DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sexuality and gender in UK high schools
a policy analysis and case study of one Midlands-based school

Potter, LJ

Award date:
2022

Awarding institution:
Coventry University

Sexuality and gender in UK high schools: a policy analysis and case study of one Midlands-based school

By

LJ Potter

PhD

January 2022

Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:	LJ Potter
Project Title:	LGBT student experiences - school

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:	06 Jan 2016
Project Reference Number:	P36017

Sexuality and gender in UK high schools: a policy analysis and case study of one Midlands-based school

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2022

Abstract

In this thesis I contribute to the expansion of queer and critical psychology by examining gender and sexuality within a high school setting, with specific reference to 'sex education' policies and teaching. Explicit exploration of sexuality and genders beyond the binary have hitherto received little research attention, with much of the focus of research being a more generalised approach looking at 'young people's experiences' of generalised sex and relationship education (SRE). My research, by comparison, considered the topics of gender and sexuality specifically, both within the topics as taught, and paying due consideration to the performative nature of gender and sexuality within the school (including within the classroom). My research brings together ideas from critical psychology and queer psychology, and working from a social constructionist position, explores portrayals of gender and sexuality. I also consider how policies that might be expected to inform the teaching of SRE situate topics of gender and sexuality. The research presented draws on four different sources of qualitative data: SRE policies of schools across the West Midlands; from within one school, classroom observation data of SRE classes from years 7 and 10, focus groups with pupils from years 8 and 10, and interviews with five members of staff. These data are analysed using critical realism-informed thematic analysis. In the first analysis chapter (chapter four) I report how SRE policy documents from schools across the West Midlands position SRE. In chapter five I examine how the concepts of gender and sexuality have been both problematised and simplified within the classroom. In chapter six I look further at the constructions of gender and sexuality within the educational environment. In chapter seven I consider the personal and structural barriers that were felt to be in place by staff and students when teaching gender and sexuality. In my concluding chapter I discuss the contributions of my research and taking the significant changes that occurred within the SRE landscape into consideration, I identify some possible areas for future research.

Key words: LGBT; sex education; critical psychology; qualitative research; thematic analysis

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking those who made this thesis possible. I would like to thank my supervisor Adam Jowett for his unending support through some difficult times and being the one part of my supervisory team present from start to finish. I would also like to thank Erica Bowen, Simon Goodman, and Nathan Kerrigan for their support for large sections of the process. Also, I would like to thank Suzanne Clisby who was able to step in at the last stage of this thesis. Thanks also to Coventry University for funding my thesis. Special thanks to my case study school for allowing me to conduct the research, and to both pupils and staff for candidly sharing their views and allowing me to observe. It has been an honour to be in this process.

Thank you also to my family, both chosen and biological whom I have loved over these years, who have seen me through parts of the thesis both big and small. You have all been incredibly important to me at different times. Special thanks go to Allycen Quan, Robin Jakumeit, Lisa Anthony, Carolyn Stevens and Michaela, without whom I wouldn't be here. My everlasting gratitude to Claire Maskery for the regular 'shut up and write' sessions and for her excellent proof-reading at speed for me.

I would like to submit this thesis in memory of my nana and my dad. I hope you would both be proud of me, and I'm sorry that you didn't get to see this process completed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Conventions and terminology

This thesis will consist of an in-depth look at how sexuality and gender are positioned within the UK Sex and Relationships (SRE) component of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum for pupils in the secondary school phase of their education (broadly ages 11-16), and how the teaching of sexuality and gender inter-relates, impacts, and is impacted by the wider school climate and cultures. Teaching is shaped by policy recommendations, and I was interested to discover what the connection between the two might look like; how genders and sexualities are constructed within policies, and what is taught are not necessarily the same thing; the map is not the territory. The research has been a continual cycle of critical reflection, knowledge construction and practice. Since the start of this PhD a large amount has changed in my thinking, my understanding, and my research. This thesis aims to convey something of my journey through this experience and how my field experiences and personal reflections changed my decisions and experiences and how I have arrived at this position. There have been clear stages in this process, necessitated in part by the imposed structure of a PhD, but much of the research has been a cyclical process. Essentially, reading has given me new ways of thinking, which has informed my research practice, which has prompted conversations, which have led to new reading. This has led the project to be a somewhat organic process, both constrained and unconstrained by the imposed structure of the PhD.

My assumptions and values include things that have felt important to my work from the start, as well as ideas that have developed along my journey. My ideas have formed out of my lived experience and from contact with my participants and have expanded as I have read theories and papers. However, I have not stuck rigidly to those assumptions and values, instead understanding that as my world is constructed, different thoughts and theories become more, or less useful, and it has felt important not to adhere rigidly to one viewpoint if another is a better fit.

Whilst it is expected that much of the language used will be familiar to many of the readers, a glossary of terms around gender and sexuality is provided at the end of the thesis for ease of use and to ensure that readers are familiar with all terminology. The first time a glossary term is used it will be in bold. Reflexivity is a central facet to this thesis and therefore the first-person singular is used throughout, to enable the emphasis of my own thoughts.

I recognise that as the researcher, the ways in which I have used language mirror that of the language that I am critiquing here. It is difficult to find elegant ways to discuss gender and sexuality minority groups in a way that does not reaffirm their marginalisation and does not contribute to an essentialist discourse, where one *is* and will *always be* [whatever 'identity' is being discussed].

When discussing the rationale for particular word usage around gender and sexuality there are three questions to be covered: is '**straight**' the best term to use for those who identify as (or who are situated as) **heterosexual**?; is the use of 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, (queer)+' **(LGBT(Q+))** the best way to convey **gender and sexual diversity (GSD)**?; Are '**homophobia**', '**biphobia**' '**transphobia**' or '**HBTphobia**' the best terms to convey feelings and actions that go against acceptance of gender and sexual diversity?

Whilst at first glance, 'straight' is a fairly benign word, unassuming and inoffensive, it is this positioning that is at the heart of my decision not to use it. Choosing to use a word that is in common parlance to describe a majority of society, normalises this identity as well as continuing to essentialise it. Equally, I do not wish to use the term 'heterosexual' as this can be seen as equally normative, or as too 'medicalised' and leaves open a suggestion of the opposing '**homosexual**' (or '**bisexual**'), risking essentialising categories. There are many ways in which people can self-code the request to state their sexuality - as their identity, as their sexual practice, as their fantasies, and each of these may yield a different result on paper (Hayfield 2020). This thesis draws on aspects of

queer theory and as such, works on unsettling assumptions and challenging normativity by stripping categories of their 'naturalness'. For this reason, I choose to use the term '**hetero**' to refer to someone positioned as 'straight' and '**cishet**' to refer to someone positioned as **cisgender** and heterosexual.

When considering the use of the word 'normative', I use this often to contrast and highlight what is happening in conjunction with what otherwise might be perceived as 'normal' or 'default' approaches to sexuality and gender. That is not to say that 'norms' are necessarily negative by default (Motschenbacher 2019), but in not pointing out normativity there is the danger that in not speaking directly to normativity there is the danger that identities outside of the norm risk becoming silenced or marginalised. I use 'heterosexism' and 'cisgenderism' alongside this, to discuss when normativities specifically related to sexuality or gender are being discussed.

It is an imperfect solution, but rather than an essentialised acronym I have chosen to use '**queer**' defined by Sedgwick (1994:7) as 'the open mesh of possibilities gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically'. The use of 'LGBTQ+' suggests specific identities, where this reading of queer does not. Although queer is often used as an 'umbrella' term for (or as part of) LGBT(Q)+, it is also a contested term, by both those that it might cover, and those it might not. 'Queer' in this instance, is an inclusion of both those who identify as LGBT in some way, or those who 'fall between the cracks' (Callis 2014) and thus allows for inclusion of people who a) don't feel that the standard LGBT acronym describes them, without forcing them into a category, either because they are for example, a 'lesbian who has sex with men' (Callis 2014) or because they actively identify as **non-binary** (in the case of gender) or **pansexual** person (in the case of sexuality) or b) because they do indeed identify as 'queer'.

I do, however, sometimes use the acronym 'LGBT' within my interviews due to its popular usage in order to ensure that I was using language that participants were familiar with. I also use LGBT on occasion in my writing, where it seems most appropriate; specifically, I do this in my literature review, choosing to use LGBT(Q+) with reference to most of the literature, matching the study's terms where appropriate (for example, Stonewall only became explicitly trans-inclusive in their research and focus in 2015, so before this date, their research only looked at 'LGB identities'). I also use the same language that my participants do when in conversation with them – I do not wish to take away someone's own choice of language for themself.

The third question is whether the concepts of 'homophobia' 'biphobia' and 'transphobia' are useful in the current climate. 'Homophobia' was coined in the late 1960s by psychologist George Weinberg, to mean a 'fear of homosexuals' (Herek 2004) and was popularised in *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* (Weinberg 1972). Since then, it has remained in popular usage, with the terms 'biphobia' (a fear of bisexuals) and 'transphobia' (a fear of trans people) joining it. It is now possible to hear 'HBTphobia' as a term that encompasses all these things. This language use is problematic on three fronts: i) Most people are not actually 'phobic' of queer people; ii) it is a catch-all for different phenomena, including structural discrimination at an institutional level, prejudice displayed by heterosexual people, and internalised oppression by queer people (Stein 2004); iii), using the term 'homophobia' locates the problem inside the individual and does not take societal values and experiences into consideration (Jowett 2017, Herek 2004).

1.2 Stigma

In school literature, where HBTphobia (or a singular variant) is used, it is usually in conjunction with bullying (e.g. homophobic bullying), suggesting that the problem is merely located in the bully. Formby (2015) suggests that this focus on 'HBTphobia' and its connection with bullying, places queer people in to a 'victim' role and polarises the research about GSD identities in schools into a bully/victim narrative that misses the

nuances of structural inequalities in schools, in a way that perhaps other terms such as 'stigma' might not. Stigma (Herek 2004, 2015) is usually used to refer to the negative appraisal by society, of people who belong to a certain group or demographic, or who (are perceived to) hold characteristics of a particular group. Stigma is a concept understood by the majority of society and is a negative collective judgment by society, a creation of (undesired) differentness (Goffman 1963). People who have been stigmatised become marginalised, often invisibly; no-one outside of the demographic notices them. They often have less recourse to resources and less power over their lives. As applied to sexual orientation, such stigma would be labelled sexual stigma. Two types of stigma are defined here: structural sexual stigma and sexual prejudice (Herek 2015). Structural sexual stigma is the way the law is written, how policies are created, in teaching, language and mass-media. Sexual prejudice is stigma outside of structural norms, that exist within the individual person (Herek 2015). Sexual prejudice is when an individual internalises structural sexual stigma. Internalised sexual stigma is held by some queer people and is reflected internally. It has commonly been referred to in the past as 'internalised homophobia'. Whereas structural sexual stigma is at a societal level and requires a social change to remove it, internalised stigma exists within the person and requires personal change in order to remove or amend it.

I would suggest that a similar type of stigma exists for that of gender identity. Both structural gender stigma, (which enshrines a power imbalance of cisgender people over transgender people), and gender prejudice, (where some gender diverse people internalise gender stigma and hold negative stigma about other 'gender minority' people) exist in the same way that sexual stigma does. Although where I use LGBTQ+ it is a direct response from the literature, or a response to the data and therefore the most appropriate word, I still create and utilise a particular discourse, as pre-existing empirical literature does, and I will be examining the dominant discourses in the data. This allows me as a researcher to draw on these dominant discourses, along with my social constructionist ethnographic approach, with a critical psychology approach to illustrate queer identities in SRE lessons and wider PSHE classes, from a variety of perspectives via

a continual state of praxis. For this piece of research, I will mainly use ‘queer’ and ‘stigma’ as my terms of choice.

1.3 Queer people as a monolith

There is no uniform group of people within the label ‘LGBTQ’ (Clarke et al. 2010). By creating such a uniformity, there is the capacity to suggest that the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people are homogenous. There is little uniformity within the letters of the initialism, let alone across it, and the uncritical inclusion of trans into the acronym is problematic at best, and often elides the problems that trans people face as a result of other individuals’ judgements of their affirmed gender. This is often compounded by issues of sexuality, where LGB trans people face hostility by LGB cis people and by cishet people. LGBTQ people are as diverse as the population in general. By virtue of my geographical location and research focus, there is also a danger that I/we suggest that western (specifically English) LGBTQ experiences are all LGBTQ experiences. There are very specific areas where the experiences of each of these groups of people will differ from each other. There are also people that do not identify as belonging to an LGBT subset of people. In addition, there are those who identify in some way as queer, or as genderqueer or non-binary, or as pansexual (or omnisexual, or various other terms that they feel best describe). The literature in many cases is not yet nuanced enough to make clear all of those differences; with much literature on sexual stigma being described as ‘homophobic bullying’, or PSHE lessons covering ‘gay issues’ or ‘homophobia’, when they do not necessarily intend to exclude other sexualities or genders. Although ‘LGBT’ has vast areas in which there is little overlap between or within the letters of the initialism, arguably, what all individuals who might lay claim to (parts of the initialism) potentially have in common is a is the experience of not seeing themselves routinely represented. They may also have experiences of systemic oppression such as heterosexism and cisgenderism, and face barriers to education (including sex education) that is representative of, or appropriate for them. It is argued by Savin-Williams (2005) that ‘the new gay teenager’ is much more likely to eschew labels than their older counterparts, so questions about sexual orientation may be

missing swathes of the younger population due to their 'post-gay' identity, or their belief that sexual identity is fluid rather than concrete (Hayfield 2020).

1.4 Background

The idea for this thesis began in quite a different arena: At a university in the UK, LGBT history month was celebrated with a display that invited comments on topics from the public, students, and staff alike. The idea was to invite comments for the first half of the month and display them in the second half of the month, with a view to being able to show 'how far we have come' with regards to LGBTQ identities. Instead, I (as the chair of the university LGBTQ staff network, and organiser of the display), when collecting the comments, was unable to display them. There were comments that ranged from "kill the gays" to "it's just wrong". There were of course, positive comments, including a notable one from a 9-year-old member of the public, who commented that it should be wrong to laugh at 'a man in a dress' as they were just being who they were. But most of the comments were negative, and unexpected in volume. I felt that something needed to change, but that the most effective time to make changes was before university. As a result of this event, I began looking at ways that genders and sexual diversities might exist within schools. I decided to consider 'Genders and Sexualities Alliances' (GSA) networks (Mayberry, Chenneville, and Currie 2013), which remain largely unknown in the UK, although various UK schools have had North-American style GSAs since 2000, and charities such as the Proud Trust and Just Like Us have created UK versions of these; 'LGBT+ Groups in School Alliance (GSA)', and 'Pride Groups' respectively.

Obtaining a studentship to investigate this topic, I intended to be present in several schools across a county for approximately a year. I began by contacting schools in a local city, saying I was looking at bullying - at this point my focus was around LGBTQ bullying and how GSAs might change this. Positive initial responses came back from several schools, so I followed up with my specifics. At this point, all the schools I had contacted decided they were unable to help. One school told me that their school "has a very particular Christian ethos and [my] project would be inappropriate for this particular

setting". All other schools who responded told me they were too busy; so, I had to rethink.

I decided to refocus on the school itself as a site of education, concentrating in particular on SRE, but also considering that there is more to 'sex education', and education in general, than what occurs in the prescribed curriculum for a specific area (Kehily 2002). Kehily (2002) conceptualises schools as having three separate areas, the curriculum, the teaching of sex education and the informal cultures of teachers and schools. I have adopted Kehily's conceptualisation within my research and look at each of these areas in addition to the policy that informs the teaching.

Although both RE and citizenship are available as GCSE subjects, they are not considered core subjects by the government, which places this focus on English (literature and language), maths, history, or geography, 'the sciences' (pupils must take either 'double science', 'core and additional science' or the three individual topics) and a language. Personal, Social, Health and Economics Education (PSHE) itself is not a GCSE subject, but in most secondary schools pupils either take the citizenship or RE GCSE, and their PSHE is placed into that subject, thus each PSHE lesson (including SRE) takes time away from the GCSE subject. Given this positioning of PSHE within the curriculum I was interested to understand how gender and sexuality were positioned within an already constrained subject, without disadvantaging students in their GCSE topics.

1.5 The current context of SRE in the UK

This section begins with an overview of the history of SRE, before moving on to the impact of Section 28. It then covers the current climate, including the moral panic about trans identities, and the Birmingham school protests centred around the teaching of gender and sexuality.

1.5.1 SRE in the UK: an overview

SRE has a complicated history in the British education system; until 1988 legislation around SRE teaching was very piecemeal (see below for more history). In 1986 a copy of 'Jenny lives with Eric and Martin' (Boshe 1983) was discovered in a teacher's resource access-controlled section of a London Education Authority. This sparked a media furore and politicians proposed Section 28 in 1987. Section 28 of the Local Government Act (UK Government 1988) - in place 1988-2000 in Scotland and 1988-2003 in the rest of GB - stated that a local authority must not promote 'homosexuality', or promote the teaching of homosexuality as an appropriate 'pretended family relationship' (UK Government Act 1988:S.28). The prohibition was at local authority level, rather than school level (Jones 2011), and whilst not illegal for schools to teach about same-sex relationships *per se*, this has had a detrimental effect on 'the teaching of homosexuality' (Evans 1989), with some teachers feeling they could not teach inclusively (Biddulph 2006, Burton 1995). The new Labour Government, which came to power from a Conservative government in 1997, created guidance that resulted in a new framework for SRE stating that all SRE should be relevant for all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality (Department for Education and Employment 2000).

In 2017, when the empirical data for this research was collected, SRE in England was divided in to statutory and non-statutory parts. The compulsory component was covered within science under the national curriculum, covering the biological aspects of sex only, and includes anatomy, puberty, biological aspects of sexual reproduction and use of hormones to control and promote fertility (Sex Education Forum 2014). The non-compulsory component was situated within PSHE. When considering the teaching of topics covered it is important to note that in 2017, caregivers could remove their children from the non-statutory aspects (Department for Education 2000), and schools must provide alternative provision for that child. Until 2020, only maintained schools (schools overseen or 'maintained' by the local authority) were required to teach SRE but are free to choose their own curriculum. Non-maintained schools could choose to teach some SRE in addition to the statutory component and are free to choose their own curriculum entirely. Independent schools are mandated to provide SRE, but this is

covered under the 'Independent Schools Standards' rather than the RSE policy (Department for Education and Employment 2000). A change in the law in 2017 means that from 2020 all schools in England have been required to teach PSHE and must have started this by spring 2021.

Researchers, including psychologists, have been interested in the topic of SRE and the wider topic of PSHE even before its inception as a mandatory curriculum topic in 2009 (see Pilcher 2005 and Iyer and Aggleton 2015 for two in-depth reviews). Due to UK teenage pregnancy rates being some of the highest in Europe (Iyer and Aggleton 2015), SRE research has largely focused on pregnancy rates and the efficacy of SRE to reduce these, with other topics receiving less coverage. The focus throughout the history of SRE has been on 'the family'; from the 1940s when education classes included 'what makes a happy family' (Iyer and Aggleton 2015:7), to a 'pre-parenthood, parenthood and pre-marriage' course, largely aimed at avoiding 'delinquencies' such as 'homosexuality' in boys and 'prostitution' in girls (Iyer and Aggleton 2015:7). From the 1950s there was a strong focus on normative genders and sexualities in SRE lessons that facilitated ideas about 'deviant homosexuality' (Iyer and Aggleton 2015, Pilcher 2005). The research of that timeframe focuses on policy rather than teaching, and research that investigates teaching investigates heteronormative topics, with little or no focus explicitly on queer topics.

1.5.2 The impact of Section 28

Research into the experiences of queer youth in schools began in the 1980s, with Plummer (1989) discussing in depth three studies on 'youth' from 1981 and 1984. The studies focused generally on 'homosexuality in school' and specifically on four areas: coverage of non-heterosexualities within the curriculum; absence of 'gay' role models – teachers were pressured to remain in the closet; the heteronormative school environment, and school bullying centering around (perceived) sexuality. There are three studies (Burbidge and Walters 1981, Bye 1984, Trenchard and Warren 1984) are the first known studies of queer youth. Trenchard and Warren's (1984) study of over

416 participants who were either still at school or who had left in the previous four years, stated that fewer than 10% of respondents experienced teaching about 'homosexuality' that was helpful in any way, and only 5% of participants were able to access books they found helpful in the school library. Plummer (1989) mentions a participant in the 1981 study who did not experience any teaching about non-normative sexualities in their 'sex education talks at school', but aside from these brief mentions there is no research covering anything other than an assumed cishet identity in 'sex education' in England before the 1990s.

Pupils often both were not, and are still not consulted on what they wish to be taught as part of their SRE (although the DfE's (2020) guidance now suggests they should be consulted) and Forrest et al.'s (2004) study considered the topics that pupils wished to see taught more. Their cohort consisted of 4353 pupils in year 9 across 13 schools in 1997, and the data collection consisted of a questionnaire where pupils were asked whether they would like more information on specific topics. Pupils were also provided an anonymous box where they could pose their own questions that they would like included. Whilst the most popular topics requested were those that could feasibly relate to most pupils (STIs; body changes) and the least popular topic for greater level of inclusion was 'lesbian and gay' relationships, there was a 21/28% agreement rate for more information on those topics from boys and girls respectively. Whilst the research did not cover how much of which topics were covered contemporaneously, their discussion notes that the levels of ignorance displayed in the responses was "depressingly high" (Forrest et al 2004: 348) and that "particularly young lesbians and gay men" had specific (unaddressed) needs. Nixon and Givens (2004) discuss briefly a comment from a lesbian teacher in 2000 who stated she was told not to bring sexuality up in school, and who had received no training on sexualities outside of heterosexuality (or how to handle the topic if a pupil brought it up).

In the research conducted immediately following the removal of Section 28, it is apparent that not all teachers were aware that it had been removed, meaning, in some

cases, Section 28 remained *de facto* law after its removal (Warwick, Aggleton, and Chase 2004). Scott and Thomson (1992) suggest that Section 28 made a queer-inclusive curriculum difficult and that discussion of non-heterosexualities might still be perceived as promoting a [particular] sexual orientation. Pound, Langford, and Campbell's (2016) literature synthesis covering 55 papers (published after 1990) on young people's SRE felt that despite the removal of Section 28 in 2000/2003, pupils felt that attitudes in teaching inclusively had not yet been reflected in SRE teaching. In a report investigating homophobia in schools in Scotland, O'Loan et al. (2006) sent surveys to all 32 Scottish Education Authorities (EAs) (receiving responses from 31), 285 Scottish primary, secondary and special schools (receiving responses from 92) and further interviewed representatives from six EAs and from 21 schools. The authors also conducted a survey for LGBT young people on the LGBT Youth Scotland website, which received 77 responses, and then carried out one focus group with eight LGBT young people who had recently left or were still attending school. Responses showed that some Scottish EA respondents suggested staff "treat everyone the same", and that in relation to talking about queer people it was "open[ing] a can of worms". Some respondents felt this had the potential to be seen as "promoting a lifestyle" (O'Loan et al., 2006: 78) evidencing that thoughts and concerns about Section 28 remained prevalent five years after its removal (when the data were collected).

1.5.3 The current climate

In 2014 Andrew Moffat (assistant head of a school in Birmingham) piloted his own resource (No Outsiders 2019) to teach about gender and sexuality. This resource would go on to be recognised by Ofsted as a 'key strength' in his 'outstanding' school report. Following a complaint by a parent, which led to a school meeting where around 40 parents complained, Moffat resigned and went on to become head at another local school. 'No Outsiders' would go on to be published and gain in recognition as a teaching resource across the country. 'No Outsiders' became a registered charity in 2019 and now has posters, lesson plans and assembly resources available for teachers. In January 2019, a parent of a pupil at Moffat's school began a petition claiming the 'No Outsiders' teaching 'contradicted the Islamic faith' (BBC 2019). The petition led to meetings

between staff and pupils and then, over a period of weeks, children were (temporarily) removed from schools and daily protests were held outside several schools in the area for 12 weeks (until an interim and then a permanent high court injunction were served). Many of the protests were led by adults who had no children at the schools (Parveen 2019).

Trans people specifically have been the target of unrest in recent years (Pearce, Erikainen, and Vincent 2020). There has been a growing trans moral panic in the media from those calling themselves 'gender critical' (Pearce, Erikainen, and Vincent 2020) in recent years, with controversial group 'LGB Alliance' being given charity status in 2021 (this status was objected to on the grounds that they meet criteria for being a hate group (The Charity Commission 2021). There has also been an increase in the discussion of 'rapid onset gender dysphoria (ROGD)' of adolescents and young adults, a term coined by Littman (2018) from a study of parents that suggests that developing an understanding that one is trans is part of a social contagion (Littman 2018), rather than 'true' dysphoria (which she argues, would be present in early childhood). In Littman's study (which has been methodologically criticised (Restar 2020) and is not supported by clinical data (Bauer, Lawson, and Metzger 2021)) there is no way to ascertain whether the adolescents and young adults identified as trans for a time before coming out to parents, and it is unclear from the study whether the term ROGD was operationalised for parents in any way. Even whilst discredited as a term, ROGD has become more popular amongst people who suggest that trans identities should not be taught in school, as this 'encourages' students to incorrectly identify as being trans (Young and Davies-Arai 2019). 'TransgenderTrend' (whose founder is Davies-Arai) has a variety of free resources for schools to facilitate teaching of SRE that denies the validity of 'gender identity', and propagates the notion that there are only two sexes and once your sex is assigned at birth that is the only sex you may claim (Davies-Arai 2018), ignoring that fact that within British law, gender and sex are not considered differently (Pearce, Erikainen, and Vincent 2020). This moral panic around teaching about trans identities is not dissimilar to the moral panic surrounding the teaching of homosexuality in the year preceding the introduction of Section 28, something underlined by Crispin Blunt and Sue

Pascoe, two conservative MPs in their discussion of the media response to the Scottish Government's guidance for supporting trans children in schools (Blunt and Pascoe 2021).

1.6 Gender and sexuality

There is a relationship between sex categorisation and gender, with sex categorisation being one's assigned status at birth and gender being one's internal sense of self, and being accountable to current conceptions of what it means to be a member of that 'category', or how one 'does' gender (West and Zimmerman 2009). Furthermore, it is not always possible to establish one's sexual orientation without first establishing one's gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Sexualities are linked to gender roles in that sexuality is viewed through the lens of gender (Butler 2010) and in this respect it is impossible to separate sexuality from gender: if there were no gender, there would be no sexuality. As long as constructs of gender exist, constructs of how it is appropriate to act within that gender role will also exist. Within the construct of gender, the normative assumption is that those who are constructed as men will be attracted to those constructed as women, and vice versa. Therefore, gender and sexuality are impossible to separate in this regard.

1.7 Aims of the thesis

My main research question was: "How are gender and sexuality positioned and constructed in education; from policy guidance, through to official teaching of SRE classes and the wider school environment?"

I was interested to discover how and what shapes and informs SRE teaching with regard to gender and sexuality, and how genders and sexualities are enacted both in the classroom and in the school in general (because how these topics are constructed within school policies - the culture (Payne and Smith 2013) - and what is enacted - the climate (Payne and Smith 2013) - are not the same thing. The policies form the values and beliefs

of an organisation and the climate of the organisation is a manifestation of the policies). In a further exploration of the interaction of culture and climate in the school, I was also interested to ascertain what might inform teaching practices within the classroom and how pupils might feel affected by that.

My secondary aims are:

1: To explore what factors (climate) influence the teaching of SRE.

2: To explore any influence of hegemonic masculinity in the classroom environment.

3: To explore the cultures both within the SRE class, and the wider school, and what connections there are between them.

1.8 Thesis outline

In the next chapter, in order to provide a rationale and critical framework for the research, I consider SRE and conduct a review of the literature published around this. The review covers reports and peer-reviewed publications and locates spaces and silences, as well as explicit positions taken within the research.

In chapter three I discuss my methodology, considering the theory and philosophy that underpins the research and brings together my critical thinking processes. These allow for consideration of my world view and enable the creation of the reflexive framework that helps to legitimise my findings. The methodology considers the various strands that my thesis takes and brings them together in a coherent reflexive narrative before moving on to my method section. I used four discrete types of qualitative data collection and each type is covered in my methods section, which will discuss my data sources and my analytic framework.

My findings begin with chapter four; my policy analysis chapter. This is a standalone chapter that informs the live data collection chapters. In this chapter give a brief consideration of SRE policy and then consider the policies from a stratified sample that was close to replicating the national school sample in the UK at the time of collection, drawing from private schools and public schools, both religious, non-religious, and various types of academies. The data cover various ways in which genders, sexualities, pupils, and staff are positioned with regards to the potential teaching of SRE.

Chapters five to eight will address the main findings from the field-based data. Chapter five covers the problematising and simplifying of minority genders and sexualities within the classroom and wider school, demonstrating that at one and the same time, some aspects of gender and sexuality are both considered 'difficult' topics, and simplified in that they are essentialised as categories.

Chapter six considers the way that gender and sexuality are constructed both within classroom teaching and school more broadly, building on the problematisation and simplifying of chapter five and widening out to consider broader aspects of gender and sexuality and their enactment within the school.

Chapter seven considers both the structural and personal barriers that are perceived to be in place by staff and also by students and covers how staff find queer identities difficult to teach both from a personal and structural point of view.

To conclude, a discussion chapter (eight) synthesises the work contained within this thesis and builds upon the analysis to explain how gender and sexuality are managed within SRE policy, teaching and school cultures, ending with a conclusion that discusses the current situation and the implications for future school experiences.

Chapter 2: Gender and sexuality in SRE lessons and beyond: A review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

This literature review considers the history of policy-making and of SRE education in my introduction, and here I focus on the more recent past and present of SRE/RSE (which for clarity I will refer to as 'SRE' as this was how it was positioned in guidance, if not in statute (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2015) at the time of conducting the research) including considering how the government guidance (Department for Education and Employment 2000) impacts on teaching climate (Payne and Smith 2013). I then address teaching experiences around gender and sexuality and consider how these are enacted within the wider school cultures, including inclusivity of the SRE curriculum and discussion of the silence around queer discourses – culture (Payne and smith 2013). A discussion of the newest amendments to the SRE/RSE framework (Department for Education 2019) can be found in my discussion chapter. The change in the policy/framework for SRE/RSE was introduced midway through my thesis, and thus largely I am drawing on the 2000 guidance, except where reference to the more recent guidance is required.

SRE is not well-defined in law, which allows for significant differences in interpretation as to what needs to be covered (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2015). Whilst maintained schools need to have regard to the government guidance, this is *guidance* rather than statute. There has been a decline of about 30% in the amount of PSHE teaching that has been conducted at schools (Gov.UK 2021) and as a result of the guidance not being statutory, there are no set topics that PSHE must cover, therefore there is a risk that SRE will not be covered (outside of the compulsory components that can be covered in science) at all. At the time of writing, the government's SRE policy guidance document stated that "no direct promotion of sexual orientation" (Department for Education and Employment 2000: 13) should occur. The same document also talks about the importance of marriage. Written at a time (2000) when equal marriage did not exist, this is an example of one type of (heteronormative) relationship being favoured over another. Within the document, the only time that sex is mentioned in SRE policies is with reference to pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Teaching sex education that only focuses on reproduction and STIs (including HIV) is heterosexist by definition

(Buston and Hart 2001). It would appear from the guidance that at the time it was created, the authors did not feel that significant discussion of certain heterosexual ideals equated to 'direct promotion' of a certain type of sexual behaviour. This language amounts to what Sauntson (2019) refers to as 'illegitimation' of non cishet identities, and creates a herculean task for the teacher trying to balance one part of the guidance with another, whilst providing an inclusive space for students that does not result in official complaints about their teaching, as occurred with Andrew Moffatt (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2015) – a complex task (Kehily 2002).

Considerations of power, where the focus is often on the teacher as 'delivering' education, (rather than on the ways in which teaching is 'received' by students) means that power dynamics structure the ways in which (sex) education in the classroom is delivered (Kehily 2002). Teachers are necessarily expected to be 'in control of' the classroom and this therefore suggests that the context and teaching of sex education are created in specific ways. Although the identity of the teacher is that of being 'professional' and 'delivering education', this is not always appropriate for sex education classes; it has been suggested that these classes need a more informal approach that recognise the cultures of pupils within the classes (Kehily 2002).

This tension between the delivering of information and the need for more informal approaches is perhaps reflected in Buston and Hart's (2001) study of the experiences of teachers delivering sex education in high schools across 25 schools in Scotland. Only 35% of respondents said they felt confident teaching about sexual pleasure/orgasms, where 80% of the responses indicated the teachers felt confident talking contraception and 70% felt confident discussing sexually transmitted infections, and almost 90% of them felt confident talking about attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS. This suggests firstly that teachers feel more comfortable talking about areas that privilege the mechanics of 'penis in vagina' (PIV) sex (contraception/STIs), but do not appear to be confident educating around sexual pleasure. In contrast, just over 60% of respondents felt confident discussing homosexuality, although 90% of them felt comfortable talking

about attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS. The fact that teachers were far more comfortable talking about the 'diseases' one might catch, than about people's ability to enjoy sex (and, one would assume, about consent also) speaks to a lack of willingness (or perceived ability/permission) to look at the experience of sex, and instead concentrate on the mechanics.

In Buston and Hart's (2001) study, 60% of respondents felt confident teaching about 'homosexuality' (figures for 'bisexuality' not known). Whilst this is problematic, in that 40% of teachers were not confident talking about homosexuality (it is unclear whether 'bisexuality' was included as a separate question or just subsumed into 'homosexuality'), it is a figure that is not discussed in relation to the lessons that were observed in the study. Within the observed lessons, only 11 lessons displayed 'good practice'; that is, teaching about 'non-heterosexuality' alongside 'heterosexuality'. Eight other lessons did not mention anything besides heterosexuality, which was the presumed single orientation, and instances where same-sex activities could have been mentioned were missed. More troubling, given the 60% who felt comfortable teaching about homosexuality, were the nine lessons involved where teachers either ignored the topic, or actively engaged in homophobic comments with students. It is impossible to ascertain from the data available what percentage of the teachers whose teaching was seen as problematic had also declared that they felt confident about teaching about homosexuality. 61% of the lessons observed were problematic (either by omission or commission), and 63% percent of teachers felt either 'very confident' or 'confident' about their ability to teach about homosexuality. Considering this, it is possible (given that it is not clear from the study how many teachers are teaching SRE and what percentage of the total were interviewed and what percentage of the total were observed) that some of the teachers who felt confident were teaching problematic content. The study was conducted whilst Section 28 was still in operation (although coming to the end of its time; it was repealed in the summer of 2000 in Scotland and in 2003 in England).

These results were similar in Harris, Wilson-Daily and Fuller's (2021) research, which considered the 'experience of LGBT+ youth' as understood by staff and as experienced by queer students. In their discussion of the school curriculum, staff acknowledge they have no training on queer topics but were given 'plenty of material'. Of the six schools they spoke with, only one had any specialist trained team, although it is not clear what this entailed. For most staff, 'LGBT+' was a topic discussed once a year. The staff (who were mostly not queer) feedback on this tended to be positive across all schools, where student focus groups all had significant concerns, feeling that queerness across the curriculum was generally missing, and on occasion where it was presented, was presented in a way that served to victimise them (including the persecution of non-normative sexuality along with persecution of Jews by the Nazis). Whilst students also had specific concerns about their SRE lessons, staff generally indicated that they would take any complaints raised by students further if raised, seemingly unaware that a number of students were unhappy with the status quo. This reactive stance makes it difficult for some students to complain, as this might risk outing them, either at home or in school, where they may not be (wholly) out and risks adding to their sense of isolation (Harris, Wilson-Daily and Fuller 2021) and this reliance on students to raise issues, then risks positioning queer youth as victim (Formby 2015) risking their further marginalisation.

Although some of the research took place whilst Section 28 was in effect, it is difficult to state with certainty how much of an effect that in itself was having on teaching; culture was changing so rapidly (Ellis and High 2004) even under Section 28, that it is impossible to separate out the effect of Section 28 from the cultural, social and political changes happening at the time. Both Ofsted (2013) and young people (Pound, Langford, and Campbell 2016) viewed SRE in the UK as somewhat lacking, even some time after the removal of Section 28. The Ofsted report states that in 2012, over 1/3 of 50 schools sampled across the UK 'required improvement' in their teaching of SRE.

Moving away from the more practical side of teaching to a theoretical focus on the teaching of sexuality in the educational curricula, Gilbert (2014) looks at the ideologies around the teaching of sexuality in schools and similarly suggests that schools are walking a tightrope with regards to education and sexuality. For schools to teach (same) sexuality (and gender diversities) would be to point out that these things exist, which would then potentially fall counter to school SRE policies (whose texts were often lifted wholesale from the government guidance document) and become troublesome for parents who may not wish their children to be made aware of non-normative sexualities and gender identities. What is 'usualising' for a school may well be seen as 'promoting' by parents and care-givers, as is what appeared to be the case with Andrew Moffatt (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2015), but as suggested by Epps, Markowski and Cleaver's (2021) rapid review, without inclusive RSE, school culture will remain heterocentric and is likely to unintentionally facilitate bullying as a result.

Epstein, Idems, and Schwartz's (2013) qualitative study, talking to children of queer parents, posits several suggestions for teachings inclusively in the classroom. These include making sure that students are aware about different kinds of partnerships, with a belief that education can create a positive change and suggests that schools have to have more than an *awareness* of LGBTQ issues; it has to be a pervasive culture within the school, that it is queer-friendly and queer lives need to be integrated into the general curriculum, not just wedged into PSHE classes.

Within the school environment, it is not common for queer teachers to be out to their students, so the dominant discourse remains that of 'assumed heterosexuality', and when teachers do come out, they are not assured of a positive response, with the example of Andrew Moffatt providing a very visual example (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2015). Nixon and Givens' (2004) study into the experiences of LGB trainee teachers emphasises the experiences of not being able to be 'out' as (trainee) teachers in schools. At the same time, this draws parallels with work inside the classroom, inside the school and within the wider community; most trainees felt that it would be detrimental to their

careers if they were out. Nixon and Givens' research was exemplified by one trainee who was aware of an out gay man in her school placement and who felt that it was inspiring to have him there. The fact that the gay man's outness has not gone unremarked, and that the trainee drew strength from this suggests that it is an act of bravery to be oneself in the teaching environment.

In looking at students' experiences of how they feel their teachers react to homophobic incidents, Allen's (2020) research suggests that a higher number of queer students across the UK, the US, Australia as well as non-English speaking countries such as Mexico and Italy currently experience a higher level of homophobic violence than their non-queer counterparts, and that teachers' responses to homophobia are seen as ineffective. Teachers (Guasp, Ellison and Satara 2014) feel they lack confidence on how to respond well but this lack of response only serves to perpetuate these types of interactions, even when this is not the desired outcome of staff. Additionally it is clear from research such as Harris, Wilson-Daily and Fuller (2021) that staff are perceived as 'not hearing' what is happening, as staff feel that as a team, they respond, and students feel that they do not.

Within education, most empirical research (especially that looking at queer identities) is conducted from an 'LGBTQ+' focus, rather than a queer theory focus; it concentrates on identities and how LGBTQ+ pupils are positioned within schools (Allen 2016). The adoption of a queer theory approach within education would lead to more understanding of queer identities. Queer theory allows us to examine the logics and discourses that allow us ways to disrupt this deficit model discourse (Sykes 2011) and thus move from the restrictions the discourse places upon us (Foucault 1978). This would be achieved in part by removing some of the fixedness around labels, thus resulting in greater intersectionality and less marginalisation of students. LGBTQ+ research brings us (for example), much-needed gender-neutral toilets through a focus on identities and how pupils are positioned in schools, but queer theory brings us the understanding of the theory behind current policies, thus underlining the need for a queer theory approach to remove stereotypes (Renn 2010). Although queer studies does not just

study the traditionally queer (or, what may otherwise fall under the LGBTQ+ umbrella), it is rare to find research that encompasses both queer theory and LGBTQ+ studies in the same piece of research (Renn 2010), because they are fundamentally in tension; LGBT psychology 'shores up' identity categories but queer psychology deconstructs them (Clarke and Peel 2007). Queer theory might be used here, in its application as a theory that aims to see the cracks, as a way to provide a possibility of how things might be done differently. Queer is not (just or only) a reductionist term for LGBTQ+, it is not (just or only) the new umbrella label, but is a way of subverting categories others would seek to place us in to (Giffney and O'Rourke 2009).

Although research covers the effects of identifying as a sexual minority in school, there is less research into the direct effect of SRE teaching on queer pupils, or those with queer family members or friends; research focuses on the delivery, rather than the reception of the content. Other research suggests that social exclusion and intolerance have a negative effect on queer people and is cited as a reason for low mood, self-injury and suicide attempts (Holt, Skagerberg, and Dunsford 2016). The research suggests that in order to feel more secure in school, specific anti-harassment initiatives should be set up to ensure safe environments for pupils with a non-normative gender or sexual identity (Rivers 2000) although this reinforces the concept that changes to culture rather than to climate are being made, in ways which might further marginalise students (Harris, Wilson-Daily and Fuller 2021).

Haywood et al.'s (2009) EHRC report looks specifically at engaging post 16-year-olds in education, suggesting that many of the young queer people in their educational care felt like failures due to not having met their care-givers' expectations (of a cishet norm). This potentially leads to two outcomes, either under-achievement due to being preoccupied with 'topics of parental acceptance' or over-achievement to try and counter-balance this effect. Although schools across both UK and USA do not routinely teach queer identities, this is compensated for differently; in the USA this lack of teaching is compensated for to some degree, by the existence of 'gay-straight alliances' (GSAs) within (a minority of)

schools (Worthen 2014), and where they are present they improve the school culture (Worthen, 2014). In the UK, GSAs have been slower to gain a foothold, although it is impossible to know how many schools in the UK run a GSA or equivalent.

2.2 The PSHE curriculum and queer-inclusivity

The curriculum is just one site in school that should allow for the interruption of hetero and cis-normativity. Responsibility for the curriculum is taken firstly by governors, and then by teachers. This section of the thesis shows that although research shows there is some space in policy for queer identities, both governors and teachers do not always feel comfortable allowing enough space in the curriculum for this to happen. The research shows that when pupils are offered the chance to rate their SRE, queer pupils rate their experiences more negatively than cis and/or hetero students. Within PSHE, it would seem that the Department for Education recognises this in part; statutory guidance states that PSHE in the UK should meet the needs of 'young people, *whatever* their developing *sexuality*' (Department for Education and Employment 2000; emphasis added). However, 36.4% of all people in the Sex Education Forum (2016) study report their SRE as being good or very good but only 16% of trans or 'other' students report their SRE as being good or very good. This is supported by Stonewall's (2017) report suggesting that more than 40% of LGB respondents did not have inclusive curricula in school.

Whilst statutory guidance exists (Department for Education and Employment 2000), research such as Martinez and Emmerson's (2008) study suggests that PSHE teaching quality is inconsistent. In a mixed-methods study, consisting of questionnaires to a nationally representative sample of 617 schools, Formby & Wolstenholme (2012), found that SRE is taught in a number of different ways, ranging from separate SRE lessons, to themed or 'drop-down' days (when other lessons were collapsed for the day). SRE was also taught within other subjects or in tutor/form time, or as part of citizenship lessons, with a small amount of SRE elements being timetabled separately. Research such as Formby and Wolstenholme's (2012) study have shown the different ways in which SRE

can be taught. However, among these studies little detail is provided about which elements are taught (and how) on these days, or the length of the lessons (or how much depth of information is covered) for these topics.

In studies of teachers and governors responsible for the provision of SRE, there is a general feeling that SRE has an important contribution to make to the school curriculum and pupils' wellbeing. Martinez and Emmerson (2008) found that almost 98% of teachers felt that SRE made an important contribution to pupil well-being. In this study, teachers were given a list of 19 topics that they would like more support on, and top of the requested list was "different sexualities, including gay, straight, lesbian and transgender" suggesting that even when it is taught, teachers feel in need of further guidance. It is possible that in prioritising topics, topics given precedence are those thought to affect a majority of pupils more directly, thus reinforcing a heteronormative environment.

The culture of heteronormativity is also reflected in an online survey of 1709 young people aged 16-25 where pupils reported that teachers' embarrassment was reflected in the quality of their teaching (Martinez & Emmerson, 2008). Strange et al.'s (2006) study of SRE for 13–16-year-olds, reveals that of the twelve schools involved, only one school in each of the two cohorts taught about 'homosexuality' in any year (year ten in both schools). By contrast, the majority of schools had covered sexually transmitted infections. Strange et al. (2006) suggest that teachers are more likely to teach topics they feel confident about, and that teachers feel that they do not have as much time as they would like to teach PSHE. As Blake (2008) argues, the teaching of SRE as a set of disparate subjects (drugs and alcohol, sex and relationships, economics, health, etc.) means that because there are so many areas to cover, there is variability regarding how, or even if, certain topics are taught. One part of SRE can be prioritised over others, which has the effect of 'containing' young people's sexuality by teaching negative outcomes of queer sexualities and not also focusing on providing related, helpful information on par with that provided for heterosexual young people (Blake 2008) which leads to young

people not fully understanding their experiences (Carlile 2020) and feeling invisible in the curriculum. The Metro study (2014) of 7126 LGBT-identifying 15-25 year olds about their experiences found that over 50% of all participants were aware that they were in some way LGBT by the age of 13. Less than 5% of participants reported learning about same-sex relationships and safer sex, 89% did not hear about bisexuality and 94% did not hear about being trans. Within the participant demographics, 30% of the participants identified as gay men, but they accounted for over 50% of reported STIs, and within that, over 67% experienced repeated STIs, suggesting that the lack of focus on queer identities has significant impact on certain demographics of pupils.

Formby and Donovan's (2020) results suggest similar topics. Participants aged 14-25, with a majority being over the age of 16, discussed their SRE lessons and felt that they were 'not at all' represented leading some participants to turn to the internet for information. Importantly in this research, the portrayal of domestic violence as a cishet problem suggests that pupils may not recognise this within their own relationships, leaving students at greater risk of harm. Students do not expect to see themselves represented in the classroom and thus are less likely to look. When considering what to include however, Coll, O'Sullivan and Enright (2018) worked with 43 high-school students in Ireland over 18 months, to ascertain both what their knowledge of SRE was, and what they would like to see taught in lessons. Although it was clear that some pupils did not have issues with the current teaching, others felt they were not represented even when their sexuality or gender status was the one being discussed, and it was noted on more than one occasion that the curriculum was heterosexual and whilst Coll, O'Sullivan and Enright's (2018) paper has no significant answers for the questions of what to teach, it does make clear that pupils are not being heard and are not being seen in their SRE lessons.

Administrators seem to take the view that 'problems' such as HIV/AIDS should be covered, whereas identities should not. School governors are in this respect similar to teachers, with Davis, Denman, and Pearson's (1997) study of school governors and their

thoughts about what topics SRE should cover, finding that 76% of respondents placed 'homosexuality' last on a list of eight topics, although a much higher percentage (97%) felt that 'HIV and AIDS' should be covered along with 'contraception' and 'stable relationships, marriage and parenthood'. Lawrence, Kanabus, and Regis (2000) report a similar finding: 97% of school health education co-ordinators felt that SRE should cover 'STIs including HIV', however, only 78% of respondents felt that 'homosexuality' should be covered. Of the schools that did cover 'homosexuality', 23% did so 'in-depth', 29% provided 'limited opportunity for discussion' and 24% only mentioned it in passing or if it arose in class discussion. The remaining 24% did not respond about their coverage of homosexuality. Why the results should look like this is not clear within the study, but it is clear that even before the PSHE curriculum (including SRE) as a whole reaches the classroom it is under scrutiny by the administrators who are not positive that a queer-inclusive curriculum should be provided.

Research does not always give a clear voice to queer pupils' feelings about their SRE, and as a result, this can make it difficult to extrapolate responses from a mixed sample that includes cishet pupils. Research that does separate the identities, uniformly shows that queer pupils rate their SRE as less satisfactory than cishet pupils (Sex Education Forum, 2016). Although some studies have made a particular effort to look at responses for those who do not identify as cishet, most studies do not report what percentage of respondents are 'LGBTQ' and there is often no breakdown of identities within that category, so it is unknown how much the research might be skewed either within or between the groups. Martinez and Emmerson (2008) for example, included trans people as a specific category, but bisexuality was elided, thus marginalising bisexual people's voices. There is no figure quoted as to how many participants fell into each category, but the paper reports that LG and T participants had lower satisfaction levels, with figures of 56% of transgender people, 55% of lesbians and 54% of gay men feeling their SRE was bad or very bad, compared to only 34% of all respondents who felt their SRE was 'bad' or 'very bad'.

In other research into the topic, a study of 2326 UK school-attenders (Sex Education Forum (SEF) 2016) found that individuals who described themselves as 'transgender' or 'other' were least likely to rate their SRE as 'good' or 'very good' and 84% of this group rated their SRE as 'ok' 'bad' or 'very bad' (they do not separate response figures 'ok' from 'bad' or 'very bad'). Although they note that overall, trends have improved in SRE ratings since this research series began in 2008, the comparison figure is an aggregate score of all young people. The SEF study also does not include explicit scores of queer young people, making it impossible to know whether queer young people's ratings have improved. Measor (2004) amalgamates three previous papers considering the views of young people in SRE, but the specific views of queer people are absent. The paper contains a footnote to say that it did not seek to exclude 'lesbian and gay voices', but that the topics simply were not mentioned by the participants (no reference was made to bi or trans voices).

This potential lack of an inclusive curriculum is reflected in three studies covered in Formby's (2011a) paper examining LGB people's experiences of SRE. In the first study, 231 LGB young people aged 13-23 were included and in the second and third study, there was no age limit but Formby states that 'the majority of respondents were aged under 35' (Formby 2011a:7). In the first study, respondents overwhelmingly felt their classes were not queer-inclusive; they did not know where to obtain barrier methods for safer sex, and women did not know about STI transmission between women (Formby 2011a). When SRE makes no explicit reference to this, it is failing to challenge ignorance and therefore risks actively raising the STI rate. This is supported by research for Stonewall (Hunt and Fish 2008) suggesting that 50% of over 6000 lesbian and bisexual women had not been tested for an STI, with 75% of the untested participants reasoning that they were not at risk. Over 50% of those who had been tested did have an STI. Looking at the results, there is a clear correlation between not having an inclusive sex education and STIs in this population. Given the high number of participants who had not previously been tested and those who had tested positive for an STI, it would be extremely useful to understand why schools are not teaching about queer sex.

Evidence submitted to the Education Select Committee Inquiry into PSHE and SRE (House of Commons Education Committee 2015) stated that teachers felt that they did not have time to plan everything they might have wished to, which led to difficulties in providing an inclusive curriculum, thus creating difficult classroom atmospheres. Buston et al. (2002) and Buston & Hart (2001) examined the atmosphere in SRE lessons through classroom observation and conducted 57 teacher interviews and 173 teacher surveys. They also conducted 630 pupil surveys. Buston and Hart (2001) noted that the use of 'homophobic' language was usually made by boys and went unchallenged when expressed both within classrooms and in shared spaces such as the corridor and playground. They also identified problems including overt stigmatising actions, where teachers were complicit in the stigmatising behaviour of students when observing PSHE classes. For example, one teacher was heard to say "it's difficult for normal men to be friends with gays" (Buston and Hart 2001: 100). Dissemination of misinformation based on stereotyping and myths was also noted, alongside a heterosexist presumption (defined as a culture where LGB identities were presumed to not exist). However, there were also examples of good practice, in which same sex relationships were usualised[1] (Fenwick and Sanders 2012), and stigmatising behaviour by students was challenged. Of 28 observations, 11 were categorised as displaying 'good practice'. They also asked teachers to self-rate their competencies and found that 90% felt confident talking about attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS, although the observation data suggests that some of the teachers who felt confident did not display good practice. There is no discussion of trans identities and none of bisexuality in these papers, with the only mention reported as being from a teacher participant commenting on how pupils were keen to discuss bisexuality.

Although the research does not always make clear what proportion of pupil respondents are queer, queer pupils do not feel that their SRE lessons are wholly inclusive, nor do

[1] 'usualise' is preferable to 'normalise' as to normalise could be seen to work to move towards an implied cishet norm, where to usualise simply means to include as a point of existence within the curriculum, without putting queer identities up for debate

they rate SRE lessons as highly as their cishet peers. It is apparent that teachers and governors are more aligned to a problematising approach when teaching around sex, which reinforces heterosexual narratives around pregnancy and STIs. Teachers feel less confident talking about identities that diverge from a cishet norm, which theoretically serves to greater marginalise queer pupils' identities, either because teachers show discomfort with the topic or because teachers can choose not to teach those subjects (and thus they are invisible).

2.3 The silence around queer discourses

'Silence' refers here to the absence of something. Silence may be present in a topic taught, or discussed, or enshrined in policy or a topic being researched. Silencing is the systematic exclusion of a topic referenced in a positive way, or the deliberate inclusion of a topic referenced in a negative way and happens in both schools and within research (Quinlivan 2013). Within research it might result in researchers feeling unable, or able only with difficulty, to research a particular topic. Whilst there is a difference between silencing and silence, with silencing being an active process and silence being a passive approach, the net result of a missing positive discourse around queerness is the same. The silencing that is noted in the section below is seemingly not done explicitly, or if it is, it happens as a result of researchers self-censoring in order that a better response rate might be achieved. It is in recognising that silencing happens at all strata of education and educational research that begins to allow for the voicing of experience and the inclusion of positive identities (Quinlivan 2013).

Silencing can happen around queer topics in educational research at all stages across the planning and conducting of research projects, by researchers deciding which topics should be researched, by ethics boards, and by participants (Allen et al. 2014). Discussing silencing in research, DePalma & Atkinson (2006) sought opinions of staff and students within higher education about sexual orientation in relation to schooling and in their reflexive article. They noted points where they engaged implicitly and explicitly in silencing behaviours: their first (self) silencing was in considering the name of the

project, choosing to remove direct references to sexuality in their project title and instead referencing 'diversity'. The second silencing came in the form of low numbers of respondents, and the final silencing came in the form of the comments from respondents, all of which served to maintain a culture of heteronormativity, in part through use of 'normalising' discourses, which frame certain things as 'just common sense' through patterns of assumptions and silences around certain topics. They noted that these silences create and maintain heteronormativity.

Silencing might also refer to illocutionary silencing in policy (Sauntson, 2013). For example, the trans equality report headed by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2016) highlighted that there was no mention in the 2000 government SRE framework (Department for Education and Employment 2000) of trans identities, and that this has led to little in the way of teaching about those identities. The same can similarly be said for bisexuality; there is no mention of any sexuality other than homosexuality. Sauntson (2013) argues that schools are constructed as heterosexual sites as much through what is not said, as through what *is* said, creating ideologies about heterosexuality, and that other sexualities are silenced as a result of this (Clarke and Peel 2007). Sauntson argues via speech act theory that the 'lexicalisation' of contested words creates semantic profiles that silence non-heterosexual identities and create a discourse of heterosexism.

Aside from the silence around discourses about people engaging in same-sex relationships, pupils who do not identify their gender within a gender binary are also excluded from SRE because its focus on reproduction and 'male-female relationships' automatically excludes them (Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford 2003). Both Sundaram & Sauntson (2016a) and DePalma and Atkinson (2006) discuss the fact that what is left out of a document is as important as what is written; this is how heteronormativity and cisnormativity are maintained. Although queer student identities can be disruptive, as they draw attention to the hetero- and cisnormativity that is performed in schools, at the same time they can be rendered invisible in practice, as liberal discourses used by

educators represent such students as 'just the same as' everyone else (where information about the perceived needs of only the assumed normative behaviours are taught), as though their identities 'do not matter' and thus are not represented.

LGB students in high schools feel that their identities are not routinely accounted for in the school curriculum and where mentioned, sexualities other than heterosexuality are more often referred to in a negative sense than a positive sense (Ellis and High 2004). This is an issue because it fails to recognise differences outside of the heterosexual matrix (Butler 2010), and thus assumes that heterosexuality is normal and anything that is not heterosexual is 'not normal' (Epstein and Johnson 1994). Ellis & High's (2004) study found that 'homosexuality' was essentialised as 'just another topic', and not at all integrated into the curriculum, and that LGB young people found this unhelpful. When treated as a special issue, Ellis and High (2004) suggest that this individualised way of framing homosexuality situates it as a 'problem' within the individual person that can be at best tolerated. The balance is therefore in usualising queerness, both by not rendering it invisible but as not treating it as 'different' (or other) to the cishet norm, and by approaching all identities (and eschewing of identity) as possible and desirable (according to the individual). In this way, no one 'identity' is favoured; students are given information about all relationships and essentials (as usually covered for heterosexual intimacy) and are free to choose their own identity if they wish, without it being essentialised within their curriculum.

In addition to examining why SRE is not uniformly queer-inclusive, it is helpful to look at school culture as a whole. Renold (2006) argues that teaching socialises children within the 'heterosexual matrix'; a concept that conflates sex, sexuality, and gender (Butler, 2010) to create a heterosexual dominant hegemony. In classes, boys are often positioned by adults, from teachers to policy makers, as rowdy or disruptive (Forrest 2000, Forrest, Biddle, and Clift 1997, Mellor and Epstein 2006), or, to put it another way, as simply displaying hegemonic, or traditional masculinity (Connell 2005). Girls are

positioned as calm, placing boys in the aggressive or dominant position, and girls in the passive or submissive position, which reinforces the heterosexual matrix.

Within SRE, the silence around enjoyment renders it difficult for sex to be discussed beyond mechanics, and I have shown that teachers are much more comfortable talking about the 'problem' of sex in general than the enjoyment of sex. Epstein and Johnson (1994) note a similar point. In their observation of SRE in a girls' school chosen specifically for its good practice, 'male homosexuality' was brought up in relation to HIV/AIDS, but 'female homosexuality' was not raised, with enjoyment of sex being only tentatively raised. Their observations (primarily of a lesson where methods of contraception were passed around the class) evidenced student reactions that suggested embarrassment, with words such as 'disgusting'. They cite a conversation that occurred between the teacher and the girls, during which the teacher asked, 'have you ever felt love for a boy or a man?'. This compulsory, or ambient heterosexuality lacks space for other sexualities; there is no mention in the study that any other sexuality is considered, adding to the silence on this topic.

Heteronormativity contributes to the dominant hegemony of teaching in the classroom, making it seem 'common sense' that sexuality has no place in the classroom (Fifield and Swain 2002: 179), but because the pervasive atmosphere is one of 'ambient heterosexuality', sexuality cannot be removed from the curriculum. As science teachers, Fifield and Swain (2002) suggest that what is *not* taught is as important as what is taught, and in science, the 'facts' were created within a frame of an uncritical view on power and privilege. Even for teachers wishing to make changes it is very difficult to make explicit the sexualities of the writers of resources in the curriculums (Epstein and Johnson 1994). Often the books chosen for English are authored by cishet writers, whose writing does not necessarily involve queer characters and thus queer identities are silenced. In areas such as maths or science, as Fifield and Swain (2002) point out, this explicitness is harder to include, as sexuality is seen as 'unrelated' to the topic at hand.

This all adds to the pervasive atmosphere of ambient heterosexuality, and the silence regarding queerness.

It can be demonstrated that where queer-inclusive curricula are taught, teachers often lack personal and professional confidence to teach such curricula, unintentionally creating a silencing effect. As an attempt to bring a queer-inclusive curriculum into schools, the 'No Outsiders' project (DePalma and Atkinson 2009 - a separate project to that of Andrew Moffatt, previously mentioned) involved bringing various queer-themes into the teaching of over 20 schools around the UK. The project used children's books and other training materials that were integrated into everyday school, often for reading time. Evaluation of the project found that it changed the ethos of the schools to some degree. The project aimed to disrupt the dominant hegemony of heterosexuality and remove some of the 'silent' effect around queer identities. Participants at the schools were free to implement the materials as they saw fit. Some offered selections of books to teachers and asked those teachers to feed back. Some incorporated the books into a module on gender stereotyping and colour, some into a project around alternative fairy-tales. When the books arrived in the schools, teacher-participants reported an initial silence around the books; staff were awkward, but progress was visible; DePalma and Atkinson (2009) note that at least one school asked for 'more of the same' type of book after those books had been completed. At the same time, DePalma and Atkinson (2006) discuss how some of their project publicity was stopped, from fear of retribution. They also mention how within schools they were met with some resistance, citing a gay teacher charged by his colleague as promoting 'the gay agenda'. This lends support to the argument about teachers lacking in confidence around teaching of queer identities - they must balance not only personal insecurity but professional insecurity.

Sauntson, (2013) and (Sauntson and Simpson 2011) analysed the policy documents for English literature at five English schools at key stage four (years 10 and 11). They concluded that although there appeared to be spaces in the policies to allow for discussion of a range of sexualities, the teaching did not engage with these spaces. The

policy documents included references to 'culture' but did not recognise that queer people may have alternative cultures, so the examples given for culture did not reference sexuality or gender and therefore, the policy documents closed down discussion of a range of sexualities and genders. This lack of recognition was reinforced by interviews of five teachers from those schools and fifteen students attending local high schools from the local area (recruited via a queer youth group). These respondents felt that queer themes present in some books (such as 'The Color Purple' by Alice Walker (2011)) and queer themes from authors who are known to be queer (such as Stella Duffy) were not always covered and this has remained true in some more recent research (Kjaran and Sauntson 2020). Sauntson and Simpson (2012) argued that the national curriculum policy for English was geared towards an illocutionary silencing of sexuality outside of heterosexuality. Although the applied part of the study had a small sample size with regard to the teachers who were interviewed, the policy analysis of the national curriculum has wider implications. Ultimately, Sauntson and Simpson (2011) recommend a whole-school culture that promotes equality and diversity at all levels, from policies to teaching.

2.4 Conclusions

There is little UK empirical research covering the direct effects of not teaching queer-inclusive SRE as the focus is on delivering rather than receiving. Whilst it may be difficult to study the effects of not doing something, it is possible to focus research on queer people to ascertain the results of their experiences. Research that does exist suggests that queer pupils have been negatively affected, but there is simply not much research in existence. Nevertheless, what research has been conducted is clear that the needs of all pupils are not being met and that there is a binary cisnormative and heteronormative system in place, where bisexuality and transgender identities are rarely taught or represented within the curriculum. These topics are also rarely covered in the research around SRE teaching with regards to psychological aspects of queer pupils' experiences, with bisexual and transgender often being included under a cohesive 'LGBT' or as 'gay and lesbian'. Allen et al. (2014) suggest that research around sexuality and school is difficult simply because young people's sexuality feels a dangerous topic to discuss.

Usualising non-normative sexualities into SRE classes would provide greater potential for discussion on sexuality, which, whilst positive for the pupils, might be considerably more problematic for the schools as they move away from being reflections of wider society and become more inclusive. As Atkinson (2002) suggests, exclusion of queer people and their families from the curriculum does not allow for a comprehensive education. The work carried out into queer-inclusive curricula and policies suggests that hetero/cisnormativity is the current hegemony, with policies written by the dominant majority, and the same holds true across the national curriculum. By and large it is taught by the cishet majority, using materials that are unlikely to have been created by queer people, and there is little explicit coverage of minority identities, thus reflecting heteronormativity and cisnormativity. This literature review has illustrated heteronormativity within schools, and this pervasive atmosphere affects more than just queer pupils, but currently little UK empirical work has been published on the hetero/cisnormative hegemony within schools.

In conclusion, although the policy for sex education states that SRE should be relevant for all pupils regardless of sexual orientation, it does not reflect gender or (much) sexual diversity and it is not felt to be diverse by queer pupils. This review has shown that there is limited research into SRE teaching, and little that considers the effects of a non-inclusive SRE curriculum on pupils. This literature review suggests that if schools are to contribute towards a positive culture around queer people, this visibility and usualisation of queer identities and experiences can be achieved via exposure through lessons. Although this explicit integration of queer people can be carried out in any lesson (Sauntson 2013), perhaps one of the most salient lessons in the first instance would be SRE. In SRE, the curriculum should include topics relevant to all pupils. This might include queer people, people who have queer families, or people who might engage in, for example, same-sex activities whilst still feeling that they are cishet. Clearly this suggests that whilst not a cure for any ill-treatment of queer people in schools, introducing a queer-inclusive curriculum in the UK might have important positive implications for queer and cishet students alike.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methodological, epistemological, and ontological approach adopted for the study, and provides a reflexive account of the data collection. The data collection takes the form of a policy analysis conducted in the West Midlands and a fieldwork process conducted at an academy for 11–16-year-olds also in the West Midlands (that I will anonymise by calling Brockmount, a name that has no particular significance). I chose this approach to allow me to amalgamate work on the theoretical and practical effects of teaching.

Part one of this chapter discusses my ontological and epistemological assumptions, their link to critical social psychology, and how my methods are grounded in my theoretical position, including the role of queer theory in this work. I then cover my data collection techniques, including the ethnographic methods I used, their usefulness to critical psychology, the use of confirmability and trustworthiness, and triangulation. I then discuss my ethical considerations in depth before introducing my participants and the research setting (including the contextual background of Brockmount). I move on in part four to my data analysis before considering ethics in part five. Finally, in part six, I consider reflexivity in-depth with consideration to the insider/outsider position.

My decision to look in depth at one case (Brockmount) rather than multiple schools, whilst in part pragmatic, is also informed by the idea that one case can be taken in-depth and used as a way to think about cases in general (Radley and Chamberlain 2012). Each school is one case; each school works differently within the same framework and choosing to study multiple schools could potentially mean that some of the richness of the data would be lost, or flattened if I were to consider policies in addition to multiple schools. Each single case is different in how they respond to policy and each school is very much a product of their wider environment; teaching (especially PSHE) is driven by the perception of the needs of the particular student body, being as it is, a non-statutory

subject where teachers are able to choose what seems most important. SRE is taught as part of PSHE at Brockmount, although it does not have to be so in every school. Involving Brockmount as a single case in this instance will still allow for me to consider my findings on a conceptual basis and whilst no statistical inferences can be drawn, (Radley and Chamberlain 2012) I am able to draw very clearly on the demographics of Brockmount to make inferences about similar types of schools in similar positions, without losing the 'personality' of the school in the process.

In following a logical order, starting with policy, which is designed to inform teaching, I conducted a thematic analysis on policy data. I was then an observer-as-participant (Gold 1958) in Brockmount, where I was known as a researcher in observed SRE lessons, and spoke with pupils and staff in focus groups and interviews respectively about their thoughts on the SRE lessons and the wider school culture. I employed a qualitative multi-methods approach drawing on ethnographic methods and theory, which was informed by a social constructionist approach. This approach allowed for the understanding of identities as they were created by individuals, and to gain an understanding of the wider policy surrounding SRE lessons, along with the interplay at Brockmount between policy and practice. In spending a period of about six months at Brockmount on a regular basis I had time to observe the ways SRE was taught and how it was constituted, and how these were perceived and interacted with by staff and pupils.

3.2 Worldview

Although there are a plethora of qualitative approaches (Willig and Stainton-Rogers 1988), they share several features, including a focus on human experience and frequent involvement with participants to understand how participant life-worlds are shaped by a kaleidoscope of social and cultural practices. My focus is to understand the meanings that participants ascribe to events, therefore my approach is informed by a philosophy that understands the social world as created and dynamic, and views culture and researcher as active components in the research environment. As the researcher, it is important to show that all participants voice their own truths and create and recreate

their understandings of the world. Findings are therefore what Crotty (1988) would call suggestive rather than conclusive and are not intended to be viewed as objective fact, but rather as confirmable and trustworthy. In the following section, I will go on to detail issues of epistemology and ontology in the study as well as the interpretative lens used.

3.2.1 Social constructionism

My study is rooted in the epistemological and ontological assumptions of social constructionism, which approaches social reality in a non-essentialist way (Diamond 2008a). Social constructionism and critical psychology both look at how individuals are positioned socially in relation to their differences, inequalities and power-positions (Burr 2015). Power may be defined as that which people exercise when drawing upon discourses and actions in such a way to allow for some ideas to become dominant. These are then internalised and externally portrayed to subordinate minority groups, leading said groups to question their own ideas based on the internalised discourse (Burr 2015). Social constructionism challenges mainstream psychology in many ways, such as drawing attention to culture, understanding that knowledge and truth are socially constructed, and 'truth' varies across time and space, according to history and culture. Social constructionism draws on several sources for its background (Burr 2015) and is contra to mainstream psychology in that it is specific (rather than making generalisations) and relativist. Social constructionism allows for the researcher to consider multiple sets of social understandings of knowledge or truths (Burr 2015).

Social constructionism argues that identity categories are dynamic and allow for individual expression and development into, out of, or within a specific identity category (Ebin and Van Wagenen 2006) without considering those categories anything more than individual social constructions, rather than essentialised category memberships and it is this that informs my use of terminology that otherwise might be considered essentialist. Although people have agency in this shaping, they are born into a world already shaped by their predecessors and thus the current world is also an objective reality. Social constructionism asks that a critical stance be taken towards the taken-for-granted

knowledge, actions and discourses that contain us (Burr 2015) acknowledging that such constructions change according to time and place. Once critically aware of what creates structure, we can look to exercise agency in resisting or enabling these constructions.

Social constructionism denotes that people construct their own realities by ascribing meanings through discourse and routine activities (Altheide and Johnson 2011). However, constructions are interpreted against a backdrop of shared meaning and cultural patterning (Miller 1999) and within research, are co-constructed between the participant and the researcher. Both work from their assumptions about the constructions and meanings of the event (Smith 2014). All this information is dependent on the site at which meanings are being constructed; people are situated within a social context and the context will reflect systems of privilege and oppression (Clarke and Peel 2007). This approach enables me to capture multiple meanings and realities as generated by participants, rather than privilege one at the expense of another (Popoviciu, Haywood, and Mac an Ghaill 2006). My focus is on understanding social life and behaviour (Green and Thorogood 2018), so I explore beliefs and meanings, making connections with my own social world (Roberts and Sanders 2005) through the process of reflexivity. This research, therefore, does not claim there is a singular, external reality waiting to be captured, but suggests that there are multiple realities constructed from discourse; all accounts of daily life are constructed, and that social standing, privilege and markers of identity influence our discourses and actions, and these in turn shape our view of reality (Burr 2015). I begin from the premise that none of us operate outside of a structural reality (Gavey 1992), although this is largely co-constituted by individual actions and discourses, which influences the experiences of our life worlds.

3.2.2 Critical psychology

Critical psychologists understand that the status quo allows for the advances of values, which advantage certain sections of society more than others, precipitating exclusion (Fox and Prilleltensky 1994). Processes of individualisation where identities are no longer bounded by or within specific contexts, but rather are open and fluid and spread

across wide space-time distances (see also Massey 2013), mean that people can now choose between a whole range of diverse markers of identity. Those with more limited access to resources do not have the resources of the dominant group, thus whilst it is possible to advance those values, the rate will be slower. Critical psychologists maintain that some values have more socially transformative power than others, with a less individualised focus being needed to make change. Applying values at an individual level will not necessarily facilitate immediate social change, where a structural-level application might. Becoming educated about these choices as critical psychologists enables us to better reduce our own oppressive practices such as heteronormativity and racism thus moving towards being able to make structural-level changes. Where mainstream psychology deals with individual attitudes and behaviours and 'problems', critical psychology takes a step further back and asks why these issues are arising; and instead of placing the problem in the individual, critical psychology looks towards the larger social factors that influence or affect the individual, moving away from the individualistic approach.

Critical psychologists criticise mainstream psychology's assumptions and practises, with specific attention to those that are exploitative and oppressive, and it attempts to disrupt the ideological branches of psychology that silence the voices of marginalised people such as queer people. Critical psychologists focus on exploration and oppression, and acknowledge that critical psychology, like mainstream psychology, is value-laden, not value-free. It looks to create social change by problematising actions and discourses that maintain the status quo, causing the continuing disadvantage of some individuals (Fox and Prilleltensky 1997).

3.2.3 Queer theory

Social constructionism argues that gender and sexual identities are binary social constructs that have been relevant in some historical moments but are not “descriptors of innate sexual types” (Callis 2009: 215). Queer theory arose from a dissatisfaction with essentialist beliefs and is therefore a constructionist approach (Burr 2015). The word

queer was used as a pejorative term for 'homosexuals' and recently, it has become a reclaimed term by some (Rand 2014). Within queer theory, 'queer' has been given a range of meanings. A single meaning would defeat the purpose of queer theory (Rasmussen and Gowlett 2015), which is about not being one single approach, but has taken its basis in a selection of theories. Queer theory requires us to be self-reflexive as we employ it. It looks at both what is said, and what is unsaid, and the context in which this speaking or not speaking unfolds. Queer theory posits that identity is not static and to be adopted, but fluid, arising from our constructions based on world view and life experience. It is therefore a theory of resistance (Showden 2012).

Working within a queer theory framework, Butler's (2010) work on gender performativity suggests we do not occupy essentialist categories, but instead versions of our gender is performative and created (Courtney 2014). This creation of gender, however, still sits within a structure where people are free to conform or resist, but in both cases, they are operating from inside of the social structure. Queer theory is interested in the exploration of the borders of these structures (Namaste 1994). To define or identify as something outside the dominant narrative (whether that be portrayed with speech or actions), first we must situate that identity with reference to the dominant discourse and queer theory is limited in this way; it must work within social paradigms in order to discard them. Queer theory's approach allows for greater development, asking how and why such discourses/practices are the most important and whether the only way to deconstruct is to place oneself in opposition (such as gay/straight), or whether there exists a way outside of the binary. This move to a study of difference allows for new insights into how heterosexual and cisgender hegemonies are reproduced (Namaste 1994).

Power, discourse and action have created the tacit idea of how the categories 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' exist outside of spoken labels, and how this has become 'natural', instead of looking to the inherent sexual fluidity of human beings (Mock and Eibach 2012; Savin-Williams and Ream 2007). Psychology aids this construction by

understanding language as mere expression of thought rather than being necessary to think (Burr 2015). In seeking to disrupt the tacit by highlighting and deconstructing discourses and actions, resistance is possible. This deconstruction comprises two main strands: radical deconstruction, and subversion, and has its basis in the work of Foucault (1976), Butler (2010) and Sedgwick (1990) who have deconstructed similar ways that identity and discourses constrain and enable people. Historical classifications have become discourses, as products of the processes and cultures of their time rather than being an absolute truth (Burr 2015). Within radical deconstruction, both discourses and actions are deconstructed, queered, and dismantled, and within subversion, queer theory looks to disrupt the normalcy of sexual order. For significant change to happen, routine and discourse also need to change. Queer theory attempts this through emptying social categories of their contents to stop further creations of further structure. Humans are born into culture, over which we are free to exercise agency and can resist (Berger and Luckmann 2011) and although it may not lead to immediate change, can lead to incremental change for future generations.

Unlike 'LGBT studies', which looks at the lived experience of queer people, the personal is not what is at the heart of queer theory (Giffney and O'Rourke 2009). Queer theory is not 'LGBT studies' repackaged but rather, it is possible to 'queer' anything. It is "a gateway to personal and political understandings of the self and world" (Barker, Richards, and Bowes-Catton 2011:374). In looking at genders and sexualities in education, I am caught in the tension between practical applications of research for queer people, and queer theory's focus on the theoretical. When considering queer bodies and queer identities, it can be shown (Jones 2011) that research positions pupils in a variety of ways, from the victim and overlooked other, through to the pupil as 'disruptive sexual subject' (Jones 2011: 690). My body of work is placed within Brockmount school, which relies very much on concrete rules and regulations. Looking at this from a queer theory point of view, partly because of schools' reliance on stated and unstated rules about behaviour (in other words, both policy and what is more informally deemed socially acceptable), school is the very place one might expect queerness; where there are rules, they can be broken/bent/stretched - queered.

My worldview draws on queer theory as part of a wider theoretical approach encompassing aspects of queer theory, a wider critical psychology and social constructionist approach. I do not wish to suggest that the mainstream approaches of LGBT psychology are not of value and that all must be 'queered' in order to have worth; good and useful research has been important and critical psychology approaches have effect significant changes when considering gender and sexuality (Clarke and Braun 2008). As such, this thesis is not based on queer theory but instead employs a bricolage of approaches to facilitate the best outcomes.

3.3 Design

3.3.1 Ethnographic theory and methods

According to Brewer, ethnography (Brewer 2000: 6) is:

> The study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.

At its inception, ethnography was used to visit 'other' groups of people (whether they be sex-workers in one's own country, or Amazonian tribe cultures) with researchers living and working amongst the groups they studied, to gain insight into the participants' social and cultural lives (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Ethnography was a way of documenting these 'other' cultures using thick description; a detailed description of the research setting, including participant actions and the setting, to give a portrayal of the environment and the socio-cultural life of its inhabitants (Shenton 2004). Many of the early ethnographies, often rooted in the epistemological and ontological assumptions

of positivism, took “fiction as fact” (Tsolidis 2008: 271), supposing that observational data revealed what was 'out there' (Burr 2015). There is little in the way of reflexivity in many of the early anthropological ethnographies (such as Malinowski 1927) as the researcher's position was never called into question (Pillow 2003). The goal itself was seen as the description of the 'other' culture rather than the ethnographer's position in relation to that culture (Hammersley 2006). Contemporary ethnography recognises a multitude of ways to conduct ethnography (See Vanover (2017) for the use of artwork in ethnography and Hallett and Barber (2014) for ethnographic research conducted online, for example). Contemporary ethnographers (beginning from the 1930s onwards), moving from an anthropological stance to a sociological one, often saw themselves as giving people a voice (Denzin and Lincoln 2011) and they sought to modernise the field of ethnography away from its initial anthropological basis of visiting 'the foreign'.

As researchers have come to realise the importance of understanding the context of teaching, ethnographic approaches in school settings have become increasingly popular. Ethnographic approaches and the current study’s approach in particular, recognise that pupils' development happens as a response to school, and that there is important information to be gained from becoming part of the culture of the school and being able to explore identity in relation to a multitude of contexts. Ethnography allows for an interrogation of processes that are taken for granted (Youdell 2005), which is highly congruent with a queer theory approach, and allows for increased intercultural understanding and cultural change (Goodrich and Luke 2016). Ethnographers have explored schools as sites that re/produce gender and sexuality and the use of ethnography allows information to be understood that might otherwise be missed. For example, Goodrich and Luke's (2016) ethnography of an LGBTQQI-identified charter school (QI = questioning; intersex) school allowed for not only the explicit narrative of the school as a good concept, but also allowed that there might be qualifiers to the explicit narrative, making for a more complex understanding than might otherwise be understood. Similarly, Youdell's (2005) school ethnography briefly discusses a history of school ethnographies and gender and sexuality, suggesting that separating gender and

sexuality from school is not possible as children are gendered beings with a sense of sexuality. Thus far most school ethnographies have discussed gender, but not sexuality (Renold 2000). Renold's (2000) study adds to that body of research with a primary school ethnography looking at sexuality and gender. It is clear from these ethnographies that there is more to be learned about schools, gender, and sexuality. Ethnographic methods are an appropriate way forward and, in this instance, fit well with a methodological approach that is social constructionist in nature and draws on queer theory.

An ethnographic framework allows for the practical to be considered both at individual level and policy level. This thesis uses ethnographic methods within a critical psychological approach. The adoption of ethnographic theory and methods to create a framework allows for this piece of work to be completed in a manner that allows us to see the importance of understanding the meanings and cultural practices of people in everyday contexts (Willig and Stainton-Rogers 1988) and gives space to participants' lives as they are experienced, where critical psychology turns a critical eye to recognising the wider culture individuals are living within (Willig 2008). My research approach allows for me to go into schools and observe practices and interview teachers and pupils, as well as consider the wider background setting of the polices that inform the practices.

Ethnographic methods are useful for critical psychology; by studying a culture in depth it allows the researcher to look for the ways in which something is done rather than any single 'truth'. Critical psychology and social constructionism emphasise that people think in *relation* to other people and draw on community networks. A critical psychologically-informed use of ethnographic approaches that uses queer theory as part of its philosophical underpinning asks many questions of the data. These include how connections between theory and practice join-up within specific cultural conditions at the local level (in this case, the school), questioning the ways in which identities are socially constructed, and what this means for both the individual and the social environment. Critical psychology is historically and culturally specific and has no single fixed shape or view, holding that culture (at either national or ethnic levels) not only

applies to the traditional notions of culture as 'western' or 'Asian' (for example), but has a more complex understanding of culture, that it can be very small groups both within and outside of Western psychology. Cultural practices provide a wealth of evidence for critical psychologists, although critical psychology has traditionally relied upon interviews and archival data (transcripts from interviews, published work etc.) through which people are constituted, with less attention to the cultural practices (Griffin 2003). Critical psychology is inherently political and asks, 'on whose terms do we now speak about topics?' Critical psychology draws on other disciplines such as sociology and social anthropology and applies these to psychological phenomena, which allows us to reflect the mirror back towards the dominant ideology rather than on to the local culture we are exploring.

Whilst I could apply a questionnaire, or a 'tickbox' format for when certain behaviours or speech acts occur within a classroom, the rich context of the culture would be lost, and this would not align with a social constructionist viewpoint. It is appropriate to use ethnographic methods, which allow for flexibility (Hammersley 2006), with a premise of attempting to understand people's actions and experiences in the field setting and with a specific consideration of reflexivity (Brewer 2000). The adoption of ethnographic methods within a critical psychology approach allows for multiple life worlds to be considered.

3.3.2 Confirmability and trustworthiness

Within psychology, the principles of reliability and validity are usually assigned to quantitative methods. Although qualitative psychology must equally be held to a standard of quality, it is not practical to take quantitative terms and graft them directly to qualitative work; qualitative and quantitative research look at different data and often use different viewpoints. I am not looking to validate one empirical truth at the field site that is generalisable, therefore the idea of validity is not applicable here. It is not possible for ethnographic approaches to be 'value-free'; researchers cannot remove their own *a priori* knowledge and viewpoints (Green and Thorogood 2014). However, I

can identify and work within a framework to ensure that a systematic analysis can be achieved so that trustworthiness and confirmability are possible. Confirmability and trustworthiness are an attempt to ensure qualitative researcher transparency both in terms of where the researcher is situated and how they generate data. Trustworthiness and confirmability are achieved through reflexivity. Trustworthiness is the concept of reflexively demonstrating a representation of the situation being presented with transparency and coherency (Sullivan and Forrester 2018). Although social constructionist approaches can make this difficult, by adopting well-established research methods, it is possible to ensure familiarity with the organisation, triangulation, and enthusiastic consent from participants; reflexivity and a detailing of the researcher's position and examination of the previous research (Shenton 2004), adding to trustworthiness.

It would be uncritical and too simplistic to adopt a positivist approach that suggests that a 'more scientific approach' could overcome bias. Instead, reflection forces the acknowledgement of bias to give a greater sense of clarity, to see how ideology is being used, rather than obfuscation that a positivist approach might create. In this thesis, culture at various levels (from the cultures in which policies are created, to school culture, to wider teachers' and pupils' cultures) is taken into consideration, which will allow for a full reflection and analysis of the data (Griffin 2003). My role, in part, is to understand and make clear the roles and activities of the participants, taking into consideration my positionality in the research setting via reflexivity.

3.3.3 Triangulation

Triangulation, in the form of classroom observations, field notes, staff interviews and pupil focus groups, will help form a more rounded picture of genders and sexualities in SRE. I am not using triangulation to confirm an objective reality, and it is likely that my use of multiple methods will give several different views. Triangulation is an alternative to validation, instead making the research credible (Brewer 2000). Triangulation in this context helps to give greater depth and understanding to the views around SRE and

teaching of genders and sexualities in schools, as opposed to one 'correct' viewpoint. From a social constructionist perspective, the staff's and pupils' views can be understood as historically and culturally situated (Burr 2015) and although ethnographic methods have been criticised for not considering the social and historical contexts that they are situated within (Jackson 1985), and some approaches (such as Altheide and Johnson's analytic realism (2011)) explicitly take these contexts into consideration. Moreover, the positions of the pupils and the positions of the staff are unlikely to be the same within each of their social groups, and are also unlikely to be the same between and within the groups. Whilst this study prizes the views of the pupils whose school experience it is, all positions are recognised as being valid. The aim of the research is to create a context where meaningful reflections of all experiences are heard. This research analyses school SRE policies and the UK government guidance document and the various social and cultural practices of a school setting. Within Brockmount, I have used a combination of participant-observations and field notes, semi-structured interviews and focus groups as triangulation to ascertain staff's understandings of the topic, and their practical application, as well as pupils' actions and reactions around the topics and these are discussed in-depth.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Ethics

After trying various approaches to gain access to a school in order to observe SRE classes, I discovered that someone I knew was a governor in a school within travelling distance to me and I approached her. Whilst not a gatekeeper, she facilitated my approach to the school. She spoke to the head-teacher about my study, and I sent a letter on headed paper detailing what I wished to achieve (appendix one), and they agreed to meet me. As a result of this meeting, the head gave consent, allowing Brockmount to participate and they put me in contact with the head of PSHE to arrange my time in the school.

I met with the head of PSHE who seemed keen to learn about my topic. He arranged my initial visits to the school and gave me PSHE timetables so that I might arrange further

visits with his approval. We agreed that the research could comprise observations of SRE classes, interviews with staff, and focus groups with pupils. As part of my arranging the focus groups with pupils, he was happy to send out consent forms on my behalf and allow those pupils who returned an affirmative consent form to participate in a focus group.

Teachers were given participant information sheets (appendix two) and each completed consent forms (see appendix three) so I could hold individual interviews with them (consent for observations was carried by the school head). The head of PSHE sent a brief letter and informed consent forms home with children in the classes he had agreed I could hold a focus group with (appendix four), and only those who returned active consent forms were allowed to participate. Both staff (appendix five) and students (appendix six) were debriefed after their interviews/focus groups.

In doing this work there is a wider consideration to take into account, which is that of how my teacher-participants might feel. In knowing the full story of why I was there – to research how gender and sexuality were taught in SRE, there was a strong chance that staff might feel judged – I was actively there to take notes on their lessons and the coverage of gender and sexuality, and was interviewing them about (potentially) how well they thought they were doing their jobs. Whilst I was at pains to keep a neutral profile and spoke to the head of PSHE at length about the process and what I was trying to achieve (a greater understanding in general), I could not guarantee that staff would not feel under scrutiny. This is in part why I did not hold a focus group for the staff; I wanted to be able to hear each individual's point of view without them being in the same room as their intimate partner (as with two of the staff team who were in a relationship) or line manager.

3.4.2 Ethics of gaining consent

Throughout the fieldwork levels of disclosure about the purpose of the study have varied. Brockmount's head-teacher, and other members of staff have been aware of the full nature of my thesis topic. During the observational work I was introduced (or introduced myself) to pupils, but only specified that I was observing how SRE is taught in school. The claim is accurate (therefore ethically sound) if more generalised. I was concerned that any full disclosure might lead to students trying to give me the data they felt I was seeking, leading to less naturalistic data. If my presence and my research topic influenced their behaviour, this would risk biasing the results. I made notes on various aspects of the class, not just GSD-related topics. Pupils in class were given no more information than this unless they asked me specifically. If they did so, I said I was writing a thesis about sex education in schools, so I was making notes on things that were said and done in class. I was expecting to receive questions about whether I was writing about specific pupils (e.g., If I had a conversation with a pupil on my table and then made a note, I expected a curiosity about what I had written down), but received no questions. When information was sent to caregivers it was framed as 'the PSHE' experience (see appendix four) to fully capture this wider information, as detailed above. Pupils in focus groups were given a consent form and informed about their rights to withdraw. After the focus groups, pupils were fully debriefed (see appendix six), telling them the full nature of the study.

Aware that I was going to be in a small-group situation with students, I had some concerns around safeguarding. Notably, what exactly would become a safeguarding issue if a student made a disclosure in a focus group (when a member of staff would not be present, unlike in the classroom, where I could reasonably expect a member of staff to be present). I mentioned this to the PSHE lead, and he advised me to meet with the school safeguarding lead for further help. On meeting with the safeguarding lead, I was offered safeguarding training held by the school, which was a two-hour training taking place before the focus groups began. Attending the training gave me a clear direction on what might need to be recorded, and the correct process for recording disclosures.

3.4.3 Use of inducements

There were no inducements prior to the study, however, there was the possibility to give the school £50 of book vouchers. Whilst there are ethical implications of using inducements (Grant and Sugarman 2004), specifically regarding the trustworthiness of data, the use of inducements in this study is not applicable as the school was unaware of the potential book vouchers until after most of my visits were complete, in part because once the head-teacher granted me permission to begin my study and introduced me to the PSHE team, I struggled to make any further contact, and later learned that the head had left on very short notice, mid-way through the study. I contacted the interim head-teacher to advise them on my presence in school and that I had been authorised to give them the vouchers and requested the address of the best person to send them to. I did not receive a response, and so after the interviews, observations and focus groups were complete, I contacted the librarian directly and sent the vouchers to her.

3.4.4 Anonymity and the school environment

The school's name has been changed so as not to identify its socioeconomic and geographical position. The demographics of Brockmount have been obscured (they have not necessarily been included, rather than were amended) to try and maintain anonymity for the school. It is possible that by not altering the geographical information about Brockmount, that it would make the school identifiable to a reader who knows the region well. It is argued that anonymity is futile whilst using ethnographic approaches; the more information you include about the personal demographics of a small sample, the more risk there is of identifying individuals and places in the sample (Van den Hoonard 2003). Because SRE is considered a sensitive topic, often being discussed in the media, I felt that I had an ethical duty to Brockmount to maintain anonymity as far as possible whilst recognising that I am not able to guarantee this (something that was made clear to participants as part of informed consent). I also assigned pseudonyms to all participants, whilst recognising that some participants who recognise themselves in this study might be able to indirectly identify other participants based for example, on their job role. In focus groups, it is impossible to guarantee

confidentiality and anonymity; any of the participants could name and discuss what had been said. This risk of losing anonymity was made clear to both staff and students. I conducted audio-recorded interviews and focus groups and have been careful in my use of language when including quotes and interpretations from participants, to remain as true to the data as possible, and at the same time to not compromise the participants' integrity. In focus groups, I explained it was impossible to make the student responses anonymous or confidential, but assured participants I would maintain their confidentiality outside of school safeguarding rules and asked them to agree to do the same. Students were informed that the safeguarding rules in their PSHE class would apply; no names were to be mentioned, and that if a potential safeguarding issue arose, I would have the same obligation to report it as teachers did. Within classroom observations, it could be apparent to people who know the school, to which staff member I refer, but unconnected readers should not know to whom I am referring. Participants were all made aware in advance that this research would contain quotes, but would not name them, and would seek to not identify them as far as possible.

3.4.5 Ethical approval

This research study received approval from the Coventry University Ethical Board. My ethics proposal was informed by the British Psychological Society's 'code of human research ethics' (The British Psychological Society 2018) and fully considered issues of anonymity, confidentiality and potential harm (see appendices 1-6 for letters to the school and caregivers, informed consent forms for staff and pupils and debrief forms).

3.5 The research setting. Brockmount: Gaining access and entering school

At time of writing, Brockmount was an over-subscribed school that was part of a small academy group. It is over 50 years old and became an academy before 2010. It is situated in a county with both high and low levels of affluence, with affluent towns and villages to the south, and working class, manual-labour-based villages to the north. The school itself is on the edge of a market town, near a large housing estate which I have named 'Field Edge', primarily comprising of social housing, and a village that was historically a

base of manual labour. The town is a predominantly urban town in a largely rural area and the school priority (catchment) area covers both urban and rural areas. Based on the demographic information provided by the school, it school is predominantly both white (97%) and largely working class. Brockmount falls into the top 10% of the most deprived schools in the county, according to the national indices of deprivation. Although not a perfect indicator, according to school data, and using free school meals as a proxy indicator for socio-economic status (SES), the school has a slightly higher than average uptake in free school meals (Hobbs and Vignoles 2007) suggesting a lower than average SES nationally. Additionally, the town has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the UK according to the Official of National Statistics, and teenage pregnancy has long been associated with deprivation rates (Uren, Sheers, and Dattani 2007).

I was present in the school on average once a week for a period of between one lesson to a full day, between the start of January and the end of July 2016. Although this is not overly long in terms of typical ethnographic research, which can run to years in a given location, shorter-term condensed ethnographic research of around six weeks has been conducted (see Brewer 2000, and also Tileagă, Popoviciu, and Aldridge 2021 for an example). However, without a significant period of immersion in the school, literature and theory might be privileged over experience to fill my knowledge or empirical gap. Being present in the classroom provides one level of immersion, but the school operates on more levels than the classroom and accessing different sections of the school provides for a greater experience of the school in general. Therefore, when invited to come for training or to the staffroom by the PSHE teachers, I obliged and this provided an opportunity to reflect on my subjective experiences and the effects that the practices and structures were having on me, as well as the effects that I had on them. Although staff interviews are important, my main focus was on the pupils as they were the participants 'receiving' SRE and have the least amount of power in this situation. I needed to try to ensure that I was not perceived by students in the same way as teachers were perceived - with ‘power over’ them (Proctor 2017). I also needed to consider my immersion in the classroom; I was conducting direct observations, and these would play a vital part in my understanding of the situation. As someone who grew up in the English

high school system this meant I had to try to distance myself from the familiar (Coffey 1999) and instead see the familiar as strange, in case I overlooked the familiar and therefore risked it being unremarked upon. The familiar must be made explicit to be rendered visible (Delamont, Atkinson, and Pugsley 2010), and to achieve this I kept reflexive field notes of my school experience. Some of the process is detailed further in the following sections.

3.6 Participants

3.6.1 Staff

A list of potential participants was co-created with the PSHE lead who was able to suggest specific interested people who might be prepared to participate. Table one shows the participant demographics below.

Gender	**sexuality**	**Role**	**Teaching/school experience**	**Ethnicity**	**Age**
male	hetero	PSHE teacher	10+ years	White-appearing	30s
female	unknown	PSHE teacher	5 years	White-appearing	30s
female	unknown	PSHE teacher	10+ years	White-appearing	50+
female	lesbian	Teacher (not PSHE)	5+ years	White-appearing	30s
female	lesbian	Librarian	5+ years	White-appearing	20s

male	hetero	Trainee PSHE/ citizenship teacher	-1 year	White-appearing	30s

Table one: Demographics of interviewed staff

The only staff participants were staff employed by, or trainees on placement at the school. I did not collect information via a demographic questionnaire, instead, one of my questions (see appendix seven) asked staff members to tell me anything about themselves that they deemed relevant for the research. In response, all staff discussed their sexuality either briefly or indirectly (with references to not being able to be confident on 'homosexuality' because it was not their experience) or in-depth. Where a member of staff did not state directly, I have not assumed a sexuality or gender. Participants were suggested by the head of PSHE as individuals who might have something of interest to say on my research topic. These included the school librarian who was identified to me as a lesbian, and the English and Maths teacher (likewise). Both had an interest in LGBT inclusion in the school – either through ensuring representation through the books, or an interest in creating a 'gay-straight alliance'.

3.6.2 Pupils

As with the staff, I did not take demographic information from any of the pupils, however, the focus group participants came from years eight and ten, and their age range would, in theory, be 12-15. They all appeared to be white aside from one pupil who identified as Black. One student said they were bisexual. Some other students said that they were cisgender, or were not gay, but did not further identify a sexuality or gender category. Pupils, as with staff, were not directly asked their sexuality or gender. Many students did not feel the need to specific a sexuality or gender identity. Where staff often told me their gender and sexuality, often the most I knew about my student participants was how they did *not* identify. To label them as a result of this is reductionist and not in keeping with a social constructionist queer theory approach. Between the

interviews, focus groups and classroom observations, the participant demographics are more likely to be individuals who do not identify as LGBTQ+ in some way, rather than those who do. This is not necessarily a limitation, especially when observations and policy analysis form a larger percentage of the data, those specifically are filtered through the queer lens of me as researcher, but it should be acknowledged that the majority of the participants have not identified themselves as LGBTQ+. The non-LGBTQ+ students do however, bear witness (Allen 2019) to the experience of the LGBTQ+ student and equally, LGBTQ+ students are not the only students who are positioned at the receiving end of homophobia and transphobia.

3.7 Analytic approach: thematic analysis

I used thematic analysis (TA; Braun and Clarke 2006) to analyse the data from the various sources. TA allowed me to fully explore the meanings of people and how these were socially reproduced and reproduced (Braun and Clarke 2006). This was achieved by analysing both field notes and what was elicited in interviews and focus groups, considering what was performed both inside and outside of the classroom. Braun and Clarke's (2006) well-delineated version of TA has seen TA move from a broad term for several loosely-connected approaches, to being a method of analysis that is both recognisable and reputable (Terry et al. 2017). It is a method of data analysis that sits well within a social constructionist worldview (see Clarke and Braun 2018; Newcombe et al. 2012; Byrne 2021; Opperman, Braun, Clarke and Rogers 2014 for examples). It is not a prescriptive approach and is widely used across psychology. Whilst traditionally TA was poorly demarcated and was seen as the 'basic' type of analysis that one might conduct within another tradition such as grounded theory, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it should be considered a method in its own right. Their approach offers clarity around TA to ensure that the process is fully demarcated, and allows the researcher to position themselves within a theoretical framework with methods to match. They elucidate what might previously have been implicit, and allow the recognition of decisions as explicit rather than the still popular construction that themes 'emerge' or can be 'discovered' within the data, without acknowledging the role of the researcher. Since their seminal paper in 2006 they have gone on to critically reflect

further on the TA method, which has resulted in discussions around the concept of ‘saturation’ (Braun and Clarke 2021a), suggesting that as themes do not ‘arise’ from the data but are created by the researcher in reaction to their readings and analysis, there is no easy way for ‘saturation’ to be reached. TA was therefore the most appropriate approach because the theoretical flexibility of this method allows for both data driven and theory-informed approaches (Braun and Clarke 2021b), where a more positivist approach such as content analysis may not allow for the depth generated in thematic analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas 2013). TA also requires the researcher to employ a degree of reflexivity in their analysis (reflexive TA), something that it had become very clear that I would need to attend to with my methodological approach.

I created two sets of data, coding 'live data' (including my field notes, interviews (see appendix seven for interview schedule), observations and focus groups (see appendix eight for the focus group schedule) as one set of data, and policies as another and approached them all in the same manner. I began by familiarising myself with the data (Braun and Clarke 2006), reading and re-reading and making notes of interesting ideas as they arose. I coded abductively, generating initial codes from interesting features of the data with regards to gender and sexuality and other related identities (such as culture), holding theory in mind. I generated themes from the codes, gathering all the relevant data for each definitional theme. Once I had a list of themes, I checked each one to see if the specific extracts fit the themes, and how the themes related to the data set. I refined themes where necessary and created a name for the themes to show clear definitions. I found at first that I had too many themes that overlapped with other themes and felt that I would better evidence a more coherent narrative if I were to re-analyse those smaller themes, to ascertain whether there was a better way to organise them. Upon doing this, and paying close attention to the data, I found that I was indeed able to have fewer themes, but that some of those had more sub-themes within them. This is acceptable as on checking the extracts, they still fit within the new theme and created a more cohesive picture of the data. Each chapter considers a slightly different topic that I identified within the data and begins with the thematic map for that topic.

3.8 Analysis

3.8.1 Wider context: school policies

Firstly, I analysed the SRE policies of the wider geographical area that included Brockmount, to discover whether there was any consensus regarding what and how sex education topics were covered. I also wanted to discover the overall 'flavour' of the general SRE setting and felt a sample would give me a good grounding in existing policies. This also allowed me to ascertain whether Brockmount's SRE policy was typical of other policies in the region. Often, policy-makers can lack critically-informed perspectives of the cultural practises of those they are writing policy for (Maginn 2007). However, when using ethnographic approaches in a mixed-methods study it is helpful to make use of in-depth specific data as well as wider contextual data of the policies (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Whilst there are concerns about conducting a mixed methods approach, these generally relate to a qualitative/quantitative mix (and concerns over a clash of paradigm) and research on similar topics to this has utilised mixed methods approaches with high levels of success (see for example Formby and Wolstenholme 2012). In conducting the study in this way, I allow for detailed analysis of both theory and practice.

After piloting data collection within the city, a stratified sample of schools within the local authority was conducted by using the government's Edubase database. The policies were chosen from one local authority area in England as a stratified sample, which matched roughly the national breakdown of different types of schools across England. Where my local sample was a convenience sample and comprising all policies available online in a certain city, this larger sample was purposive as I was looking to review a sample that, although it could not be wholly reflective of the UK school demographic, was representative of a diverse range of schools reflecting the national breakdown of schools across England. I chose to download 60 policies in total as this number would then mean any school type with a 1% presence, such as an 'academic convertor' school in the country would be included. I chose to focus solely on England because of the devolved nature of policy and teaching application across the different areas of the UK.

I also downloaded the English Indices of Deprivation file for 2015 from the government website. Using a pivot table, I cross-referenced the two documents to divide counties across England into three levels of deprivation with equal third cut off points. I then was able to see what percentage of all schools, and what percentage of each school type (as specified by Edubase) were at each level. The pivot table had a 1% error rate (it was not able to account for 1% of all 6000+ schools). Schools were not equally distributed across the areas of deprivation, with more schools in the lower third, and fewer schools in the middle third. I began by comparing each local area's demographics in terms of schools to the overall demographic representation of schools in England. I then chose the local authority (LA) that had numbers deviating the least from the mean. Depending on the LA, there are different types of school more prevalent. It would skew the sample if, for instance, I chose as a representative sample an area high in independent schools, or low in academies. After examining each of the LAs thoroughly, I found the West Midlands to be the best fit.

I took into consideration the smaller breakdown percentages of schools, such as faith schools, technical colleges, sponsored academies, and (as far as possible) retrieved SRE policies for the matching percentage and school type (academy, etc). Although I tried to account for a microcosm of schools, which allows for less chance of a systematic sampling bias, some schools that were listed on Edubase as having 'no religious character' did have one listed on their website. I followed Edubase when categorising each school, as this is the official declaration. When creating my list of ‘types’ of schools to sample, I considered what percentage of schools were in each category nationally and created a table of numbers to ascertain how many policies I would need if I were going to keep the same balance (see table two below for details). I included policies that had more than a 1% representation in the local area

School type	Local area	Policy numbers	Nationwide
Academy 16-19 Converter		-	0.05%

Academy 16-19 Sponsor Led	0.15%	-	0.02%
Academy Alternative Provision Converter		-	0.51%
Academy Alternative Provision Sponsor	0.30%	-	0.23%
Academy Converter	25.65%		23.94%
Christian	4.03%	3	3.76%
Jewish		-	0.07%
Muslim		-	0.03%
None	21.63%	13	20.06%
Sikh		-	0.02%
Academy Special Converter	1.81%	1	2.05%
Academy Special Sponsor Led	0.91%	-	0.40%
Academy Sponsor Led	10.91%	-	9.89%
Christian	1.33%	1	1.60%
None	9.59%	6	8.30%
ACADEMY SUBTOTAL	39.73%	-	37.08%
City Technology College	0.13%	-	0.04%
Community School	8.91%	5	8.65%
Community Special School	8.24%	5	8.18%
Foundation School	4.56%	-	3.91%
Christian		-	0.05%
None	4.56%	3	3.86%
Foundation Special School	0.58%	-	1.02%
None	0.58%	-	1.02%
Free Schools	2.26%	-	2.07%
Christian	0.15%	-	0.14%
Hindu		-	0.02%
Jewish		-	0.02%
Muslim	0.30%	-	0.12%
None	1.51%	1	1.70%
Sikh	0.30%	-	0.07%
Free Schools - 16-19		-	0.28%
Free Schools - Alternative Provision	1.20%	1	0.56%
Free Schools Special	0.15%	-	0.31%
Non-Maintained Special School	0.26%	-	0.97%
Christian		-	0.06%
None	0.26%	-	0.91%
Other Independent School	16.71%	-	19.34%
Christian	4.29%	3	5.23%
Hindu		-	0.01%
Jewish		-	0.12%
Mormon		-	0.01%
Muslim	0.84%	-	0.57%
None	11.58%	8	13.38%
Scientology		-	0.02%

Other Independent Special School	7.00%	-	7.67%
Christian		-	0.09%
Jewish		-	0.02%
None	7.00%	4	7.56%
Pupil Referral Unit	3.67%	3	3.90%
Studio Schools	0.75%	-	0.64%
University Technical College	0.75%	-	0.68%
Voluntary Aided School	3.41%		4.03%
Christian	2.74%	2	3.54%
Jewish		-	0.11%
Muslim	0.14%	-	0.07%
None	0.53%	-	0.32%
Voluntary Controlled School	1.69%		0.66%
Christian	1.42%	1	0.37%
None	0.27%	-	0.29%
Total	100.00%	60	100.00%

Table two: The local area studied and the national breakdown of school types, and the number of schools of each type included in the sample.

Ordering a spreadsheet by school type, I worked through the list, visited each locatable school website, and manually searched that website to see if the school had a downloadable policy. If none was available, I moved to the next school on the list until my category was full, at which point I moved to the next category. Over 1/3 of schools in each category did not have policies available online. I was able to fulfil my pre-determined number of policies for each category from policies online, and did not approach any individual schools for their policy. Aside from the category type being ordered, the list of the schools was in no particular order, thus not leading to a bias around names such as "Saint" being possibly more likely to belong to a Christian school etc. Once retrieved, I collated the policies into NVivo for analysis.

I also analysed the governmental SRE guidance document, as this is the document that informs each school policy. When looking at the data, within the policy and spoken data I was looking for themes on GSD but also linguistic absences; as heteronormativity is “maintained not only in terms of what is said and done, but also in terms of what is left out of the official discourse” (DePalma and Atkinson 2006: 337). Therefore, while

thematic analysis is useful in looking at what is present, I was also looking for what was missing from or implied within policies (Sundaram and Sauntson 2016a). Such analysis might include use of juxtapositions, which can help to "build up a semantic profile of that word which can contribute to revealing any underlying discourses and ideologies" (Sundaram and Sauntson 2016b:106), where currently there has been little in the way of specific research around the use of language for both heterosexist and homophobic discourses within the classroom. In looking at my observational data, I was looking at both discourse and routine and the ways in which behaviour include and exclude certain identity positions. I was also looking to see how heteronormativity and cisnormativity were maintained and challenged through behaviour.

The benefits of using thematic analysis for this work are that it is a flexible analysis tool that can be used to collect a detailed and complex account of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021b, 2021a) also suggest that in picking certain aspects of a body of data and positioning them in different themes, thematic analysis does not allow the maintenance of a coherent sense of continuity through any one account. Whilst I would agree that this is difficult, it is not impossible, and indeed I go on to point out places through the thesis where either individuals or policies discuss one topic and then another, thus maintaining a sense of continuity.

3.8.2 Direct observations and field notes

Each class lasted for one hour and I observed all three of the main SRE teachers over several weeks as they taught several different classes, starting from the second week of term in January 2016 and continuing through to the middle of the summer term. Although unplanned initially, I saw the same lessons (with different classes) on more than one occasion. The students became used to me being present in the room; in some of my initial lessons, students asked about my work, and in later lessons with the same class, students seemed more relaxed, asking how I was, and interacting more with me. In some classes I was initially introduced, or was asked to introduce myself, and those introductions always took the format that I was a psychology student interested in

seeing how sex education was taught, and that Brockmount had been kind enough to allow me to observe their school. Without becoming a teacher and teaching in the class, I would have no other way to gain direct knowledge of what happened in the classroom and would instead have to rely on reported behaviour from focus groups. Using direct observation allowed me to make direct record of how lessons were taught. I could make a note of teacher comments, student comments, actions, and daily routines within the class and how they related to each other. Direct observation, whilst not without criticisms that it is subjective and filtered through the viewpoints and biases of the ethnographer (Denzin and Lincoln 2018), can sidestep issues such as social desirability (Nock and Kurtz 2005). The observer must be prepared to note potential sources of bias, and to take into consideration their gendered, classed self, and what this means for the observation, both in terms of the differences their presence makes to events around them, and in terms of how their identity positions may affect data gathered (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). Notes taken from observations are both data and analysis and are subject to the bias of the researcher. Alongside other data collection methods, observation allows for triangulation making the research more credible than any one method alone, which could be limiting with observations limited to the current situation rather than a larger cultural background, or participants in interviews acting under a social desirability bias (Brewer 2000).

I spent time in classrooms making notes on speech and behaviours, including both teacher and pupil actions. Direct observations generated the largest amount of participation data. I made 25 sets of notes, ranging from half a page to three sides. I noted down actions and speech. Where possible I noted down the exact speech of participants, and where this was not possible (for example, the conversation was too fast) I noted down the overall 'gist' of the conversation, or the comment(s) of note within the exchange thus aiming to capture an accurate representation. To ascertain how heteronormativity and cisnormativity were performed and maintained, and allowing for the legitimisation of certain genders and sexualities, I noted down interactions between the pupils and the teachers, and conversations between pupils to each other. I also noted interactions between pupils and the teacher, as well as both pupils and teachers

with me in lessons. To facilitate this, I created two sets of notes. One set was my classroom observation notes taken at the time, and another set was my field notes, in which I wrote more about the impressions I was left with afterwards, or which included information I had not had time to note in the moment, or something that I had only made sense of after the lessons. I observed three SRE teachers over two terms, watching the delivery of SRE, only participating when asked to by the teacher, which happened twice. I was not invited to participate in teaching generally, and my participation was invited by teachers in response to questions from pupils that they did not know the answer to and felt I would; one by a male teacher about the use of tampons and one by a teacher about trans identities. Going in to classrooms I intended to take something of a 'least adult' role (Mandell 1998) in the classroom, as I was acutely aware of the power differentials between me and the pupils. However, much as Atkinson (2019) notes, the inherent complexities around the ways in which I was positioned by staff (as an adult/expert, demonstrated above), and being conscious of my time in the classroom and not wanting to disrupt, this was something I was only able to hold nominally in mind, whilst I concentrated mainly on being 'the least disruptive' I could be.

Each year group had around six lessons of SRE as part of their PSHE studies, and in this academic year delivery either started at the start of the September or January term. This limited my observation to years seven and ten (year 11 did not have SRE) as year eight and year nine had their SRE lessons at the start of September, before I began the fieldwork. This was unfortunate as it meant I missed the middle two years of SRE teaching. In observing years seven and ten, I gained an understanding of the ways in which SRE topics change from the first year of high school to the fourth year.

3.8.3 Semi-structured interviews

I decided to use semi-structured interviews to ascertain what staff were able to articulate about the teaching of gender and sexuality within the school. Semi-structured interviews allowed for me as researcher to focus in on a particular topic, whilst also allowing participants to construct their own responses and build a picture of their views

on various topics. This in many ways, reflects the way that teachers operate within the educational setting; they are given a skeleton (or a policy) and need to create the 'meat' of the teaching. In choosing semi-structured interviews, I was providing a framework but allowing for the freedom of choice within this (Corteen 2006). I chose interviews for staff as this allowed more confidentiality than a focus group would have done, potentially leading to a greater sense of freedom on the part of the participant. Although this means that the possibility of interviewees using each other's conversations to further their own thoughts was removed, it was important to me to offer as great a degree of confidentiality as possible, and there were issues such as staff structure to consider. A focus group of all the staff together would involve at least two members of staff having their line manager present, and it would be unethical to create this mix (Morgan, Kreueger, and Scannell 1998). These individual interviews created an over-view of the school environment and whilst holding to no single particular stance, provided an overall picture of teacher experience in Brockmount. My interview schedules were a similar progression of questions for all staff to allow for a fair comparison between the interview schedules. I wished to discover how staff felt that lessons and the school culture impacted upon each other. Questions were open-ended to avoid leading answers and began by asking general questions about the staff's history in the school and in general, before focussing on queer topics and SRE. The questions then opened out again to broadly look at positive applications by the school around gender and sexuality (see appendices 7-8 for the interview schedules). Semi-structured interviews allow for freedom of responses, providing some structure about questions I was interested to gain responses to, but also to allow for a branching out where staff had information they wanted to share. Interviews led to detailed responses about each of the questions, with staff being willing to expand on and discuss topics.

3.8.4 Focus groups

Further to individual interviews with staff members, I wanted to discover pupils' thoughts on their SRE experience and felt the most appropriate way was via focus groups. The use of focus groups was important as it provided a multi-layered environment to give the pupils an opportunity for scaffolding learning by building on the

words of each other as they constructed their environments and their responses, offering unique insights into the school (Kamberelis, Dimitriadis, and Welker 2018). Because of the number of permission slips returned (nine for one year group and six for the other), for the larger year group, rather than select particular pupils to take part, I simply ran two focus groups of slightly smaller sizes resulting in three focus groups in total. This seemed most appropriate as it was a cohort I had not previously met, and therefore had no *a priori* knowledge of, but as the focus groups were taking place in the PSHE office it was not practical to fit more than six participants in the room. It is possible that the groups' knowledge of me informed the ways in which they spoke. The year ten class were more comfortable from the outset, possibly due to having seen me in several of their classes before the focus groups were conducted. On the other hand, I was a stranger to the year eight class who may have been unsure of what my exact role in the school was.

Focus groups happened during the larger class SRE teaching period, which meant that the time available differed from 20-45 minutes depending in part on how long the group had between the necessary administration at the start and the end of class. The first focus group was shorter, but the second and third focus group filled the time available. The average length of the focus groups was 30 minutes. Focus groups followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix eight) asking open-ended questions about their thoughts and feelings around PSHE and SRE generally, before moving on to topics about teaching inclusivity. The questions for focus groups were similar to the interview schedules, but had less focus on the wider school context and instead focused on pupil learning experience within the class, in order to ascertain pupil SRE experience. Focus groups were recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

Although focus groups have criticisms; they might be dominated by one person, or people might feel unable to talk within them, or the group might be answering in socially desirable way for each other (Wooten and Reed 2000), these criticisms tend to be based on focus groups where participants are not known to each other. The focus groups in

this study all comprised individuals from single classes, and students had been in the class at least one term with each other. Taking these criticisms in mind, I felt that a focus group, with its interactional nature that does not always require a response from each person to the interviewer, and allows for participants to respond to each other rather than just me, would give me broader breadth of information than individual interviews might (Morgan, Kreueger, and Scannell 1998). I conducted three focus groups in total. In the first focus group, the answers given were short, and there was no real conversation between the participants, instead they spoke directly to me and did not interact with each other. This is borne out by the fact that this focus group is the shortest focus group in length (20 minutes); this may be in part due to my inexperience as a person running focus groups. Following this focus group, I revised my questions, asking a broader range of questions before narrowing the questions down. The second and third focus groups were highly engaged, with many interesting insights, with pupils talking to each other, and using other pupils' comments as starting points for their own comments. Both of these focus groups filled the entire time available and felt like they could have continued to provide interesting and relevant information for a much longer time, had the time constraint not been in place. The changing of the questions for the second and third focus groups enabled me to collect much richer data than in the first focus group.

3.9 A note on NVivo

Throughout this thesis I decided to use NVivo (a data analysis program) where possible as a data analysis tool. It has been a new venture for me, but a physical disability has prevented me from doing all the initial coding by hand and I wanted a central place to hold my research that would quickly allow me to compare codes across documents, which would not be possible in Microsoft Word or similar. NVivo was the best software I had available to me as a Mac user, but I found in places it was inflexible and difficult to use, which is what led to the eventual coding of some of the data by hand before importing these back into NVivo. With smaller amounts of codes, the local study was acceptable in NVivo, but with hundreds of codes it was impossible for me to lay out the codes into themes adequately on the computer. Once I had moved the initial codes into

definitional themes, I could then check each theme for fit and move initial codes around as needed.

3.10 Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be defined as use of self and involves considering the researcher's part in the research setting, analysis, and write-up (Burr 2015) and helps us to be vigilant about the way in which we research, allowing the researcher to question themselves and their practices. Reflexivity aids understandings and insights into the social world as created by people, but it also shows how this knowledge is created (Pillow 2003) and how it is relevant to claims made (Altheide and Johnson 1998). It fits well within a queer theory framework that requires an interrogation of assumptions, rendering the taken-for-granted as strange and allowing for the production of knowledge that helps the researcher gain insight into social worlds and how these are constructed, and also by providing insight on how we arrive at specific knowledges (Pillow 2003). Reflexivity requires me to be aware and "critically conscious" (Pillow 2003: 178) of my own intersecting identity positions as queer, white and middle class and how these intersections informed my experience of the fieldwork process.

I wanted to present a look that was as unthreatening as possible, whilst still being an authentic representation of myself. Whilst I am more comfortable in trousers and shirts, at the time, I owned and wore skirts, depending on the occasion. As a person assigned female at birth who is gender/queer, I am often read by others as being just 'female' and/or possibly 'a lesbian'. Approaching the school, I knew that I needed to be cognisant of the impression I wished to create (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019). In my first interview with the headteacher and the head of PSHE, I wore a skirt. As I spent more time in the classroom and built rapport with the staff I began to dress in my more usual trousers and shirts. I did not experience any change in manner from staff members or students.

I also use the gender-neutral pronoun 'they' in my everyday life, but I decided that I would not bring that to the school and was almost unanimously gendered 'she' throughout my time in the field. The decision not to be clear about my pronoun was a personal decision based on my everyday experience of being misgendered. I find it less uncomfortable to be misgendered if I know I *could* choose to give my pronouns but have not done so, than to be misgendered once I had given my pronouns. When going into situations where I feel like I am asking for something from someone, (such as the request to study a school in depth), I will often wait until I know more of the general atmosphere. In this instance, it felt to me like the staff I hoped to be working with had little exposure to genderqueer people, and I did not want to have to manage my personal sense of discomfort at knowing I had asked to be referred to as 'they' (and might not be) whilst also trying to remain open to the experience of learning how the school worked with topics of gender and sexuality. I did not wish to become a case study within the case study.

Whilst I was expecting that it would be an uncomfortable experience for me, I hoped to mitigate some of that by being referred to with my name, and for the most part, did not expect to be referred to. On my first visit to a classroom however, I was asked in front of the pupils what I wanted to be called, to which I replied "LJ" but was from then on, referred to as 'miss' by the teacher - a pattern that repeated across other classes and teachers. Although this felt uncomfortable, I did not challenge this directly because to do so in the classroom felt like a challenge to the teacher's authority and I was mindful that in the eyes of the pupils I was potentially another authoritative adult. I continued to give my name individually to pupils, and the staff were aware that I was doing this. I was not asked to change my own way of acting around my name at all (thus I continued to refer to myself as LJ rather than with an honorific), so whilst I do not know how the staff felt about this, I feel certain that if I was threatening the structure of the school (as adults within the school are generally teachers and most if not all staff in schools are generally referred to by honorifics), they would have let me know that they did not feel this to be appropriate.

As part of this research, I was mindful of the power imbalance between me as the researcher and the teachers and pupils I observed (Jensen 2005). Whilst I made it clear to the pupils that their words in general would not be shared with their teachers (outside of the final published work), I was still held to safeguarding standards, as was every adult within the school and I was clear about this. At the same time, I was not a teacher and needed to perform a 'different kind of adult' (Jensen 2005: 169). I would be doing several focus groups with pupils across the age range of the school and would have been an observer in only some of their classes. I needed to gain their trust, without losing the trust of the teachers. This involved positioning myself not as a member of staff (and referred to as 'miss/sir') but as 'LJ', which risked over-familiarisation (potentially, in the view of the teachers), but helped to lessen some of the distance between them as a pupil and me as an adult. Thus, I have tried to position myself as able to ask questions, observe and participate in the classroom activities (and host focus groups), but without being placed into a position of authority. Much as Jensen (2005) found in their interactive study, I needed to be able to maintain more than one kind of adult position: at once the interested observer, the 'not-teacher' but also the 'not-pupil'. This positioning of self as 'non-pupil' potentially allowed for the access of pupils' 'backstage' culture (Goffman 1959), and at the same time, I was given access to the staffroom, which potentially allowed for access to the staff's 'backstage' culture.

I am white and middle-class and visually I was able to fit in with the dominant demographic of the school, which was 97% white. Although I had previously lived on the same social housing estate where many of the pupils lived, I was demarcated by attending a university to obtain my undergraduate degree. When requested to introduce myself to classes, I was careful to say "a degree" rather than "a PhD" as I was very aware of my status as a PhD student (something potentially out of reach to many of the pupils in the class) within the classroom and did not wish to appear too different.

My work involved me becoming part of the culture that I was exploring, and considered the social meanings of people by use of classroom involvement. The school is a 'culture',

but I was also writing about social events at least partly from the point of view of those involved in the events (Erickson 1984) and was engaging in significant amounts of reflexive work. According to Pillow (2003:178) to be reflexive “not only contributes to producing knowledge that aids in understanding and gaining insight into the workings of a social world, but also provides insight on how this knowledge is produced”, which therefore makes reflexivity essential.

In considering reflexivity, I am drawn to my interviews with lesbian staff members. There seemed to be an immediate understanding with one staff member that I was queer in some way and the other staff asked me before the interview started “you are on my team, aren't you?”. I felt that more than associating with specific identification, she was asking me “do you have insider knowledge about my world?” and I do. My identity has flexed and changed, and I have in the past claimed 'lesbian' (even if not 'woman') and have always felt myself as not belonging to the cishet world. I noticed with both of the interviews with the lesbian staff (Dawn and Ada), a way of understanding the world was taken for granted. When talking to Dawn about gender in classes, I felt that I understood implicitly why she was approaching gender the way she was, but this knowledge was tacit; she mentioned that she did not gender pupils. I needed to ask her 'out loud' why she was doing what she was doing to ascertain whether my interpretation was correct. The knowledge is tacit in that she assumed a mutual understanding that she would not have assumed if I had identified as cishet, and whilst she was able to explain what she meant, there is still a level of conversation that did not happen; the way that she was able to assume that I would know what she meant, whether she explained it or not.

3.10.1 Insider/outsider perspectives

I consider myself to be an outsider researcher as far as my participants are concerned; I am neither pupil nor teacher. This outsider position reduced the risk of personal bias being imposed upon the data (LaSala 2003). Although there are clear advantages to being an outsider researcher, there are also drawbacks where an insider position would have been more advantageous. Insider researchers often have the ability not only to

observe outsider perspectives (as outsider researchers can do using participant observations), but also to understand their importance, which leads to the possibility of a more in-depth analysis. However, an insider perspective brings with it cultural bias (Asselin 2003) to the research setting. For instance, it was possible for me, as a gender/queer person, to ask about people's personal intersections and values about teaching. This allowed me to question the teachers' use of self in the school environment, a question which may not have occurred if I was a cishet researcher and may not have elicited the same answers if asked by a cishet person. Whilst both the lesbian members of staff explicitly used their identity to form part of their personal values and wished to share that with me, the heterosexual staff who answered the question were ambiguous in their answers. An important point to note here is in the way lesbian staff recognised having a similarity to me and brought forth their identity and use of self into the interview. There are advantages to holding a mix of positions. It allowed me to see a plurality of perspectives that lead to no voice being prioritised, and for all claims to be possible, and to lead to a deeper understanding of the topic matter at hand.

My positionality as a researcher in Brockmount was complex; I was not part of the school, yet my identity influenced my fieldwork approach. This has been both positive and negative; an insider researcher might find it difficult to look beyond their own experience and expectations as they will have a good understanding of the processes involved (Roberts and Sanders 2005), whereas an outsider researcher researching a conceptually strange situation will have less personal experience to work with but may find that they have a critically fresh viewpoint (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). In Brockmount, my outsider status was positively perceived by some; in an interview one teacher made direct reference to the anonymity section on the participant information sheet, saying that they would not have felt able to be fully frank were I in any way connected with the school itself. Although I was seen as an outsider by the staff and also students, I have of course in my life, also been a student. Although I was a child of Section 28, it being in place for my entire high school career (and no sex education taught in my primary school), I have some experience of being a student in sex education classes. It seems to

me that my experience of sex education was sufficiently far removed from these students' that there is little to be held in common with their experience.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together each strand of my methodological approach, from theoretical justifications to reflections on the fieldwork process and ethnical consent. I have maintained that a mixed-methods ethnographic approach was the most viable for researching genders and sexualities within a school context. The use of direct observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were complementary in understanding how sexuality and gender was taught within a particular school in an English county. However, I also showed that researchers come with their own beliefs, worldviews and *a priori* knowledge. Therefore, as part of this chapter I provided a reflexive account of my own experiences in the field, during the data analysis process and on the ethical implications of the study. I now want to turn to the data that came out of the research starting with an examination of school SRE policies.

Chapter 4: SRE Policy analysis of schools in the West Midlands

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses a sample of sex and relationship education (SRE) policies from secondary schools in England. The chapter studies the language of hetero- and cisnormativity, and bullying, as well as considering potential imagined futures of the pupils. In this chapter I also examine the tension between religious values and inclusive sex education, showing where on occasion the two seem to be opposed yet contained within the same policy. It is important to study the policies alongside teaching practice, as policy positions both the topics that are taught, the school's values and the context of SRE. I recognise, however, that there is a gap between policy and practice (Corteen 2006). Policies take shape within specific contexts and draw on history, current politics and national contexts, making them a cultural product (Bacchi 2014). Whilst policies are not sufficient to alter SRE programmes in schools by themselves, the wider heterosexist views that form part of both society and SRE teaching are unlikely to be challenged

without ‘official’ policy acceptance (Epstein, O’Flynn, and Telford 2003), and policies, with their suggestions about what may be taught when, have been referred to as ‘bibles’ for teachers (Pilcher 2005).

Without an analysis of policy documents, it is more difficult to know how and why schools position their chosen topics of relevance, and thus this chapter will discuss the various ways in which both SRE and GSD topics are positioned. ‘Position’ here means to consider what topics, approaches and other factors schools have considered relevant in the creation of teaching and policy. Policies are created around moral beliefs (what is overt or implicit within culture (Harré et al 2009)). We see in this how the government positions schools as having the competence, the right, and the duty to provide sex and relationship education, taking normative constraints into consideration (Harré et al. 2009); which topics are considered relevant for teaching. Through a queer theory position I will interrogate normativity and constructions of identity within policies, giving consideration to where those rely specifically on gender, gender identity and sexuality constructions (Loutzenheiser 2015). Whilst my research in subsequent chapters uses ethnographic theories and methods to discuss the culture of one particular school, the importance of the cultural and organisational context that it is situated within cannot be overstated.

I argue that the policies (both the guidance document and individual school SRE policies) situate GSD in very particular ways that are often normative in nature, with assumptions of definitive future sexuality for pupils that will follow a cishet norm. Policies suggest that school should be a safe environment but do not prescribe the ways in which this should be created, which leads to a blurring of official and unofficial culture (Allen 2013). I also show where schools have dissented with, or changed the language in the guidance document, providing space to challenge both the dominant hegemony and to make use of a wider discourse outside of the school policies. The chapter covers the various ways in which GSD and SRE are positioned, beginning with what is possibly the central tension throughout the policies – ‘SRE being unbiased’ and ‘SRE being values-driven’. I then

discuss gender and sexual diversity in schools in terms of an idealised cishet norm and move to the final theme of problematising difference.

4.1.1 History

When Section 28 came into effect, what might be considered ‘promotion’ of homosexuality was not made clear by the government. The guidance document simply stated “there should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation” (Department for Education and Employment 2000) and is reminiscent in this way of the language of Section 28. This policy language allows for the appearance of neutrality whilst remaining ambiguous in meaning; the notion of heterosexual privilege means that heterosexuality is assumed and therefore cannot be promoted (Hammack, Frost, and Hughes 2019). Schools are often places where cishet identities are performed, and other sexualities and genders are seen as transgressive and are liable to be silenced (Sundaram and Sauntson 2016a). Heterosexism, and (by extension) cissexism (the assumption that being cisgender is ‘better’ or ‘more normal’ than being transgender), are created as much by what is not stated as what is (Sauntson 2013). The guidance document is intended to give schools support on issues involved in developing their SRE policy (Department for Education and Employment 2000), and thus is important to cover in detail here alongside the documents it has informed.

SRE was not a mandatory curriculum subject in 1988 but was voluntarily taught in many schools. Before the advent of Section 28 in 1988, the more fragmented guidance around SRE did not mention the promotion of sexual orientation. Section 28 first introduced this language and that remained on the statute books in England for 15 years. When discussions began around the time of the introduction of Section 28 - shortly after the start of the AIDS crisis, Hansard notes that some MPs suggest that schools then were 'promoting' homosexuality (Hansard 1987) by making use of books such as 'Jenny lives with Eric and Martin', a children’s picture book portraying a young girl living with two fathers (Boshe 1983). The discussion in Parliament (Hansard 1987) at the time centred around the idea that on the one hand, HIV/AIDs was killing (gay) people and on the

other, schools were promoting homosexuality, a dilemma with heteronormative assumptions at its heart.

The guidance document analysed in this chapter is the 'Sex and Relationship Guidance' document created by the Department for Education and Employment in 2000, which was a framework allowing for the creation of individual SRE policies by schools. In 2014 The Department for Education and Employment marked the guidance as updated but no changes were made from the 2000 version. The guidance was consolidated from several smaller pre-existing policies and circulars and was added to and amended in order to create one cohesive framework. When PSHE became a curriculum subject in 1999, this guidance provided a teaching framework covering pupils throughout their school cycle. It is important to consider the history of the Department for Education and Employment guidance that has informed the SRE policies of many schools, whose (usually) much smaller local policy documents often reflect the language of the larger guidance document.

4.2 Method

The local and nationally representative policies and the guidance document are presented as a singular analysis, as they are all policies discussing the same topic. The method of analysis (in this case thematic analysis) is covered in chapter three.

Where individual quotes are used, they are identified by a code at the end of the quote. Where the guidance document is being quoted it will be defined as 'SREG' (short for ‘sex and relationships education guidance’). Where school policies are quoted, they will be defined by a code to denote an individual school and a type to signify the type of school as collected from the Edubase database. Types will be given as follows, and are appended after the school code as shown in table three below.

Key	Type

R	Religious (no 'R' indicates that this school is listed with 'no religious character' on Edubase. Religions covered in this analysis include Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam)
A	Academy. Includes free schools, traditional academies, and academy converters
I	Independent schools
M	Maintained. Includes community schools, foundation and trust schools, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
SREG	Government policy

Table three: School character codes

Overall, it is possible to build a picture of how this guidance might affect schools' stances on sexuality and gender within SRE lessons. Whilst the social constructionist approach of this thematic analysis does not suggest that the guidance means that the government has one particular stance on the matter, it is possible to see the language of the government policy being replicated in individual school policies. It is possible to see how the guidance links and differs to individual policies at both local and national level.

4.3 Analysis:

Three main themes were identified in the analysis, along with two sub themes. The three main themes were: 'the tension between SRE being unbiased and being values-driven', (with subthemes 'SRE as values-driven' and 'religion and cultural values'), 'the idealised (cishet) norm', and 'problematising difference'. There are also links between the idealised (cishet) norm and the problematising of difference as well as between the idealised (cishet) norm and SRE as values-driven.

The thematic map in figure one below provides an overview of how the themes related to each other. The aim of this chapter was to analyse the way SRE policies position GSD. In 'the tension between SRE being unbiased and being values-driven', I found that many schools positioned themselves as simultaneously objective, and as being values-driven. The values individual schools espoused differed, from specific religious values to those of 'tolerance and acceptance', but values in any direction are a bias in one direction. In 'the assumption of an idealised (and cishet) norm' I show that policies reinforce these norms and there is little or no space within policy language for those outside of the normative policy assumptions. In 'problematising difference' I show that policies tend to discuss queer identities in terms of problems to be solved - as 'bullying' or 'sensitive issues'.

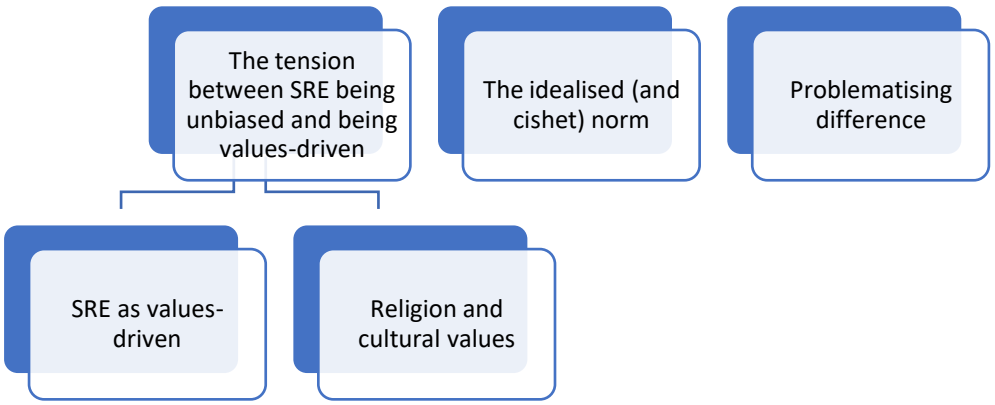

Figure 1. Thematic map of key themes in school SRE policies

4.3.1 The tension between SRE being unbiased and values-driven

In this theme I will discuss how there is a tension displayed in the policies between SRE as unbiased, and at the same time as SRE as having a specific set of values to uphold. It is clear in this theme that often policies are trying to balance what can feel like competing values, such as the need to be sensitive to religion and religious ideas, whilst at the same time being able to accommodate pupils whose identities might be in tension with some of those religious ideals. This overarching theme highlights the tensions inherent in two main ideals. First, there is the ideal that SRE should be unbiased and

factual and merely about the dissemination of knowledge, and secondly that SRE can be values-driven (therefore biased in a particular direction).

A majority of policies mention that the delivery of 'sex education' must be sensitive to religion, with 'sensitive issues' that schools with a religious ethos may reflect that in their policies. This concept, however, is not visible in policies of religious schools; a need for the religious school to be sensitive to queer pupils is not suggested. Making this dilemma explicit would raise difficult policy questions for some schools on how they will be inclusive of all genders and sexualities and remain true to their religious ethos. Also, of course, the two constructs of inclusivity and a particular religious ethos are not mutually exclusive. There will be queer pupils who are religious, as there will be non-queer pupils with no religion and in this way, the policy documents construct a particular understanding of what it means to be a queer pupil.

The idea that SRE is unbiased is demonstrated below in the policy guidance. These excerpts suggest that whilst schools must nominally be unbiased, there is an ideological dilemma between contrary themes of social knowledge (Willig and Stainton-Rogers 1988), where the lived ideology (Billig et al. 1988); common sense notions of our everyday lives is sometimes in tension with individual school values, which in turn must sit within current legislation:

> Teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and because teachers therefore act in loco parentis, parents may need to be reassured that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of sex and relationship education within the PSHE framework. – SREG

> Teachers and all those contributing to sex and relationship education are expected to work within an agreed values framework as described in the school's policy which must be in line with current legislation. – SREG

Whilst the guidance document suggests teachers must be unbiased, it also suggests that schools can create an agreed values framework and that teachers may not demonstrate a stance that is not in alignment with the ethos of the school, as seen in the following

example. It also suggests that schools' views will be transparent – visible in policies – where teachers' will not be. This allows for the school's "values framework" to dictate the terms of the SRE provided, suggesting a values-driven approach. Where the agreed framework of the school's is an inclusive one, providing a culture where all genders and sexualities are equally visible, and this may serve as a protective mechanism against individual teachers' potentially differing attitudes. Where, however, policies position anyone outside of cishet norms as troublesome in some way, the individual teacher who may wish to teach a different message, may find themselves constrained by policy.

The overarching guidance is ambiguous - it does not delineate what the "agreed values framework" may be, leaving this open to interpretation by individual schools. It might be a religious values framework or a more broader school ethos of 'respect' for example, and as such allow for the promotion of certain ideals, such as the importance of marriage, or tolerance. The values implicit in the values-driven approach are seemingly taken for granted as being positive. Nonetheless, they create a biased approach in SRE education, promoting one way of being over another.

Across both the government guidance and school policies, it is possible to see how schools are positioned, and position themselves as unbiased and inclusive institutions of learning, suggesting that one of the main points of SRE is to inform young people about sex. This works up their position as reasonable and warranted by orienting towards the concerns of parents – deflecting responsibility for the direction of the sex education in a very specific way. This can be seen below:

> Effective sex and relationship education is essential if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives (SREG)
>
> The school policies then reflect the guidance to work to place SRE as a sensitive or possibly contentious subject. Parents and pupils may need to be reassured that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of sex and relationship education within the PSHE framework - SREG
>
> The delivery of sex and relationships education is factual, sensitive, and balanced, not judgemental – WB-A

> SRE is not value free and teachers need to be aware of their own attitudes and values to lessen the chance of imposing their own subjective biases. - SelP-M
>
> Teachers will adopt strategies which seek to avoid bias on their part and will teach Learners how to recognise bias and evaluate evidence. - WMG-A

The guidance does not state teaching will be unbiased - this is tacitly taken for granted in the framing that caregivers and pupils may need to be *reassured* about the fact that teaching *will* be unbiased. This guidance constructs caregivers as being concerned about the fact that (unspecified) bias may be introduced thereby introducing the problem in need of fixing (Bacchi 2014). It also presupposes that bias is only introduced at the individual level, not recognising potential bias being created by the school's stated values and ethos. Policies that explicitly state that it would be difficult to teach SRE in an unbiased manner note that teachers must be aware of their own biases, to allow pupils to make their own decisions. This suggests a simplicity around decisions and sex that are not always possible. Some schools present SRE itself as factual (potentially value-free) and some as not value-free. Both approaches aim for an unbiased approach, although some policy documents make the school's positions clearer than others:

> Effective sex and relationship education does not encourage early sexual experimentation. It should teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, to build up their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. It builds up knowledge and skills which are particularly important today because of the many different and conflicting pressures on young people. - SREG
>
> [SRE] should teach children and young people to develop values, attitudes, personal and social skills, and increase their knowledge and understanding to make informed decisions and life choices - AME-A
>
> The purpose of Sex and Relationships Education should be to provide knowledge about loving relationships, the nature of sexuality and the processes of human reproduction. - Pbr-A
>
> This school believes that the essential aim of sex and relationship education should be to provide students with the knowledge and skills to enable them to make informed and responsible choices now and in later life, emphasising the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. - CC-A

SRE is constructed in the above extracts as impartial, and as capable of carrying out the act of disseminating knowledge in an unbiased manner. Knowledge is portrayed as something that can be 'provided'. Sexual health here is portrayed in a neoliberal manner, acknowledging personal choice and responsibility, but not taking the wider social contexts of pupils into consideration. These wider social contexts, such as socio-economic status, the local environment students live in, family and community expectations, create the framework for the situation that individual decisions are made within. This knowledge will be imparted to the students and the students will retain this knowledge to make 'responsible choices' in their life, which in context is a clear reference to not getting pregnant outside of a 'stable relationship'. Young people are being encouraged to make their own choices via the 'provision' of (certain) knowledge(s), at the same time as parameters are placed around what is acceptable or responsible. Whether the young person can make an autonomous choice depends on the quality and availability of their education (MacKenzie, Hedge, and Enslin 2017), and their choices are often governed by what feels normative within their prevailing cultures. If we were to consider a queered version of 'responsible choices', then there is something to be said for the explicit inclusion of homosex into the curriculum and the use of condoms and dental dams to prevent STIs. This is only visible in a general 'prevention of STIs' discourse, with no explicit mandate to cover same-sex intimacy.

These prescriptive morals ('thou shalt not') rather than enabling morals ('thou shalt') (Thomson 1997) have the potential to exclude particular groups such as queer individuals who might live their lives outside of a normative framework and experiences in a way that is difficult to challenge, creating a moral framework that SRE must be taught within (Thomson 1994). These wider social contexts create the frame for the situation that individual decisions are made within, and the guidance document defines SRE in specific ways:

> It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. - SREG

> It should teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. – SREG

All of the policies analysed made some mention of aiming to reduce ignorance. Schools occasionally made direct reference to being in *loco parentis*, as in the guidance, but were always clear that their role was to educate children about SRE, thus positioning themselves as potentially objective imparters of knowledge.

This notion of being an inclusive educator is demonstrated above with several excerpts from the guidance document and the policies themselves, and it is possible from both sets of quotes to see the similarities and differences between the guidance and the policies. Policies are similar in terms of their positioning as 'knowledge-givers' to the government document, but on the topic of bias some school policies read quite differently to the government quote, with the government focusing on the need to reassure parents and the school policies tending towards making statements about how they will, or will not, teach. Different schools approach this differently, with some stating that SRE is purely factual and others stating that it is not.

When Section 28 was being considered for repeal, at the same time as the government guidance document was created, language was added to the guidance document to state that SRE teaching was not about 'the promotion of sexuality'. Several policies mention this statement in one form or another:

> It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching. [...] There should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation – SREG

> We do not use sex and relationships education as a means of promoting any form of sexual orientation and we adhere to the national principals of the healthy school programme OS-A

This policy language mirrors that of Section 28, but 'sexual orientation' replaces 'homosexuality', and arguably serves to reassure parents that homosexuality (and other

sexualities outside of heterosexuality) will not be promoted, whilst framing this in a neutral manner. Whilst it might also be argued that there is no push *towards* heterosexuality, later themes will show this not to be the case. It is unclear what 'direct promotion of sexual orientation' might look like, however.

4.3.1.1 SRE as values-driven

SRE policies simultaneously state that there should be no promotion of sexuality and do not mention gender, but then privilege a certain type of relationship. Whilst marriage is now available to most people no matter what their sexuality in Great Britain, this was not so when the guidance document was written, and it nonetheless suggests that there is a specific type of heterosexual ideology to be lived up to, that 'marriage' is the best option available to all people regardless of sexuality. In discussing adult intimate relationships, the guidance takes a particular position.

> As part of sex and relationship education, pupils should be taught about the nature and importance of marriage for family life and bringing up children - SREG

The ideology of 'family life' is being used to present a particular normative style of relationships. 'Marriage followed by children' is the normative approach, with little or no consideration for other approaches, demonstrating that when the guidance was created, heterosexuals who wish to procreate are the intended (and assumed) audience. This heteronormative approach assumes that (heterosexual) marriage provides the best relational context for bringing up of children by endorsing traditional (nuclear) family values. A policy that ideologically promotes marriage and 'traditional family values' privileges certain ways of expressing sexuality and minimises other possibilities available. Policies have expanded on the guidance document to create the view of 'the stable family' alongside parenthood, again privileging an idealised cisgender heterosexual view of relationships, without taking other relationship styles into consideration and building a particular type of heterosexist discourse. A stable family life does not necessarily exclude queer families, but this discourse privileges certain forms of relationship and exclude others, including, for example, single parent families.

Although the guidance document goes on to mention that it is aware of “strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage” (SREG), it lists marriage first (or only) in a list of what is considered significant for 'family' life six times. Feminist critiques have long-suggested that marriage is merely a tool for the subjugation of women, and that it creates and facilitates an institutionalised form of heterosexuality (Finlay and Clarke 2003; Hamilton and La Diega 2020). This is supported by the recent change in British law to allow for mixed-sex civil partnerships following a challenge by a heterosexual couple. The data show that there were 167 ‘opposite sex’ civil partnerships registered on 31 Dec 2019 the first day that ‘opposite sex’ couples could do this – and the most recent year figures are available for (Office of National Statistics 2020) showing that marriage for family life is by no means a universally desired given:

> [Sex education] is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care [...] Therefore pupils should learn the significance of marriage and stable relationships as key building blocks of community and society [...] learning the value of family life, marriage, and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children [...] Within the context of talking about relationships, children should be taught about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and for bringing up children - SREG

School policies also reflect this language in their documents, and all mention the values ‘family life’ marriage and stability:

> The Trust believes that SRE should be set in the context of clear values, including the value of family life, marriage and of loving and stable relationships in bringing up children. - AME-A
>
> Objectives: [...] To teach the value of marriage as the basis for family life; the value of love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood - BW-AR
>
> The benefits of planned parenthood within a stable married relationship are discussed as an integral part of the course - Wo-M

The guidance positions SRE "not about promotion of sexual orientation", but at the same time could be said to promote a particular (heteronormative) form of relationship (the

importance of marriage), with a stable marriage being the foundation for family life. With the introduction of same-sex marriage legislation, the guidance has now become more inclusive by default, however, with no mentions of civil partnership, it continues to promote a particular form of relationship (marriage) over others (e.g., cohabitation) based on a heteronormative model of relationships. Whilst queer people (along with cishet people) currently choose to enter into marriage, and/or have children, this is by no means the only type of relationship structure that people (queer or otherwise) enter. Equally, no policies overtly recognised that relationships that did not include children would be valid.

When school policies use inclusive language, they too buy into a different value: diversity. TG-M, below for instance, promotes a particular value set (tolerance) and beliefs, that same sex relationships are legitimate. DE-M suggests similar; same-sex relationships are legitimate:

> It is recognised that an individual's sexuality is a highly personal matter. The teaching of sex education at [this] school will place stress upon the need for understanding and awareness of a variety of sexual preferences across the spectrum of human sexuality. DE-M
>
> To positively present same sex relationships as equally legitimate and healthy as mixed sex relationships, as part of our school ethos of tolerance and respect. TG-M

A minority of schools explicitly reference the Equality Act (UK Government 2010) and their need to be inclusive and have worked to include sexuality outside of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

This theme shows how SRE is positioned as values-driven and that those values can be variously suggestive of different ways of living - from a nuclear family being ideal, recognising that there are various types of relationships, and one should not be prioritised over the other. Further values that need to be taken into consideration are religious and cultural values.

4.3.1.2 Religion and cultural values

Almost every school SRE policy mentioned the importance of either religion or culture. Religion and/or culture, and an unbiased sex education are in tension throughout the policies, with no guidance for schools regarding how they might reflect their religious ethos without becoming hetero- or cissexist. The guidance does not explicitly manage this tension between religion and inclusive sex education with regard to parents, and instead suggests only that religious views must be taken into consideration. A majority of policies mention the need to be sensitive with regard to religious beliefs. The school policy language in this respect follows on from the guidance document:

> Sensitive issues should be covered by the school's policy and in consultation with parents. Schools of a particular religious ethos may choose to reflect that in their sex and relationship education policy [...] It is also essential that governing bodies involve parents in developing and reviewing their policy. This will ensure that they reflect parents' wishes and the culture of the community the school serves. - SREG
>
> The objectives of the Academy's relationship & sex education programme are to [...] understand and respect cultural and religious influences on individual sexuality - GA-A
>
> A sensitive approach to religious beliefs is essential - TWA-A
>
> To ensure that students are given appropriate teaching materials that have regard to any religious or cultural background of the students - AME-A

The conflict between teaching from a particular religious viewpoint and providing unbiased education is not explicitly acknowledged, and the only suggestion of acknowledgement is that teachers may not demonstrate a stance that is not in alignment with the (religious) ethos of the specific school.

These excerpts suggest that schools must be unbiased and there is an ideological dilemma (Billig et al. 1988) within the guidance; SRE should be unbiased and sensitive and should *also* allow for the religious ethos of the schools to be reflected. Within individual school policies where caution is mentioned or implied, it is with regard to

religion or cultural differences. Religion is seen as a key deliverer in some schools' SRE; on occasion policies state that their two main delivery bodies of SRE are science (for the mandated curriculum) and religious studies (for the optional curriculum):

> [This] School specifically delivers SRE through its PSHE Programme, RE and Science lessons at KS3 and KS4. M-R-AL
>
> Sex and Relationships Education is one component of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Programme which is delivered by a specific team of teaching staff. It features in National Curriculum Science in Key Stage 3 where anatomical and physiological information about reproduction in humans forms part of the course. It also features in Religious Studies under Personal and Social Values and beliefs which deals with personal identity and relationships. - BH-A
>
> The knowledge base will be extended to include: […] Social, cultural and credal norms and differences in sexual practices – BC -A-R

The third above quote from a Catholic church school references 'credal norms'; the religious norms that the Catholic Church adheres to. There are two points here; the guidance (as demonstrated by the initial quote in this theme) allows individual schools to interpret how they will reflect their religious ethos in sex education. This allows for a scale of SRE, from fully inclusive to very exclusive SRE. A fully inclusive SRE programme might mean that a school would reflect their religious ethos by teaching both what their religion teaches, and other perspectives held within the wider British community, ensuring that genders and sexualities are taught in a positive (or at least neutral) manner, providing information for queer pupils as well as heterosexual and cisgender ones. An exclusive SRE programme might teach that their religion believes various forms of sexual and/or gender expression to be immoral or wrong, and teach no further than that, providing no information for queer (or otherwise interested) pupils. Schools do not make their own policies clear. For example, although the quote above mentions credal norms, but does not leave the reader with an understanding of what might be taught and how credal norms might be included.

Whilst individual schools may decide what to teach, the guidance does not suggest topics that must be covered or the ways in which they must be covered. This means that it is possible to teach to a religious doctrine. For example, contraception is not an accepted credal norm in catholic churches. Similarly, AL-M-R's policy demonstrates that it will teach about the contraceptive services available from within the Islamic Framework, but this is also ambiguous. It is unclear whether the school teaches about all forms of contraception and specifies which would be consistent with the framework, or whether only contraception within the framework would be taught:

> All Sex and Relationships Education at [this] Catholic School is designed and delivered according to the teaching of the Catholic Church. - BW-A-R
>
> Learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services, within the Islamic framework - AL-M-R

Religion in faith schools (whether or not the school is listed as having a religious affiliation on Edubase) creates a particular approach to SRE classes. Both Christian/Catholic and Islamic faith schools make very similar statements:

> SRE is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity. As a Catholic School we acknowledge that we have a particularly significant role to play in this aspect of young people's development BW-A-R
>
> The information about sexual relationships will reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church on such issues. SJW-M-R
>
> Traditional (Christian) marriage should be promoted as the fundamental building block of society and of family life and as the proper context for the nurture of children. SP-M-R
>
> It involves acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes in keeping with the teachings of Islam through the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). AL-M-R

Each of the quotes above suggests that SRE will be taught with reference to particular religious values. Again, a definition of ‘promotion’ is not made clear to the policy reader.

The only thing that is certain is that there is a dis-preferred viewpoint (no promotion of sexual activity) but this use of 'promotion' does not make clear whether discussion of, or active inclusion of sexualities equates to 'promotion', and we know from Section 28 that historically books that portrayed same-sex parents *were* considered 'promoting' (Vanderbeck and Johnson 2015). Historically the case was that, given policy language of Section 28 and the fear of being seen as 'promoting' homosexuality, schools often did not cover homosexuality at all.

The third policy quote is included in the policies of some schools with a stated Christian ethos. The wording 'traditional Christian marriage' is a euphemism for a religious heterosexual marriage, as a church wedding is not available to same-gender couples. In SRE policies, religion is prioritised in terms of what may be taught to the students as a whole and assumes that pupils subscribe to the religious beliefs and values of the school. The religious schools covered here have written about being aware of the teachings of their doctrine and ensuring that outside educators remain within the acceptable bounds of the religious framework of the school. Once a school has declared its religious focus, this can change the nature of how SRE is positioned. Examples of this can be seen here:

> SRE is about saying yes to God - BW-A-R
>
> Any conduct or behaviour undertaken that is in defiance or out of sympathy with the Church's teaching relating to sex education will be dealt with robustly and consistently - JHN-A-R
>
> [within RE (as a deliverer for SRE) there will be] Discussion of homosexuality and lesbianism, including an Islamic view of them. - AL-M-R.
>
> Personal hygiene - among the various types of pads, tampons may not be appropriate due to insertion - AL-M-R

School AL seems to position itself as including both a wider view of sexuality and an explicit Islamic viewpoint, where other schools (JHN and BW) merely suggest that teaching will be in accordance with a particular religious ethos. From each of these examples, it is clear that in these policy sections, religion is the primary framework through which SRE topics and practices are framed and presented. SRE is positioned as needing to adhere to the moral framework of the school, and different schools have

differing opinions on what is acceptable. School AR noted that one of its main attitudes and values of SRE was as follows:

> Attitudes & Values [...] To include the role of husband and wife including polygamy. AL-M-R

This extract suggests that within SRE, this school has found it possible to teach on topics not usually seen as normative in British culture. Polygamy cannot legally be entered into by individuals living in the UK (this would be classed as bigamy), although it may be legal if all parties had a ceremony in a country where polygamous marriage is legal. Thus it is unusual within the UK, but within certain branches of Islam it is a more standard occurrence (Fairbairn et al. 2018). It would therefore seem possible that for some aspects of SRE, it is possible to teach outside of normative expectations if this explicitly aligns with the value of the school.

4.3.2 The idealised (cishet) norm

Most schools mention children "whatever their developing sexuality" (SREG) and this is welcome language; sexuality does not have to be a fixed identity and is open to growth and change throughout the lifespan (Diamond 2008b). Policies, however, usually do not go beyond this acknowledgement of 'developing sexuality' to provide explicit recognition of implicit norms such as sexism, heterosexism, and hetero- and cis-normativity, and language usually reinforces these norms. This means that developing sexuality is to be taken into consideration at one level, whilst at another, cishet norms are privileged within the policy language. Norms that are not troubled in policies include those around asexuality and future parenthood, as well as those of heterosexual and transgender identities – these are not critically considered within policies, and norms are adhered to:

> It is recognised there may be students who may not be heterosexual and SRE must cater for their needs and questions as well. - FP-A

> Objectives […] To positively present same sex relationships as equally legitimate and healthy as mixed sex relationships, as part of our school ethos of tolerance and respect. TG-M

The wording of the policies is often that in comparison to heterosexuality. This use of the reference point of heterosexuals suggests heterosexuality as the norm (Chestnut, Zhang, and Markman 2021); "same sex relationships [are] as *equally* legitimate and healthy *as* mixed sex relationships" (TG-M) [emphasis added], and schools must cater for the needs and questions of non-heterosexuals "*as well"* [emphasis added] as heterosexuals (FP-A), rather than "schools must cater for the needs and questions of heterosexual, gay and bisexual pupils" These schools are inclusive of GSD, but heterosexuality is positioned as the norm (Shannon 2016). Clearly, the inclusion of non-heterosexual people is visible in the policies, but often it is "through a guise of liberal equality that enshrines heterosexuality as the norm against which non-heterosexual people are measured" (Riggs and Due 2013:102):

> Students that consider themselves transgender or are transitioning from one gender to another will be treated in school in accordance with the gender identity that they assign themselves. H-M
>
> We understand our duty under the Equality Act to ensure that teaching is accessible to all children and young people, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Br-A
>
> Homosexuality: The following should be read in light of the underlying principles, that 'sexuality is a gift from God'. Given the nature of our society, students are likely to ask questions about homosexuality. The aims of teaching about homosexuality and responding to students' questions and concerns should be: To enable students to understand the Catholic teaching on prejudice, compassion, love and homosexuality. That to express homosexuality itself is not evil or sinful. However, the Catholic Church teaches that homosexual acts go against the natural order. […] To develop a critical attitude towards stereotypes, in the media and elsewhere, of masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. StP-M-R

These few policies stand out in a larger body of documentation that does not pay explicit attention to normative assumptions, rendering the schools unusual in their approach to gender and sexuality with regards to the queering of identities. It is clear from StP-M-R, however, that although a critical attitude towards *stereotypes* is encouraged, those who

do engage in ‘homosexual acts’ are positioned by the policy as unnatural and only a heterosexually imagined future is acceptable (Epstein, O’Flynn, and Telford 2003). This imagined future is visible in other policies also:

> To explore the emotional dimensions of personal development and of relationships between the sexes and the responsibilities of parenthood - SHS-M
>
> Through providing information and guidance in the following areas, we seek to broaden the horizons of our students to ensure they [...] Understand their roles as future parents and child carers - WWA-A

This construction of cisgender future parents is noted in the guidance document and is troubled by relatively few policies. Most policies build on the wording about the value of children directly from the government document:

> Secondary schools should: teach about relationships, love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood as well as sex – SREG

Whilst teaching these topics does not mean that the teaching must apply to everyone, little space is given in the documents to allow for other possibilities such as asexuality (Lamb, Lustig, and Graling 2013). Whilst arguably, the language of ‘delay’ is useful for those who do not feel they wish to have sex as part of their lives, as well as those who do, those who do not wish to have sex in their lives are situated within a norm of compulsory sexuality (Gupta 2017). This means that policy does not seek to actively name their experience and situate asexuality as a valid identity, thus leading to individuals trying to fit the dominant narrative (Gupta 2017), that part of the normative assumption of being a teenager is the inevitability of sexual intercourse. This is exemplified by policies that mention 'delaying' sexual activity:

> learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay - AT-A
>
> Students will be given a clear understanding of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and resisting pressure. - GA-A

> Our SRE programme aims to prepare students for an adult life in which they can [...] understand the arguments for delaying sexual activity - BVG-A

There is an absence here; there is no mention of those who do not want to have sex, marry, or have a family. Almost every policy situates its pupils as sexual 'parents in waiting', assuming that all pupils will commence having sex, with only a minority of policies considering other futures. Very few policies place any emphasis on the option not to be sexually active; most emphasis is put on discussing the value of 'delaying' sexual activity until an appropriate future point. This positioning is achieved via positioning students as needing to learn the 'values of family life'.

When talking about sex, many policies only give explicit wording around heterosex and are silent about any other type of sex. Policy wordings that talked about ensuring that staff who became aware that pupils were sexually active ensured that that those pupils were aware of contraceptive advice. Classroom teaching was often solely focused on 'contraception' (or contraception and HIV) rather than 'safer sex', which then leads to a danger that those for whom contraception (and HIV) was the only discourse available risked not having information about same sex safer sex. The heterosexual norm is also borne out by mentions of contraception. Although the guidance is inclusive with mentions of safer sex when it discusses the abstract notions of sexual activity, when it covers a more concrete example, this is stated:

> Nonetheless, there may be cases where a teacher learns from an under 16 year old that they are having, or contemplating having, sexual intercourse. In these circumstances, schools ought to be in a position to take steps to ensure that:
>
> - wherever possible, the young person is persuaded to talk to their parent or carer; - any child protection issues are addressed; and
>
> - that the child has been adequately counselled and informed **about contraception,** including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services. - SREG (emphasis added)

In a specific example, the imagined young person is presumed to be engaging in heterosex , and most in need of specific contraceptive advice, which is only relevant to

people with the requisite genitals for penis in vagina (PIV) sex (Buston and Hart 2001). The above extract would seem to be about safeguarding, and the lack of emphasis on cisgender homosex would suggest that cisgender homosex is not considered in the same way as cisgender heterosex. Confining sexual activities outside of heterosex to the margins (Jackson and Weatherall 2010), as demonstrated in the above extract, suggests that where young people are having sex, they will be engaging in heterosex that has the potential to result in pregnancy. When responding to pupils who are having sex, contraception and advice are the two items of note, potentially leaving open the idea that homosex does not need to consider issues of safer sex. This consideration of the dangers of (hetero)sex serves to enhance the moral conservatism discourse that also does not include a discourse of pleasure, which is absent from any policy.

Whilst a minority of policies are very careful to use non-gendered language in their policy when talking in the third person singular, almost every policy uses gendered terms (e.g., 'boys and girls') for students. This serves to render non-binary students or students whose gender does not match biological expectations absent or invisible. The majority of policies use gendered language throughout, either to refer to the pupil, staff members or both:

> Schools should also make adequate and sensitive arrangements to help girls cope with menstruation and with requests for sanitary protection. - SREG

> Some issues may be perceived differently by **boys and girls** and may be tackled by **single sex groups** initially - WA-A (emphasis added)

> If a teacher believes a pupil to be at risk **he/she** is obliged to inform the Child Protection Officer/Head Teacher - THW-A (emphasis added).

The language in the policies, much the same way as the guidance document, mentions 'girls' having periods and that SRE should focus on boys as much as girls. Individuals of different genders who experience menstruation will be equally in need (if not in higher need) of a sensitive approach to help them cope with menstruation. The guidance uses 'their' as a third person plural pronoun, but not as a first-person singular pronoun and where schools have closely aligned their policies to the guidance document, this

inclusivity will therefore be missed, leading to a widespread cisgender binary approach within the policies. This is evidenced by a lack of referral to trans identities and use of non-binary pronouns. One school used gender inclusive language; where most schools adopt 'he/she', the final quote above discusses a singular pupil as 'they' all the way through, up to and including discussion of pregnancy, where it would be common to pick 'she' as the most appropriate pronoun for a singular pregnant pupil suggesting that it is possible to step outside of the gender binary. There is no way to tell whether this was a deliberate attempt to be inclusive, or whether it is just that the individual(s) writing the policy did not find it strange to use singular ‘they’ as a matter of course:

> The school will encourage the pupil to talk to their parents/carers first if they believe that they may be pregnant. SelP-M

Explicit mention of transgender identities is rarely visible throughout the policies; whilst non-binary identities are theoretically covered under the term 'transgender', the level to which non-binary identities are included as a matter of course is ambiguous. Nowhere in the guidance are specific topics of gender identity discussed. The documents are silent on these topics, and reify a binary gender theme rather than seeing gender as something that individuals do (Clarke and Braun 2008), repeatedly discussing the gendered terms 'boys and girls', or 'her or him' rather than adopting a neutral 'pupils/young people' and 'they'. Along with the reification of the binary is also a silence around trans pupils specifically. This means that children who might be trans are at risk of missing out on important information; it is possible to be a lesbian in a relationship that involves a penis, or a man in a relationship that involves no penises. Not all pupils or staff will identify as 'he' or 'she', and thus also find themselves othered because of this discourse. Almost every school policy was included in this theme, with language that is in some way normative and othering to those who do not identify as male/female, suggesting that the policies as shown are (re)constructing gender in binary terms. All non-normative sexualities are subsumed into 'homosexuality' (and therefore silent). All quotes here suggest a normative relationship style, with no explicit allowance for same-sex relationships, or relationship styles outside of 'marriage and stable relationships', not recognising that cultures outside of heteronormativity might place their emphasis in

different places (Riggs and Due 2013), reinforcing the hetero- and cisnormative hegemony. Other research supports this, such as Forrest et al.'s (2004) RIPPLE study into 4353 students across 13 schools. Their analysis of topics desired by students and 'anonymous' questions found that students were far less concerned with the idea of 'stable relationships' (the only question raised anonymously by participants about this being a question asking what a stable relationship actually was) and far more with questions about STIs. They also suggest that their data show a reinforcement of discourses around compulsory heterosexuality, and this could lead to diminished capacity by queer students to feel intimately linked with the world around them (Shannon 2016).

4.3.3 Problematising difference

This theme as a whole covers the ways in which queer identities are simultaneously reduced to problems and to 'homosexuality'. Once situated as 'homosexual' and as problems, they are then solved, but remain 'different' by virtue of their mentions within policy where mentions might not be expected, for example - 'bullying' in a sex and relationship education policy, where bullying for other reasons is not mentioned.

In the guidance document, the only time there is a direct mention of a queer sexuality is with reference to bullying and most, if not all, of the discussion on bullying is around homophobic bullying. By including discourse about 'homosexuality' as bullying-related and placing it into a document on SRE it is not perhaps the most relevant to a policy that is largely about sex and intimate relationships. The document also presents a liberalist tone, in its presentation, by locating the 'cause' of bullying within individuals, rather than looking at wider systemic issues that operate within schools (Smith et al. 2004). Schools show they are aware of queer sexualities within their policies through references to homophobia and then by presenting that they have ways to deal with any problems (by mandating reporting of bullying). This then potentially means a potential 'removing' of the problem, leading to an increased awareness within the school environment. Schools 'showcase diversity' (Prasad and Mills 1997) in two ways within the policies, either by

directly stating that they have some kind of general 'commitment' to diversity, or by speaking specifically about homophobia. They also then provide a solution, which generally fits within a neoliberal framework that 'empowers' each individual. The showcasing of diversity does not ignore (some of) the problems raised, but it presents these as minor issues that (by use of policy) can be overcome (Prasad and Mills 1997). In portraying diversity in this way, schools show that they can 'do diversity' by both anticipating problems, and providing responses in advance:

> Schools need to be able to deal with homophobic bullying. SREG

> Incidents of homophobic language and bullying are dealt with swiftly and logged as part of our anti-bullying policy SP-M-R

> Homophobic bullying is dealt with strongly yet sensitively. NP-M

The quotes above suggest a neo-liberalist understanding that 'everybody is equal', and that the cause of bullying is situated within the aggressor/victim dyad that does not actively declare an understanding of the effects of school culture. It does not take issues of power into consideration, nor does it seek to explore how the school and wider cultures might affect bullying behaviours. The policies above seem to imply that bullying is interpersonal, rather than systemic, institutional, and impacted by the wider environment of heterosexism within the curricula. Because there is heterosexism inherent in the curricula, I argue that this places heterosexuality as normal and anything else as ‘deviant’ or other (Kehily 2002) and with this, a fragile heterosexuality is maintained and becomes part of an ongoing struggle of dominance and submission that has the potential to result in bullying behaviours at an individual level.

School policy language situating 'homosexuality' as problematic may have evolved from the positioning of bullying and 'homosexuality' together. Schools have often created policies that suggest that sexuality is difficult to teach. This is not something that is covered in the government guidance document; it has been created within school

policies and is often achieved by the positioning of ‘homosexuality’ as a 'sensitive' topic or by collocating this with other topics considered difficult. A majority of the policies position sexualities outside of hetero identities as problematic. Where policies list 'sensitive' topics, 'homosexuality' or 'sexual orientation' is often included:

> In any examination of sexual activity, it is impossible to avoid discussing potentially controversial areas. We will not shrink from such matters as abortion, contraception, HIV and AIDS and homosexuality - BC-A-R
>
> AIDS, homosexuality & other potentially controversial issues - BH-A
>
> To widen understanding about health and social issues, e.g. sex and sexuality, drugs and crime, HIV and AIDS. - W-A

The excerpts above position homosexuality in different ways. BH-A problematises homosexuality as 'potentially controversial' rather than approach from a sex-positive point of view where sex might just be part of the curriculum, and it is explicitly collocated with AIDS, which has become interminably linked with 'homosexuality'. In the listing of homosexuality only, bisexuality and other queer sexualities (and genders) are silent; this is reductionist and therefore problematic in itself. What all of these excerpts have in common is not having placed sexual orientation as part of life's experience - whether pupils are hetero, gay, bi, asexual or feel a different way.

Teaching about tolerance or acceptance helps to place homosexuality as other by implicitly reinforcing the heterosexual norm (Røthing 2008). When suggesting that ‘tolerance of difference' is needed, it suggests that the policy is not 'speaking to' someone who is ‘different’ but instead 'speaking about' them. The language of the policies positions the queer pupil as 'other' and reinforces the narrative of the normative person as a generous person who welcomes ‘the other’, and does not allow for identification with this other as their history and information is in some way irrelevant (Britzman 1995).

When we situate the topic of ‘homosexuality’ as sensitive, this can also suggest that 'homosexuals' themselves are positioned as sensitive, or vulnerable:

> To help reduce discrimination and to educate tolerance, so students do not run the risk of becoming persecuted and socially isolated as a result of their perceived sexual orientation. SP-M-R

> It is well documented that students are sometimes bullied because of their perceived sexual orientation. - CC-A

> We aim to help students understand the inappropriateness of certain behaviours that may involve the use of sexual swear words, anti-homophobic [sic] bullying. - JH-A-R

Where a minority of schools have touched on other sexualities, these are generally mentioned in the same problematised manner:

> Gay, bisexual, transgender lifestyle and concerns. Ki-I

Where pupils are constructed as having a vulnerability because of sexual orientation (whether the orientation that they themselves ascribe to or whether others have ascribed on their behalf) they are positioned as the monolithic ‘victim’ with a lack of agency, who is in need of extra support (Loutzenheiser 2015). The problem here in M-R-SP, and A-CC is situated firmly with the pupil-as-victim “students are sometimes bullied because of their perceived sexual orientation” rather than with the perpetrator of the violence, or a wider understanding of the general culture, where the bully (or the wider culture) is the problem, rather than the perceived orientation of the victim.

In general, difference is problematised in several ways. Whether by locating this within a bullying framework, or suggesting it to be controversial, or as a vulnerability that needs to be protected, it is clear to see that all these problematisations of queer identity work

to place those with queer identity as somehow outside of the mainstream, which also links this theme to the theme of the idealised cishet norm.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified and analysed several different themes and shown that individual school SRE policies are heavily based on the government guidance document. It is clear from the guidance document onwards, that it is possible to position SRE and sexual and gender identities in a variety of ways: the tension between religion and non-normative sexualities and genders, SRE as unbiased and inclusive, the assumption of an idealised cishet norm, difference and problematising. The themes have coalesced to present SRE in a particular manner, with non-hetero non-cisgender identities as encapsulated rather than incorporated (Britzman 1995), and it is demonstrated in the analysis that there is an amount of overlap between the themes in the guidance document to the codes in the policies.

This chapter analyses the various ways in which sexuality and gender diversity are portrayed in both the guidance document and the individual school policies. I show that although the policies explicitly position themselves as 'not promoting' sexuality, heterosexuality has been constructed as a default, and 'the heterosexual' as an unproblematic subject position. This analysis also shows that transgender identities are discursively silent throughout (Sundaram and Sauntson 2016a).

Policies create a discursive environment and are intended to inform the teaching process, and if the policies set non-normative pupils and their family situations aside as other with no directive on teaching, then teaching might follow from this. This impacts how queer identities are seen; it places gender and sexual diversity as 'issues of concern' (with bullying, for example, which positions the topic quite differently than placing it as another topic that is covered as a matter of course in class, and will therefore potentially lead to negative connotations (Barrett and Bound 2015)). The following chapters will demonstrate the practical ways in which SRE teaching and queer identities are

positioned, by both pupils and staff, and will show the links between the theory of policies and the practicalities of the school environment. The first chapter discusses the problematising and reductionism of 'homosexuality', looking at how queer identities are reduced to 'gay'. I then discuss how staff and pupils 'do gender' and the effects this has on SRE teaching and positioning of queer identities. I then move on to look at how staff are positioned and position themselves with reference to the teaching of SRE and queer identities, and the ramifications this has for both policy and teaching in general.

Chapter 5: Situating gender and sexuality within the educational environment

5.1 Introduction

Building on the policy analysis chapter, the following three chapters will interrogate how SRE is covered in schools with regard to genders and sexualities. They will also look at how the SRE class environment links to the wider school culture. These chapters show the ways in which policy is enacted in teaching, and what else shapes the way gender and sexuality are approached within the classroom. The current chapter looks at themes of a) the impact of stereotyping on identities, b) queerness as different, c) microaggressions in the classroom and d) invisibility and the hetero and cissexist presumption. Some themes have several subthemes; please see figure two below for a representation of these. The chapter ends by reaching a conclusion as to the overall effects of these themes upon the SRE classroom and school in general.

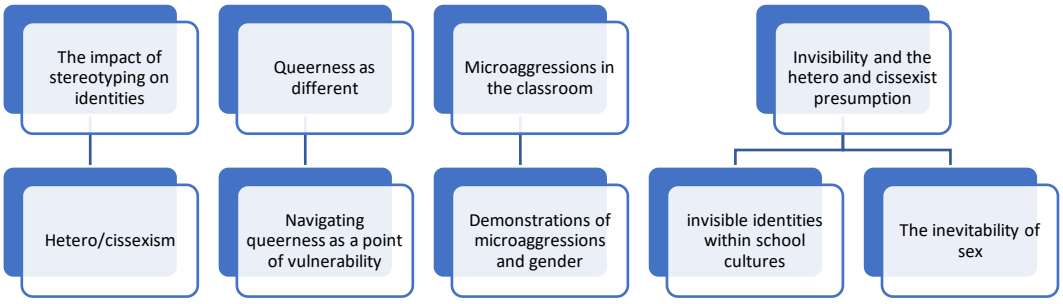

Figure two: Situating gender and sexuality within the educational environment

Extracts will be presented with the staff member's pseudonym if the data are from an interview, with the teacher pseudonym and school year if an observation, with the school year and 'focus group' if a focus group, and as 'field notes' if field notes. All names recorded as part of interviews, observations and focus groups are pseudonyms. On first presentation of staff excerpts, their staff role, gender, and sexuality if known, are noted.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 The impact of stereotyping on identities

In this theme, the discussion and use of stereotypes happened frequently. Alongside stereotypes, pupils and staff employed some negative comments that could be described as stigmatising. This use of stereotypes by staff and pupils created an adherence to gender norms that removed space for those who did not conform to perceived norms. This also suggested a use of the 'universal assumption' category of microaggression, where all queers categorised by others as belonging to the same category have the same experience. The head of PSHE used stereotyping of himself to discuss why he has never been 'come out' to:

> **James:** No-one's ever come out to me either (I: laughs). I think, I don't know, being a bit of a sporty heterosexual big bloke. (I: mmhmm). Maybe I'm stereotyping here a little bit.
>
> **(James, PSHE lead, cishet)**

Alongside his self-stereotype of a "sporty heterosexual bloke", he used this as a way to state that pupils would be unlikely to come out to him thus essentialising a disconnect between these two concepts (Burgers and Beukeboom 2020). This suggests that there was something about his presentation as a 'clearly' heterosexual man that would have in some way inhibited queer pupils from approaching him on this topic, perhaps playing into a stereotype of him as a cishet man being 'sporty' and queer people being inherently 'not' sporty. Interestingly although James suggests that there is something incompatible about overt displays of heterosexuality and being safe to come out to - the pupils themselves positioned him as the person they would be most likely to talk to if they have a problem:

> Amy: Yeah, you really do feel like you could tell him anything and like you could trust him.

> Gertrude: Yeah you could trust him with almost anything, like some of the teachers, you don't want to talk to them about stuff, but I think you just, I think he just understands more than some of the other teachers would and he sort of takes into account how you feel as well as what's going on.
>
> **(Year eight focus group)**

The pupils in this extract did not position themselves as other than heterosexual, however, they felt that they could trust James with "almost anything", unlike "some of the teachers". James' stereotype - the presentation of a 'stereotypical man' - large, sporty, married, does not prevent them from feeling that they can share intimate comments with him.

Teachers also employed stereotypes towards the pupils. There was a moment before a class started when I was helping move the tables around ready for the incoming class. Two pupils coming into the class were addressed by Mary and told to help me as they were "big strong boys". This awareness of gendered stereotypes was higher in the lesbian staff:

> **Dawn:** I try really really hard, and this is one that I do struggle with; to not go "good girl; good boy", when they get something right. That's my one that I really really do struggle with, because I've got so used to doing it over the years. I would never dream of saying "can I borrow a strong boy to lift a box". I would never dream of saying "throw like a girl" or "run like a girl" or anything like that.
>
> **(Dawn, humanities teacher, lesbian, cis)**

When I asked her why she was careful to do this, she replied that there might be trans pupils in her classes and that it would be positive to be aware of this:

> **Dawn:** Just in case they don't identify that way. I'm a bit like you, know, just, I wouldn't wanna keep going "good girl" "good girl" "good girl" at a little girl if she really didn't feel like a little girl.

More generally, other cisgender stereotypes were used by pupils, such as women being "the dirty slags that sleep around" (A boy speaking in a year ten lesson on pregnancy).

When considering stereotypes, another excerpt from my field notes becomes relevant:

> A boy on my table then asks the teacher: "what about men dressed as women?" The teacher asks if he means 'transsexual'. He says "why do you never see women dressed as men?" And I ask him what else I could do to look like a man, already being in a shirt and trousers (I am not out as genderqueer or trans in any way) and he gets confused and doesn't know what I am asking- so I explain that I am wearing the same clothes as him – a shirt and trousers [literally] 'men's clothes', but I look female to him, despite wearing the same 'male' clothes as he is. He can't answer that. He doesn't know what 'a woman dressed as a man' would look like and to him I am female, no matter what I wear.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

Trans men, ('women dressed as men') are invisible because that is normative; women wear trousers and shirts on a daily basis, thus trans men are not easily accorded space to exist; a form of microinvalidation (Sue et al. 2007). This microaggression as mentioned makes it very difficult to 'appear' trans and to be afforded space in the classroom. For those staff who feel that they would be more careful in the way that they teach if they know they have a queer pupil, and who rely on this queerness being visible, this becomes problematic. When considering visibility, the opposite is perceived as true for 'men dressed as women', who are constructed as very visible. This was borne out in interviews with teachers, where more than one staff member espoused the view that somehow, it would be known if a teacher was trans:

> **Ada:** It's something I've heard students discuss amongst themselves based on things that happen in the news or popular culture, things like that, but it's, as far as I'm aware we've never had a student; a trans student. We've certainly never had a member of staff, so it's, it's not something that's you know, on very many people's radars really.
>
> **(Ada, librarian, lesbian, cis)**

Ada's comment also suggests the same microinvalidation - that somehow one's trans status would be visible. Ada, whilst trying to be inclusive, draws on an essentialist construction here – that one 'can tell' if someone is trans. She cannot know for certain that there has never been a trans student at the school, although it may certainly be accurate that there has not yet been an 'out' trans student at the school. Whilst Ada felt gender was not on many people's radars, pupils in focus groups and in observations were able to discuss trans identities in many ways. In focus groups, I discussed 'LGBT' topics with students and asked if they could define trans. In each focus group at least one pupil could readily define what trans meant and pupils in two of the three focus groups brought up non-binary trans identities of their own accord, discussing most often 'genderfluid':

> Ann: And then I think that needs to be – the other stuff needs to be taught in depth earlier as well because I think, cos like, you just do, you try and label yourself, you feel like you have to fit into a certain category. And doing that younger it could help people find themselves because they might not understand it themselves, they like they don't know how they're feeling or, they're like 'oh I'm kind of like more to feeling like a boy and not so much a girl, but what does that make me?' like, I feel like they need more help trying to find themselves really.
>
> Riv: Yeah and then there's people like, like genderfluid people for example, they're like 'I feel like a girl today, I feel like a boy today. What does that make me?' so if you're not taught about that, you would just think 'oh it's just one of them days' or something. But it's not.
>
> **(Year ten focus group)**

The pupils here understand that one does not need pre-existing labels in order to feel a certain way, but that language can be helpful in exploring these identities. They also recognised that if this was them, they would be at risk of being stereotyped by others:

> Adam: Because, like er, if someone was genderfluid and felt like a girl one day and came in dressed as a girl, because people just aren't educated on it at all, they just wouldn't understand it and they would think it [as]
>
> Diana: [Attention seeking.]

Adam: Yeah, like some sort of circus like freak or something.

(Year ten focus group)

In some way, genderfluid people would be seen by *other* people as freaks. None of the pupils in the focus groups described themselves as being anything other than completely accepting of all genders and sexualities, and were often able to have nuanced conversations about it, including a moment when one of the girls was talking about me - I had made a statement that another pupil did not quite hear and which ended in a lot of laughing. In her response to the confusion, in which she was responding about me directly, she said

Kay: I forgot what they [referring to me] were on about and when they said the last word I just, ok.

(Year eight focus group)

I did not comment on her use of 'they' for me - I did not want to make her feel in any way 'put on the spot', but this was a group of pupils who had had no prior introduction to me; I had not observed their lessons, so when considering my pronouns, they only had the initial gendered mention of me by their tutor. Where it would not be unusual for a person with my name to be gendered as 'they' if the other person had not met me, it is not my experience that people gender me as 'they' without being asked to. Thus, whatever the intention of the pupil, it is uncommon to be referred to as 'they' and speaks to a lack of essentialist intent; she did not pick the standard cues and decide a pronoun based on those. Unlike the year ten boy in the observation, whose ideas of gender did not allow for the conception of a 'man dressed as a woman', at least one person in this year eight focus group seemed to understand that I may not have been the gender that had been ascribed to me by someone else.

There were many types of sexuality stereotyping observed and recorded in focus groups, interviews and observations. In class observations, year seven groups did not stereotype 'gay' people to any real degree, but the topic had very little space in which to arise in

the curriculum. In the year ten group however, many stereotypes of both gay men and lesbians arose:

> John: What if you don't like gay people for no reason?
>
> Peter: When you change for PE gay people are staring at you.
>
> Sam: I'm scared they might try and bum me.
>
> Teacher: You have a high opinion of yourself.
>
> Sam: It's just there's a gay guy in PE and he touched me. I'm scared of that person.
>
> Teacher: Stop talking.
>
> John: That means shut up.
>
> Teacher: Why would someone bum you?
>
> Peter: Because they're gay. Gays will do anything for a bit of bum fun.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

Here gay people were portrayed as opportunistic predators, for whom being gay is all about sex, and this view of gays as predators expressed in the classroom potentially makes it difficult for any pupil who has same-sex attractions to discuss this here. Although the teacher is clearly disparaging of the pupils espousing these views and thereby giving potential queer pupils some level of safety, these microaggressions would potentially cause queer students a level of harm (Dover 2016) in that the wider conception of 'gays as predators' is not deconstructed and instead the response comes down to the particular individual; that *he* in some way is not attractive. The microaggression of 'gays' being more generally opportunistic predators is not reflected upon.

Whilst less arose in conversation about bisexuality than homosexuality, the topic was brought up in Kim's year ten class and tropes were used, some seemingly supported by Kim:

Girl: Bisexuals are confused.

Kim: Yes, they could be confused.

(Year ten observation - Kim)

Although my overall opinion at this moment was not that Kim felt that all bisexuals are confused, but some might be trying to work out their sexuality. The point lacks nuance and instead seems to be an agreement from Kim that (all) bisexuals might be 'confused', a common mis-conceptualisation (Hayfield and Jowett 2017). It was, however, taken up by one of the year ten boys a couple of moments later as the subject of dating 'boys *and* girls' was being discussed, and mentioned as being 'an experiment':

Paul: It's not an experiment; it's seeing who you really are. An experiment has a test subject. It's about finding your true self.

Note: This is the same boy who says people can choose. He was vehement about the choice and here he is equally adamant that you should not call people experiments, that *things* are experiments and that *people* are not things. That people might be exploring their sexuality, but it's not an experiment.

(Year ten observation and field notes - Kim)

He argued strongly against the stereotype that bisexuals are simply experimenting. This need to argue against bisexuality as experimentation was made clear in the year ten focus group (which is not the same year ten group as the observation in Kim's class):

Riv: And if like someone like comes out as being bisexual I think they come under the most taboo, if that makes sense.

Diana: The most scrutiny. Definitely.

Riv: Because, you know.

Diana: The whole "greedy" thing.

Riv: You're greedy, you don't know; you're confused.

Adam: (laughing) You've got to broaden your horizons though int' ya? Keep your options open.

Riv: Yeah! (laughs) but especially that kind of "greedy" "attention-seeking" that kind of thing.

Diana: "More likely to cheat" [this is said with air quotes].

(Year ten focus group)

Notable here is that Riv is the only person in the focus groups who actively stated that she was bisexual (or espoused any specific sexuality or gender). Here, she was talking from her experience of having a same-gender partner in year nine. By and large within the school, bisexuality (along with trans identities and also asexuality) was invisible (Hayfield, Campbell, and Reed 2018). Where it was not, it appeared to have a feel of not being quite finalised in terms of identity and was discussed in terms of experimentation or 'broadening your horizons'. Diana and Riv discuss in seriousness the tropes that are associated with bisexuality. Adam's comment about broadening horizons could have been either sarcastic or genuine and it was difficult to get a sense of his intent from the manner in which he spoke, but it is clear that all pupils, whether out as bi or as potentially hetero, easily understood the tropes associated with being bisexual, and those were not challenged in this conversation, although they were brought to light. Their use of these 'generalised impressions' of bisexuality giving rise to certain stereotypes (Burgers and Beukeboom 2020). The mentions of "greedy" and "more likely to cheat" seem to be given here as ironic, suggesting that pupils (whatever their developing sexuality) have a fairly broad understanding of different tropes around sexualities (Hayfield and Jowett 2017, Hayfield, Clarke, and Halliwell 2014).

5.2.1.1 The hetero/cissexist presumption in school cultures

Linked to the theme of stereotypes and how they impact on people's identities, which is largely evidenced outside of official teaching (and by participants from teachers to pupils) I show in this subtheme that there is a reliance within the teaching itself on mundane hetero- and cissexism. Pupils are assumed to be cishet, and the onus is on the student to state if they are not and thus need something different within their SRE teaching, potentially sustaining power imbalances within the classroom (Preston 2016).

The resources pupils are given often focus explicitly on heterosexual normative constructions of sex and biology:

> This is a year seven class talking about body parts. They have a piece of paper with 'words that you should know'. The words are penis/ vagina/ genitals/ intercourse/ sperm/ ova/ semen/ erection/ ejaculation/ masturbation/ clitoris. When they are asked to do this out loud in class the teacher defines intercourse as "a penis is pushed into the vagina".
>
> **(Field notes - James)**

This definition of intercourse, where the vagina is constructed as the passive receiver of the active penis reflects Braun and Kitzinger's (2001) study into dictionary definitions of genitalia, where they found a similar pattern; vaginas were constructed as receivers to penises, and sex was defined as being related to the penis (but vaginas were not mentioned as standalones in conjunction with sex). This suggests a hetero- and cisnormative construction of sex. Sex is defined as essentially heterosex, and coitus only (Buston and Hart 2001; Braun and Kitzinger 2001).

In Mary's interview, her response to my question about whether SRE classes taught safer sex for pupils with a minority sexual identity was:

> **Mary:** We do, we have a whole contraception lesson with that contraceptive board. I don't think we really mention it, we just say, obviously, we promote the use of condoms for safe sex because of health issues and that would be for gay and lesbian as well as heterosexual.
>
> **(Mary, PSHE teacher, sexuality unknown, cis)**

The year seven class was using an external resource, which provided the answers in addition to the terms, did not allow for any construction of sex other than literally 'penis in vagina'. By year ten, in the 'safer sex' class, there was a contraception case that is

displayed to the pupils. In the lesson (of Mary's) I observed where the case ('that contraceptive board') was present, it was not referred to. It contained only methods that are contraceptive (e.g., contained nothing about dental dams or similar). As Mary states, condoms were expected to be appropriate for 'gays and lesbians'. It would be essentialist of me not to recognise that there are of course situations where lesbians might need to use condoms in the format designed. However, this would not be the case for the majority of women in a same-gender relationship and those sexual health needs are not explicitly covered or particularly considered here. This normativity is carried over into class plans created by the school also. James shared with me the PowerPoint presentation for all of the year ten sex education lessons, including those that I missed due to timetabling (classes are not always entirely synchronous and I did not watch the same class for each lesson). One of these was a presentation on 'marriage'. The lesson slides began by discussing that marriage and civil partnerships are available to same-gender couples and that marriage only is available to mixed-gender couples (same sex marriage was in fact available at this point, although not different-sex civil partnership). It moved on to discussing divorce rates in mixed-gender marriages. Pupils are asked to create a list of ideal characteristics they would have liked to see in their partners and were then to write their own wedding vows. Immediately after this, the prepared slide was "let's have a wedding!" where pupils were given this slide:

> We will use an official wedding ceremony script to recreate the magic moment!
> We need 5 volunteers -
> Minister
> Bride
> Groom
> Father of Bride
> Best Man

In conversation with James before I began observations, he showed me his lecture slides. At the time he commented "oh. That's a bit heteronormative, isn't it? I'll have to look at

that". It was, however, the slide he sent me for the lessons that had been completed, so it seems that potentially this presentation was the one delivered to the class, and thus, the stereotypes are perpetuated (Burgers and Beukeboom 2020) and communicated to the class (Worrell 2022).

Pupils are also given 'on the fly' hetero- and cissexist presumptions. A pupil in year seven asked about penises and whether it was possible to "get stuck" when you're having sex. Kim's response, and the rejoinder from another pupil perfectly illustrate the phenomena:

> Kim: It won't get stuck. The penis and the vagina are built to fit together.
> Pupil: Like Lego!
> **(Year seven observation - Kim)**

This perfectly illustrated the mundane nature of mundane heterosexism (Peel 2001, Riggs 2006). Sex is constructed here in a way that assumes that these two parts are inevitable, although of course, Lego bricks often have a number of configurations in which they can be put together, much like body parts (McPhillips, Braun, and Gavey 2001). There is, however, an assumed correct way here, as in the wedding class above, and thus, homosex is pushed out of awareness by the simple fact that in this definition (which is not challenged) of 'two penises' or 'two vaginas' cannot be involved in sex, as half of the requisite pieces are missing.

5.2.2 Queerness as different

As shown in the theme above, stereotyping has an impact on how people perform their genders and sexualities (Butler 2010), and additionally, the reliance on mundane hetero- and cissexism means that teaching is taught in ways that might exclude those outside of a cishet paradigm. Queerness is often essentialised; taught as a separate topic but not quite as part of standard human experience. Problematising, by its nature, essentially situates non-cishet identities as difficult. Problematising occurs when a topic is often

situated as something that is in some way difficult, 'hard-hitting', or outside of the norm (Britzman 1995, Sedgwick 1990). This way of looking at sexuality, as a 'problem' was reflected in qualified staff statements. After I observed one of Mary's classes, she talked to me about her students. My notes read:

> After the class has ended, she tells me that the girl on my desk has "a lot to contend with because she has same-sex parents"; that her parents had been the first lesbian couple in the town to have a civil partnership, and so things were hard for her.
> **Field notes - Mary**

There was no suggestion in any of the discussion around this pupil that the hard 'things' might be anything other than having same-sex parents, such as bullying by pupils, or the ways in which sexuality and/or gender might be taught in classes. Thus, sexuality itself is problematised here rather than the school environment, as also happened in my interview with Mary.

> I: What do you think the school does well around topics of LGBT inclusion?
>
> **Mary:** The zero tolerance now when it comes to any sort of bullying. So, any gay bullying would be immediately investigated. That's taken very seriously, so that's a good thing.

Mary's answer to my question about inclusion was about the school's reaction to bullying, although *not* being bullied is the bare minimum that pupils should hope to expect from school. In reducing my comment about inclusion, to a framing of queer identities as a problem, allowing for a response of "zero tolerance" enabled her to construct and frame her answer as queer inclusion and to suggest that the school did this well, allowing for a showcasing of diversity (Prasad and Mills 1997). This is not to suggest that a zero tolerance on bullying is something to be criticised, but in considering this as active inclusion (rather than trying to prevent a form of exclusion) pupils' queer identities are problematised. This reflects research by Meyer, Taylor, and Peter (2015),

whose large-scale study of Canadian SRE educators found that heterosexual staff were much more likely than LGBQ to say that school was safe for all students, and only just 57% of heterosexual staff felt that school safety means inclusion (in comparison to 77% of LGBQ teachers). In framing bullying as an individual problem, this allows for a discounting of the ways in which the wider school culture might contribute to hetero- and cisnormativity that frames student interactions (Payne and Smith 2013). It also means that staff need not allow for their own agency in reframing gender policing that might occur, which would allow for social change.

The problematising of sexuality begins in teacher training. This was demonstrated here by Trevor, who was halfway through his teacher training at the time of the interview:

> I: So when it comes to LGBT topics, have you had any sort of direct 'being taught' experience around that?
>
> **Trevor:** Erm. In (breathes out). Again, not a great deal to be honest. Not a great deal. I mean we have had some er, some elements of lectures around sexual health have sort of dealt with that. But not, not erm, a massive amount that was specifically around LGBT. We did have some again, more around the human rights side of things around LGBT (I: mmhmm). We had some sort of er, er, sessions, seminars er, about that when we had outside speakers coming in talking about their experiences.
>
> […]
>
> I: Mmhmm. So do you cover like, homophobic bullying as any kind of topic?
>
> T: Yeah again around the, around the whole human rights thing.
>
> (**Trevor - trainee teacher, cisgender man, heterosexual)**

From the start of Trevor's PSHE training, he did not experience a significant amount of training that was specific to queer topics, and at least some of that time was dedicated to 'human rights'. Although I did not enquire here about exactly what 'human rights issues' might be (my question about "homophobic bullying" being my clumsy attempt to follow up on the statement), Trevor's immediate association of my comment of "homophobic bullying" to "human rights" suggested that rather than talking about

sexual health and intimacy for queer people, 'human rights' is associated more with problematising approach and people having a 'human right' not to be bullied.

Trevor's experience of queerness not being integrated into teaching (except as "human rights") as the standard training received, seems to have lasting effects on staff's teaching styles. James, when discussing the teaching of queer inclusion, suggested that he did not know how to teach queerness aside from problematising it. In an answer to my question about how he made SRE inclusive, he says:

> **James:** To be honest with you I wouldn't know what the best thing would be to do. What would you do? Would you have an extra objective for each lesson, so 'must' 'should' 'could' and 'gay'? Or something. I don't know. It's- I wouldn't know the- yeah. A bit.

Pupils have their learning objectives written on a board and displayed at the front of the room for each lesson, so that the learning expectations are clear. In this excerpt, James appears to not know the best way to respond (as demonstrated by firstly his use of "I don't know" and secondly his false starts before concluding "yeah. A bit"). His "would you" was framed as a genuine question to me: as 'the expert' what would *I* do to ensure that SRE was inclusive. He moves from his own unsureness to asking me, to flipping back to himself; his second 'would you' seemed to be his own musing rather than a question of me. For him, if a topic was to cover 'gay', then it had to be added in specifically. Whilst he parodied the idea to suggest it is added as an objective, this served to underline that 'all the other' objectives would be relevant to all of the class, where this one would (potentially) not be. Thus, there is a suggestion that queer identities are problematised and that in some way, it would not be possible to create an inclusive lesson because it would be preposterous. It was presented to me as an 'over the top' solution, that would not be workable, and although it might have been desirable to have had some other way of teaching it, James could not immediately see a way that he could be any more inclusive than he was already being, which constructs queer identities again as difficult. This response is illustrative of the broader theme that somehow queerness cannot be

included in the main topic of sex education delivery, which is illustrated within both my observations in class and the student focus groups.

At Brockmount, the main delivery of 'homosexuality' was taught via the delivery of Stonewall's 90 minute 'Fit' video. Fit is a drama in five sections, following five of the characters as it explores, the adolescent relationships of some of the pupils, the assumptions that other pupils are gay because of the way they dress and the friends' reactions to some of the pupils who have come out. The film is watched and discussed over two to three lessons. Below I am discussing the teaching of sexuality with Mary where she discusses this:

> I: So do you kind of write your own classes based on the [external provider resources] or do they have lesson plans that you-?
>
> **Mary:** They have specific lessons that they have given to us to use for those hard-hitting messages and lots of erm, we use the Fit video, were you there when we were watching it?

Mary's 'specific lessons' include 'sexting' 'grooming' and 'homosexuality'; the bringing in of outside resources for certain topics seems to reinforce the 'difficult' nature of certain topics, and sexuality is constructed as shocking here by Mary.

> **Mary:** It [Fit] is quite shocking and we show it to only key stage four; [year] tens and elevens. […] There must be a reason like that that we probably don't show it to the younger students, but I would show it to my year nines no bother.

Although Mary suggested that she found Fit "shocking" it is rated '12' and thus could be shown to all pupils in year 8 upwards. A 12 rating suggests that all references to sex violence drugs and nudity must be minor and moderate with no large focus on crude references to sex and no promotion of dangerous behaviour. This sense of a non-heterosexuality as shocking, is something that Nadal et al. (2016) consider to be a

microaggression. The parameters around this rating suggest that there is little in general that could lead Fit's specific storylines to be shocking, and that the topic itself is therefore the shocking element and potentially unsuitable for younger years to be taught. Trevor reiterated this, suggesting that sexuality should be taught in later years.

> **Trevor:** In schools so you'd probably start with, just target those people you think are at risk, I think. So I think I'd probably start. I'd do the contraception thing in year nine, but I'd start in earlier years and start with the whole relationship thing. (I: Mmhmm). About 'what is a relationship?' Not just about you know, sexual relationship. It's about what friendship is. (I: Yep) It's about what you know, you know, what's appropriate in terms of friendship, and then building on, moving on to, you know, how can that, how can that then become a more you know, emotional relationship. (I: Yeah) A deeper relationship and stuff like that and lead on to sexual activity, so I think I think I'd start with that approach and then that builds up year nine contraception and things like that and then go on to much more in-depth stuff around sexuality, around different forms of sexuality in the later years or maybe start in year nine. Start in year nine and go on to the later years, you know.

Trevor's statement suggested that relationship and sexual activity should be built up to over the first two years, and different sexualities should be taught from year nine, but begin earlier for those who constituted a potential (unspecified) problem and were thus, 'at risk'. Similarly, Mary suggested that she would not show Fit to those below year nine. Both of these approaches seek to problematise sex in general and queerness in particular by not allowing for the teaching of anything outside of a hetero norm until year nine. Currently 'relationships' (which covers a variety of types of relationship) is taught in year seven, and it would be difficult to teach that without reference to sexuality, although Trevor's suggestion was to concentrate on friendships. This problematising approach was felt as sub-par with the lesbian staff members who would like to see lessons become simply inclusive of queer identities. This differing levels of acceptability between queer and cishet staff is recognised in Meyer, Taylor, and Peter's (2015) research, where queer staff felt very differently about the school and how it felt than cishet staff did. The desire to have less of a problematising approach at Brockmount can be seen in my conversation with queer staff:

I: You'd kind of like to see it [queerness] taught in other areas as well

Ada: Yeah. Just sort of fed into other things, so it's not 'we're going to discuss an issue today…' it's just 'this is just a part of this lesson and this lesson' you know?

I: So less on the kind of problematising it and more and more about making it a part of their everyday.

Ada: Yeah, less 'oh if you're going to be gay your life's going to be harder' it's 'oh this is a really successful person and they happen to be gay, let's do some research on them. Oh, they were married to this man da da da da da'. So then it's just something that happens to be part of that lesson, so if they're looking at their BTEC sport, they have to do a section about sport in the media, so could they cover about gay football players in the media.

(**Ada - Librarian, cisgender woman, lesbian)**

Ada's ideal approach to teaching around sexuality was to teach inclusively on the topic; to cover the topic at hand, and usualise non-heterosexualities, an approach that using Fit as the standalone deliverer for any sexuality outside of a hetero norm, which, by definition was not doing. By problematising sexuality in this manner, it was turned in to a topic by itself, rather than an accepted part of the variety of human experience. Ada's approach here mirrors Meyer, Taylor, and Peter's (2015) findings; that LGBQ staff members are more likely to desire or create learning that is usualised rather than problematised. Ada's usualising approach perhaps lacks some of the focus on power inequalities that might be apparent with queer identities, but she recognises that exclusively focusing on the negatives creates a problematised identity. This was recognised by pupils themselves:

Boy: What if you see a lesbo couple kissing?

Girl: The more people see it the more it's okay.

(Year ten observation - Kim)

The more something is usualised, the more it becomes acceptable. When the topic was treated as unusual, and as an issue, it prevented this usualisation and did not allow it as

much room to become accepted/acceptable. In this excerpt, the pupil's heterosexist use of the word "lesbo" is not challenged by pupils or Kim. This may be because Kim felt that it would be more important to concentrate on the larger conversation - which turned out to be a productive conversation about norms, than to shut down the discussion based on language. It may, however, have been because Kim felt that she did not have personal capacity to challenge the behaviour (Rudoe 2010) or because she simply did not recognise it as problematic – or if she did, that she did not consider that it might have a negative effect on some pupils, to hear unchallenged language.

Across this theme staff have demonstrated that they tend to teach in a problematised manner, to 'deal' with an 'issue' (as is reflected from the policy language in chapter four), and pupils, whilst not discussing teaching *per se,* demonstrate their own understanding that the more something is made visible the more it becomes acceptable. Ada, as a lesbian woman, would like to see less problematisation and more usualising and has a vision of how this might be done, but the heterosexual staff members struggle to see how queerness might be incorporated into the curriculum in a meaningful way.

5.2.2.1 Navigating queerness as a point of vulnerability

For pupils for whom their sexuality has been declared 'other', there is a large presumption by staff that their sexuality is a vulnerability (Quinlivan 2013). Some of this is underlined by the lesbian staff members' constructions of their own sexuality. Both these staff members feel that it is possible to have their sexuality be a point of vulnerability and they manage this in different ways. Dawn was out to staff but relied on the heteronormative school culture to not out her to pupils, in similar ways that Rudoe's (2010) lesbian teacher participants mention. Dawn went to great lengths not to gender her partner in any conversation where her partner was mentioned:

> I: You must do quite a bit of work around that kind of, the language of 'the other half', that's not gendered.

> **Dawn:** Yeah, but it's quite, it's easy once you get used to it. It's just using 'they', and then like cutting sentences short if you're going to say like 'he' or 'she'. It's quite easy. Like when you get used to it. In the beginning probably I struggled a bit more, but not here.
>
> I: Yeah.
>
> Dawn: So we were having the eternal debate the other day about what you call a roll, like a bread roll (I: (laughs)) and I said "oh my other half says 'bread-cake" and they were like "what?!" and I'm: "Yorkshire".

Dawn's discussion of the topic here suggests in her assertation that she struggled at the start of teaching but not now. She has been not out to pupils at least (she has been out to some staff), for some time; she has worked in this school for over two years and was not out in her previous school that she was at for five years. The demonstration she gives of the way in which she negotiates avoidance of personal pronouns mention relies on ambient heterosexuality (Fifield 2001); a default assumption that all are heterosexual unless mentioned otherwise.

Ada says about herself: "The clothes I wear, I kind of fit a stereotype, so, I can't avoid it. I don't seek to, so…". When I met her, she was wearing (amongst various things that could mark her out as a feminist and possibly therefore have an association with 'lesbian' in the eyes of the pupils), a union-based rainbow lanyard, which would signal 'LGBTQ+' to many pupils. Talking about her outness and vulnerability around her sexuality, she said:

> **Ada:** I think because the kids know it doesn't upset me, you can call me a dyke; you can say that to me to my face; I had someone shout it out the window once actually, but I didn't react. It wasn't, it doesn't upset me, so I think they know it's not a button they can press with me, so they just don't bother.

But she recognised that for pupils it was not as simple to not react to peer pressure or comments; that there was an expectation of compulsory heterosexuality (Atkinson 2002).

> **Ada:** I think there's a lot of, although it has got better, there's still a lot of peer pressure on students to conform. There are more students come out now whilst they're at school. When I was here, there was just two of us when I was at school across the whole school at the time, whereas now you might have a couple in each year group, which is nice. But it's still, it's still something that isn't easy.
>
> I: Yep.
>
> Ada: It's not an easy environment to come out in.

The school environment is seen as having improved over recent years as the school has begun to challenge attempts at stigmatisation, but it is still difficult. Because of her own identity, Ada has worked hard to create a safe space in the library. When I arrived to interview her, it was the end of a slightly damp lunch time, and the library had a sign on the door stating that it was full. I asked her about this, and she commented:

> **Ada:** I have had students who are gay come up as a safe place; I've had students confide in me and things like that, so that does happen, but it's a safe space for all sorts of students […] I think it [SRE] gives them permission to discuss something new. And once they do start discussing it, they take ownership of it more. So I've had, for example, a couple of students might come in after one of the lessons and say "ugh, we were just doing this in, we were just doing about gay people" whatever, and then all of a sudden a student who wasn't even part of that conversation will go "have you got a problem with it? My sister's gay" and then they start and they go "oh no no, that's not what we were saying, we were just saying we did it in lesson" and they start to discuss it then, whereas they would never have walked in and started a conversation like that ordinarily, so I think that's really good that it opens a dialogue for them.

It seems that Ada's creation of a safe space in the library worked for varying demographics of pupils. The library as safe space gave the pupils room to challenge stigmatising comments directed at queer people, perhaps safe in the knowledge that the area was run by someone who was clearly part of the demographic the comments were about, and feeling that they might be supported to make the challenge.

In addition, Ada deliberately sought out books that usualise both queer characters, and other minority characters (such as Black, and minority ethnic people) and her aim was to continue to provide books that simply have a diverse range of characters as part of the background. She also had a range of books on sexual health and other health topics. This is additional 'safe space' work; pupils who come to the library and read will learn about other identities as part of daily life. Whilst other schools might have a designated 'safe space' sticker (Payne and Smith 2013) to support pupils, in this school, it is small enough that the library as safe space seems to be a widely accepted fact. The day I interviewed her just after lunch, she mentioned that two boys had taken a sex education book from the shelves and had put themselves in a corner to read it. They had not felt able to return it to the right place and had placed it somewhere else. Ada had not commented to them about this although she had been aware of it in the moment, as she had wanted them to have the safety to learn what they wanted to learn, rather than shame them about not replacing the book correctly.

Dawn was considering trying to create some kind of safe space for queer pupils also:

> **Dawn:** But I'd like to be more open, and I'd like to discuss it a bit more and I'm trying to set stuff up around the school and stuff, but nobody's really interested in getting involved and it's just difficult (I: mmm) you know, and without outing myself it's quite difficult as well. And it's one of those things; the idea of it sounds lovely; yeah, it would be wonderful, but I do worry at this school with the kind of 'yob-'eds' that we've got, what the reaction might be.

I met Dawn on my first visit to the PSHE lead, where he introduced me to her and she explained that she wanted to set up a space that was something akin to a gender and sexual orientation alliance (GSA) in the USA (Rasmussen 2004), which is what she is referencing again here. In the USA, the associations are usually peer-led but supported by staff, and give pupils a safe(r) space to go. As the name suggests, the groups are open to hetero students as well as all queer pupils (Mayberry, Chenneville, and Currie 2013). Similarly to the teaching, where staff felt comfortable in teaching about non-normative sexuality, but were concerned about how to deal with the repercussions from intolerant or uninformed pupils, Dawn was concerned about how to manage that safe space and

this was echoed in my interview with Kim, who was aware of the space Dawn wished to set up. I asked Kim how she thought the school culture might be improved for queer pupils:

> **Kim:** I think having role models? I think we said this last time [we spoke]. Having somebody to speak to? Somebody who's openly gay, in the school, which is not going to happen now probably?
>
> I: You mean like pupils?
>
> Kim: Pupils, staff. Either? Someone for them to go and talk to about how they feel, about what they're going through […] but then how safe would that be? That's the problem isn't it? Because there would be other people that are 'look – they're going to that LGBT place – look!' and then does that lead to people getting picked on or name-called because they've gone somewhere because they might be confused or might be supporting a friend or, dealing with family issues surrounding it. For any number of reasons. Somebody saw them going in there. Yeah it's hard. In this school particularly.

Interestingly, in this comment, the "picked on" is only construed as undeserved for pupils who are not actually queer themselves - the confused, or those with queer family and friends; those were a problem and people might pick on them - they are 'undeserving victims' (Preston 2016). There was no mention here around what might happen if people who were queer themselves were seen accessing that space, but there was a recognition that somehow, the creation of a safe space might have made things worse for pupils affected by queer topics. This issue was seen as too dangerous to address as it might lead to repercussions, and there might be a 'safe space' but by implication that might have made the school environment 'less safe' for some pupils, and thus was portrayed as best left not started. The suggestion that queer pupils need a 'safe space' automatically places the student as needing support and as 'other' (Talburt and Rasmussen 2010) and again takes us to a solution that focuses on the individual rather than the systemic. The topic of safe space is paradoxical; whilst there is the potential to position specific students as somehow 'other' and 'lesser', and the school environment as otherwise inherently 'unsafe', in creation of a specific 'safe' space, it interrupts notions of normativity and allow for education on accepting understandings of

difference based on a deficit model. The creation of the safe space might also allow some students who would not otherwise have considered it, a place to explore their gender and sexuality (Quinlivan 2013).

The portrayal of gay as a vulnerability was reflected by students. They illustrate their point with a specific incident that occurred:

> Ann: It's really sad cos I like, know two gay people that used to be together, and they used to be like, afraid of hugging in public, because they'd be-
>
> Gemma: [They wouldn't talk in school.]
>
> Ann: [Afraid they would be heckled]. Yeah, they wouldn't talk at school. And it was really sad because like, it was only a hug and it's quite innocent. Erm, if they were like doing whatever, touching each other up, then if it was anyone I'd be 'just give it a break a minute; you're at school' but it was just a hug and because like it's something so innocent you don't even have to be together to give anyone a hug, you know. It was so innocent but they couldn't even do that.
>
> **(Year ten focus group)**

The "two gay people" were portrayed as feeling themselves to be afraid of being seen as being queer, to the point of not acknowledging each other even 'innocently' in the school environment, presumably for fear of the repercussions. 'Gay' as vulnerability existed in conjunction with intersectional issues also.

> Adam: And as well like er, people talk as well don't they?
>
> Riv: Yeah .
>
> Adam: You sort of lose your identity, you're not known as what your name is; I wouldn't be known as Adam, I'd be known as 'the gay Black geezer'.
>
> Riv: (laughs)
>
> Adam: It's just, not nice. You're stripped of your identity, stripped of who you are and you just feel isolated.
>
> **(Year ten focus group)**

As a Black student in the school, Adam recognised that if he were to 'come out' in any way, he would be dehumanised, and his identity would just be referred to in terms of his minority statuses; 'gay' and 'Black', leading to a sense of isolation. Other pupils recognised that social standing might also play a part in the way that individuals would be constructed:

> Diana: And I feel like it depends on where you are like, socially as well. Compared to like if Adam came in with a lad it would be completely different if you saw someone maybe not with as many friends, like then it would be more accepted as well like, if you don't really know them, whereas like Adam if he was, if he came in with…
>
> I: So you think because Adam's popular, he would struggle more?
>
> Diana: [Yeah]
>
> Ann: [Yeah]
>
> **(Year ten focus group)**

Adam's view of himself was intersectional in that he was looking at his ethnicity - in terms of appearance, he was one of three percent of pupils in the school who are not white (there were other white non-British pupils) and he clearly feels the impact of racism in his comment; he knows he is immediately more vulnerable because he is Black. He did not however, consider his popularity. During an observation of his class, I noted that he felt that he did not suffer from peer pressure because he was a leader, but in this focus group excerpt he was positioned by Diana and later Ann as being more vulnerable *because* of his popularity, rather than being shielded because of it, which had been his original argument.

In this theme of queer as vulnerability, queer identities were not considered as part of the whole, but as somehow outside of this, which reduced stigmatising behaviours to individual levels. This precluded a conversation about how homo/biphobia and transphobia situate cishet identities as 'normal' (Britzman 1995) and everything else as

'other', and this is reflected in how non cishet identities were discussed within the classroom and wider school.

5.2.3 Microaggressions in the classroom

Microaggressions can come in the form of a barbed comment, or 'a joke', or a 'seemingly innocent' comment and can be defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward members of oppressed groups" (Sue et al. 2007: 271). They may or may not be intended to harm but they support hetero- and cissexist norms. Microaggressions come in three forms: micro assaults that are overt behaviours that can be verbal or non-verbal; micro insults, actions or statements that serve to slight the identity of the queer person; microinvalidations, actions or statements that negate or exclude the feelings and responses of the queer person, for example, by telling them that their perception of an event as discriminating was not so (Nadal et al. 2016: 3). In this theme I consider several ways of using queerness as a microaggression and consider the impact on pupils.

The use of "that's so gay" as a microaggression has been well-documented in literature (McCormack and Anderson 2010, Woodford et al. 2012, Rasmussen 2004). Although I did hear other gendered epithets (usually negative towards women) used with some frequency, I did not personally hear the use of 'gay' as an insult raised at any point inside or outside of the classroom, supporting Rudoe's (2018) research finding that the use of the term dropped by a third between 2009-2014. Mark, a year eight boy talked about his hearing of the term:

> Mark: I don't why- it's so, I don't know; it seems, like when people use I guess 'gay' as an insult. I don't understand why, because it shouldn't be bad, because they use it in a way to make it sound as if it's a bad thing, but it's really not.
>
> (**Year eight focus group one)**

Mark recognised that 'gay' can be used as a microaggression; an insult that serves to reinforce the message that being gay is a weapon that can be used against someone.

All the teachers and pupils demonstrated a considerable acquaintance with the phrase "that's so gay". In discussing the phrase, it became evident that the teachers interviewed all worked to position themselves as someone who would personally challenge the use of "that's so gay", and they also discussed other staff who would not.

> **Ada:** But there are a lot of staff who don't pick students up on that kind of language.
>
> I: Yeah. I was wondering what it's kind of like. I mean I haven't heard it as I've been wandering around. I've heard more students called 'pussies' than anything else, and that tends to get picked up on, so I was curious about how it would be, how the anti- the homophobic language gets picked up on.
>
> Ada: It depends on what member of staff is around at the time unfortunately. It was an issue I raised with our previous head, who was here before [current head] and I sent him an email just saying "are you aware how often this happens and how staff don't pick it up?" and I got an email back where he'd said "well I've looked on the Oxford English dictionary online and it just says that it's a part of common usage now as a negative term, so what do you want us to do about it?"

Ada tried to pursue the topic at the highest level and was rebuffed by the previous head (and she felt that the head I met was much better). She understood that the 'grammar' argument had been used against her, and thus she could not argue further. Ada had been trying to suggest to the head that stigmatising behaviour had been being used, and her implication is that this phrase could be damaging to hear (Woodford et al. 2012) and the head had responded with a microaggression; a tokenistic rejection of the suggestion. Whilst it is suggested by scholars such as Rasmussen (2004) that the phrase "that's so gay" is not always problematic, and that individuals themselves say they do not intend the use to be stigmatising, the rejection by the head of any stigmatising intent outright and locating the issue in grammar ignores possible intent and potential damaging outcomes and in this instance was received as non-affirming (Testa et al. 2015).

I discussed with Kim the new policy of zero-tolerance that would be coming in, in the September term, with reference to stigmatising language:

> I: So does this new zero tolerance kind of policy go as far as, if kids were using homophobic language in the playground just to each other, not kind of directed at anyone. Would that be a zero tolerance or?
>
> **Kim:** (whispers). I think depends who heard it.
>
> I: Right.
>
> Kim: I do think it. For some people, if they heard that language, kids would be pulled up on it. But other staff would probably just let it go.

A newer, much stricter policy was not seen as being enough to combat this microaggression. It depended on the point of view of the individual teacher as to whether "that language" would be picked up upon or not, but the policy did not necessarily affect whether pupils would be pulled up or not, suggesting that policy and actions are not synonymous and that it is possible to officially state one course of action, but to act another. Pupils recognised this for themselves:

> I: Do you hear anyone using "that's so gay"?
>
> Amy: [Yeah]
>
> Gertrude: [Yeah]
>
> Crystal: [Yeah]
>
> I: And what happens when people say that?
>
> Amy: I don't think really anything happens to be honest. But like, I think sometimes people might say 'you shouldn't say that' or something like that, but you know, I don't think it really…
>
> I: And what if it happens near a teacher?
>
> Amy: Erm
>
> Crystal: They say it's like, not appropriate sometimes, but otherwise they just kind of ignore it.

> I: So some of the time teachers will say it's not right and some of the time they don't bother.
>
> Amy: Mmm.
>
> (**Year eight focus group)**

In this excerpt, I interpreted Amy's comment of 'people' as meaning pupils, and she did not correct me, but whether she was referring to pupils or staff, there is a sense here that whilst there might be a mild reproach "you shouldn't say that" there is a strong understanding from the pupils that sometimes staff won't 'bother' to correct language. There is also recognition from staff and students that some staff also recognise that (other) staff would "let it go". Whilst the use of "that's so gay" is positioned by at least some staff as not intending to be homophobic, some pupils seem to recognise that even if not meaning to infer a person is 'gay', (instead 'gay' is applied about objects, rather than people), that the use of the term links being 'gay' to being somehow 'bad', thus stigmatising language to negative consequences (Dover 2016, Rasmussen 2004, Chonody, Rutledge, and Smith 2012). Pupils seem to recognise that language might reflect inner intent, as seen in my year 10 observation with Kim:

> A boy says that gay isn't used by lots of people now and they have a conversation about using the 'proper' words. Kim says 'why don't you use words that mean things?" and he replies with "maybe they're homophobic".
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

The person in this observation understood that 'gay' was linked to stigmatising attitudes, and seemed to be suggesting that pupils (people) could choose to use other language, but did not do so as a low-stakes way of demonstrating homophobia. The phrase "that's so gay" is at least partly accepted into general language, thus drawing on notions of mundane heterosexism (Peel 2001). These notions speak to individualistic understandings of homophobia rather than acknowledging that prejudice can become so embedded in our language that it is not recognisable as such. It was a phrase used

both by those who wished to stigmatise and those who did not. Without a clear way to differentiate, it is impossible to sanction a pupil for their choice of words.

5.2.3.1 Demonstrations of microaggressions and gender

Microaggressions and transgender identities are not well-covered in existing literature, and much of what exists treats trans people as a homogenous group (Chang and Chung 2015). Microaggressions against those who either are, or are perceived as trans, differ significantly depending on the presentation of the trans person. There are some commonalities however, such as perceiving trans people as exotic (Nadal et al 2016) and incidences of cisgenderism, defined by Ansara and Hegarty (2012) as a systemic multi-level ideology that is reflected in cultural discourses that consistently situates the trans person as 'other'.

Pupils and staff both used language that might be considered microaggressive, and discussed others' use of microaggressions. I start with an instance in a year ten class:

> One of the pupils, Jack, made a comment that I didn't catch, but Kim responded to with "aww, Jack's come out of the closet. We all knew the homophobia was just a front" to which Jack replied instantly: "it's not!"
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

Kim employed a common rhetorical device here, an ironic comment, used in order to make a joke out of the pupil to suggest that people who appear to be hetero and see queer identities as stigmatising are secretly gay. Jack could not accept being called 'gay' and for him it was an insult. Kim took a minority identity that has been situated as problematic, that no-one in the class had actively claimed, and 'jokingly' outed a pupil. In this extract it may be that she is trying to challenge the stigmatising behaviour demonstrated by embarrassing the pupil. However, in doing this this way she inadvertently reinforces the idea that it is stigmatising to 'be gay' and reinforces the construction of 'gay' as a site of potential mockery. In Kim's class, this led to the pupil

being able to defend his stigmatising of others without recrimination. People are intersubjective in that they cannot go through life without being subject to the views of others (and vice versa) and their thought processes and identity positions are often created in response to those experiences. This form of microaggression, a microinsult (Sue et al. 2007) serves to slight a gay identity and thus demonstrates to others that 'gay' is stigmatising. Kim is not the only member of staff to speak in this way; Mary recounts here how she has responded in a similar way to a pupil.

> I: There was some stuff from the girls but more about, more about seeing boys kissing.
>
> **Mary:** Yes. You're right. Cos that happened in the film doesn't it? In the Fit? Cos they don't want to look at it. I mean I always say to them you know maybe, I sort of make a joke about it like "that's something in you maybe, that you're fearing for yourself and if you want to talk to me at the end of the lesson then you're welcome to do so". You know, because they found it quite challenging to actually watch.

It matters less here whether their points might be accurate and more that 'jokes' are a microaggression commonly reported being used 'against' queer people (Nadal et al 2016). Staff are using microaggressions differently to pupils in that they are attempting to use them as devices to challenge stigmatising behaviours; as the responses to microaggressions from students, whilst not perceiving their own responses as microaggressive - indeed they are trying to stop a stigmatising behaviour it has potential to have a negative impact by itself.

In an observation again with Kim's lesson, the pupils are discussing the difference between girls being able to say women are beautiful, and the boys (not) being able to say men are handsome:

> The teacher talks about an assignment on beauty that she set last year and how two of the girls handed in pictures of women and that somehow, it is acceptable for girls to talk about beauty in women, but not for boys to talk about men being

> handsome, which immediately brings a cry of “lesbian!” from a boy (who then suggests he was only joking).
>
> (**Year ten observation - Kim)**

Where Kim was being ironic in the example before this, in suggesting the pupil was gay, this is an unironic statement that girls can talk about beautiful women without being lesbians. A pupil reacts and whilst it clearly *is* a joke (whilst being somewhat heterosexist), the joke is that previously, a pupil could do this work without being accused of being a lesbian, and now ‘lesbian’ has become a weaponised comment, rather than the reverse; that it has become ok for boys to say men are handsome. In the moment, Kim is reflecting on her observations of what pupils feel is acceptable; rather than portraying a sense of mundane heterosexism, she is reflecting on this. It is impossible to know whether the student who responded with this form of microinsult (Sue et al. 2007) was aware of this and was trying to break a perceived taboo, or whether he was trying to shore up his identity, meaning that the response both challenges and reinforces heteronormativity. In this ‘gay’ set of lessons, these types of responses were common, as shown in the extract below, where the pupils are watching a film: “love is all you need”. In this film, the universe is flipped; ‘gay’ is normal and ‘hetero’ is not:

> Kim starts by playing the YouTube short film “Love is all you need”, which was recommended by one of the pupils, Paul in the last lesson. As it starts, a male pupil says “gay” and other boys laugh. As the clip plays there is a scene where one child wants to play ‘mummies and daddies’ but in this alternate universe this is not normal.
>
> A pupil comments “no it ain’t- that’s *normal*”.
>
> The film later contains a chant of “Ashley likes boys” and a different male pupil in Kim’s class says “that’s normal”. […] Another comment of “gay boy” from someone in the class. In the clip someone says “papa says breeders will burn in hell”. A male pupil says “I’d rather burn in hell”. And the sense is that that is rather than be gay.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

A series of comments arose here in response to the film. The first 'gay' comment came as the film became obviously about a 'gay' world, and I wondered to myself whether, along with being a reflection of the film's 'gayness', the comment was a way to subvert language - this clearly *is* a 'gay' world, so the pupil cannot be chastised for using the word. Kim was a teacher who stated that she actively challenged the use of "that's so gay" but here it would have been difficult to pull the pupil up for his usage. Comments were made throughout this film: male pupils commented that 'gay' was abnormal, and there was a direct statement that a boy would rather suffer an eternity in hell than be gay. All of the comments have the effect of positioning the speaker as hetero, and by implication, those who fit the norm do not need to worry about this kind of statement, repeating various microaggressions (Nadal, Skolnik, and Wong 2012) that have potential to be harmful, but that were difficult to challenge in this context.

Coming into lessons, I was aware that I looked different from most people coded as women (as that is how I was introduced - by the proxy of 'she' as a pronoun). The women teachers wore skirts and blouses, or dresses for the most part, and the female pupils that I saw, almost exclusively wore skirts. When I was in class, I wore trousers and a shirt and to some degree, presented fairly androgynously. There is a moment in the classroom that I recorded in my field notes:

> Year ten: I was sitting in the classroom at the start of the lesson waiting for pupils to arrive. The teacher had just left the room for a moment. Two pupils I coded as male came in, and as they arrived at the table I was sitting on, looked at me and one said to the other "Is that a student or a teacher? What is it?". In the moment I was torn between staying queer and responding. I also feel somewhat intimidated. I was seated and they had just walked in and were standing above me. The casualness with which the statement was treated felt unsafe and I didn't feel that I could respond in any appropriate manner. I was shaken by both the casual air with which the question was asked out loud by someone standing above me within arms' length, and my inability to respond in the moment.
>
> **(Field notes)**

The exchange between the two boys felt pointed. Standing a foot away from me, they knew that I could hear them and made no discernible attempt to moderate their voices. I was directly affected by the negative feeling that seemed inherent at that point, understanding it to be a tacit disapproval of my failure to conform to a gendered expectation and a microaggression directed towards me based on their perception of my gender (Nadal, Skolnik and Wong 2012). Although my presentation is intended to be ambiguous, my interview with Ada, who also wore trousers and short hair (but in a much more 'tailored' and 'feminine' fashion) confirmed that she had a similar experience within the school:

> **Ada:** So I've seen it from both sides. Erm. And I really enjoy the job. Initially I was thrown; the questions the students asked about me personally. The first week I had a lot of comments about me erm, sort of saying "ooh it's a man" and things like that. I was very different to the lady I replaced, who was your typical middle-aged, pleated skirts, socks and sandals librarian, and then I turned up in a suit and short hair. (I: laughs) and it did throw them and I didn't know how to reac-respond to that initially. So I did find that quite difficult. For the first sort of year really, if I'm being honest. But since then, I've found that with the students, honesty is the best policy. If they ask me a question, I will answer it, providing it's obviously not too personal, but I'm sure the students still say things behind my back, but I'm, I'm not aware of those so I don't worry about them.

Although Ada did not present this as a significant problem for her personally; she was 'thrown' for the first week. As the conversation moved on, she expanded her statement and it became clear that for the first year she directly experienced significant numbers of students making challenging statements about her because her presentation was not the stereotypical 'female' presentation pupils expect: the stereotypical (hetero) female presentation of (Nadal et al. 2011) and she suspects it is still happening. In both these incidences, adults, either staff or visitors to the school, were subject to comments that were difficult to receive and were outside of pupil behaviour that might be expected by said staff or visitor.

In the course of the lessons also, several stereotypes and tropes about gender and sexuality were employed. Men were constructed as 'masculine', and anything outside of that was not male. Women were constructed as feminine, but anything too female (girls and women having a sense of their own sexuality) was considered (in their own words) "a slag". Pupils positioned gender in several ways, often seeming to draw on popular constructions of gender. In Kim's class, a character in 'Fit' was introduced as he was getting ready to go out. He was tall and muscular, and he was putting on a tight-fitting pink vest top, and jogging bottoms. He left the house and it became apparent that he was a teacher on his first day in a new school:

> They started to watch the Stonewall 'Fit' film, which starts with a drama teacher who seems to be a cis male, in a pink 'women's' top being harassed by several people (mostly male) who the viewer then finds out are pupils at the school. The scene then moves to the drama teacher phoning his (apparently male) partner. One of the boys in my class says "why did he call it a man?" and others say "I thought he was a man. What is that?" "that scares me!" "why has he got boobs? Is that a man or a woman?" – Kim says "it's a man and he's muscly". A boy says "it's a man but apparently it's got tits of muscle".
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

Although the actor in question would not usually be described as effeminate aside from the pink top, the fact that he was a drama teacher and was wearing a top probably designed for a woman, was enough to disrupt some of the pupils' processing of the idea of 'male'. It was not the drama teaching that was problematic, but its association with the feminine. This character was presented as a cis man, but the pupil's use of "it's a man, but" suggests that the character has stepped outside of the accepted presentation for men (Nadal et al 2016). This, again, is a shoring up of sexuality and masculinity in a culture where both of these concepts might be challenged (Epstein, O'Flynn, and Telford 2003), and provided a performance of cishet masculinity reinforced by stigmatising words and behaviours (Nayak and Kehily 1996). As the pupils could not easily assign 'gay' as an insult (because the character *is* in a same sex relationship), they have used trans identities as an alternative to what Pascoe (2007) calls 'the fag discourse'; failing at 'masculine' tasks and revealing femininity.

Pupils used the phrase “it” as a microaggression across three instances here, all to refer to a person they felt has transgressed boundaries. “It” was used to refer to me in my trousers and shirt, actively trying to portray ambiguity; to refer to Ada, who wore tailored clothes bought from a clothes range aimed at women, but who transgressed the gender boundary by wearing trousers and having short hair and lanyard badges that positioned her as a feminist and queer person; and at a character who was male but who wore clothes (possibly) from a clothes range aimed at women. All three of us transgressed gender norms and were moved from he or she into the objectified ‘it’ (rather than the personal ‘they’), and this active portrayal of gendered differences as unacceptable adds to problematising, both in SRE and in the wider school culture, therefore making it difficult for those who do not conform to gender norms to exist easily within school and within the curriculum.

5.2.4 Invisibility and the hetero- and cissexist presumption

Aside from the mundane hetero- and cissexism that occurs in the classroom, there are identities that are invisible due to default assumptions of cissexism. These will be explored separately below. Beginning with invisible identities within school cultures, I will discuss the ways in which some minority identities are marginalised in favour of other identities and then move on to discuss the inevitability of sex, which marginalises asexuality.

5.2.4.1 Invisible identities within school cultures

Although it is not very ‘queer’ to pick out ‘types’ of queer identity, the school itself is working within this framework. The language in school (and in policies) is essentialised and therefore it is useful in considering how certain ways of discussing sexuality or gender are not happening, something that the pupils have noticed for themselves:

Ann: Having to explain like the whole like spectrum, like saying "you don't have to be just a boy or a girl, you don't have to be straight or gay – there's stuff in between" I feel like that needs to be taught as well.

(Year ten focus group)

And later:

Diana: Yeah. They only really focus on gay and straight don't they?

Riv: Yeah. They say "there are straight people. This is how straight people work. This is…"

Diana: "Well we don't even know how. [It's a shady subject."]

Riv: ["We don't know how this bit works, but we know it exists"] They don't talk about the in between as much.

Adam: If they speak about it they'll speak about it but not educate you on it.

Riv: They just go "oh yeah this is a thing"

Ann: "But we're not going to tell you what it is"

Riv: Yeah.

(Year ten focus group)

The pupils here suggested that their sex education was aimed at telling them "how straight people work" (Corteen's 2006 coital imperative), but merely informing them that other people exist (e.g. by teaching about 'homophobia' in sex education lessons). This supports Britzman's (1995) claim that in the curriculum there are two pedagogical strategies: "provisions of information" and "techniques for attitudinal change" (Britzman 1995: 158). Although pupils felt that 'homosexuality' was marginalised and treated differently, they felt that bisexuality was invisibilised by its lack of mention. This is borne out in my observations and interviews with teachers. In most classes where sexuality was discussed, bisexuality was not mentioned. Where it was mentioned, it was discussed with reference to stereotypes, rather than as a genuine orientation that someone could claim for themselves. This lack of coverage within the curriculum is demonstrated in discussions with teachers also:

I: So if you had free reign and could kind of devise the perfect SRE thing across the year what would you do?

Mary: Oh I'd have it all in there. I would have er, Oscar Wilde poetry and talk about history of gay and lesbians and how the law was changed and the campaign. The pride. You know I talked about, I put a poster up for the pride march in [local town], just so that it was in the classrooms, so people could see that that was something that people were able to do, students were able to do.

I: So when creating a lesson plan you have kind of, the concerns of parents [in mind]?

James: Possibly yeah. It is on your mind. Just from a faith point of view. I've had conversations with parents before who are obviously against homosexuality and so erm. And as a Christian as well, er, I respect other Christians' viewpoints, to a point. But personally myself and both my colleagues in this school and also people I go to church with all agree that homosexuality is just normal. It's the same as heterosexuality. (I: mmhmm). So, so yeah.

The pupils' comments are supported by my conversations with Mary and James, who did not leave any room in their comments here for bisexual people, which is reflected in the lack or curriculum time for bisexuality in general. Whilst Mary's speech and James' comments here were both positive in that they are supportive of including 'homosexuality', both sets of comments work to erase the visibility of bisexual people (and people with other sexual identities) (Barker et al. 2012), which along with the comment on gender, is something pupils would like to see covered as a matter of course.

In the same way that pupils are assumed to be hetero/sexual beings, they are also presumed to be cisgender. This is noted by pupils and staff when discussing the coverage of identities that are not cisgender:

Riv: And saying that, with all this like, we've got homo- but transgender issues I don't feel were really approached at all.

Diana: No, there's none of that.

Ann: Never has been

Gina: Not even a mention.

(Year ten focus group)

This lack of coverage of trans topics is acknowledged by the teachers also:

> **Mary:** And then a bit more hard-hitting messages. You know, the trans area is something that we have definitely not in any way shape or form started to cover or refer to, and yet there's bound to be trans people in school. (I: yeah) And I think they probably just, they're the quietest, they're not able to probably speak about that because it's even more off, off the range now.

Mary acknowledges that the lack of facilitation for trans identities to exist may mean that pupils who might consider (or do) identify as trans, may not find room in the classroom or perhaps school, to exist.

In my first observation of a class, year seven, the teacher (James) asked the pupils if they knew what "a transgender" was. Several children in the class could give some kind of explanation that was broadly correct, and none said they did not understand. It was the week that the Transgender Equality Report had been published and every day that week there had been something on the news or as a documentary about trans identities - including a six-year-old child talking on the Victoria Derbyshire show two days previously. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding, with one pupil talking about watching a programme about 'a boy and a girl who had been a girl and a boy' getting married and having children. Another pupil brought up Lady Colin Campbell (who is intersex; she was brought up as a boy and is now living as a woman). Afterwards, the teacher, James commented to me "I don't know whether I would have done that if you weren't in the room" suggesting that this visibility of the topic was not the norm in his classes.

Buston and Hart's (2001) study suggests a similar disconnect. In their study, a majority of teachers felt that they were inclusive in their teaching, where class observations suggested that only a minority were fully inclusive. Likewise, here, James stated that if he did not know the answer, he would say. However, in his teaching, he does not do this, possibly because he does not know he does not know the answer. This relationship between cognitions about teaching and actual teaching practices is both complex and not uncommon (Opdenakker and Van Damme 2006).

Although only one pupil openly stated a sexuality other than hetero and no pupils openly stated a trans identity, there was a big sense from participants that people should be able to 'be who you are', and that that identity need not be stereotyped:

> **Karen**: Transgender and stuff. It's a bit like that. "well you're born a boy and you are a boy" but just because it's like when I say "oh I'm a girl so I have to play with dolls". They may be born a boy or a girl but that might not be how they feel, and we shouldn't put labels on them because they're a boy; they can be whatever they want. (I: mmhmm). Like you wouldn't go "when you're a grown up you can only be a chef". You can be whatever you want to be, whatever you have your heart set on. So why shouldn't they be whatever sex they want to be?
>
> **(Year eight focus group two)**

Karen portrays gender as flexible; much as someone can choose a job, for her they can 'choose' a gender. She discusses how conditioning causes specific roles to be stereotyped (girls and dolls) and mentions how the very suggestion that she is a girl means she is required to play with dolls. For Karen, if somebody feels that they are a certain gender then that is who they are; this finding is echoed by Bragg, Renold, Ringrose and Jackson (2018) whose study of 12-14 year olds in UK high schools finds very similarly to the above results. A similar acceptance happened in the year seven observations:

> Many students were able to mention trans people that they had seen on the telly, and there appeared to be a complete acceptance that if you were 'a girl who wanted to be a boy', or 'a boy that wanted to be a girl', that this was fine.
>
> **(Year seven observation - James)**

In these examples, there is a strong sense that pupils should be able to be who they are. Pupils felt that the ways in which they were taught gender and sexuality in SRE was not helping them to understand others, and that more in SRE could be done earlier. SRE, with its cishet focus can lead to teaching of queer identities as a problem, and pupils felt that something was missing from their school experience, as demonstrated by the year ten focus group below:

> I: [Does] anybody else understand what Riv just said?
>
> Adam: Heteronormative?
>
> I: Cisgender.
>
> Adam: What?
>
> Ann: Cisgender, that's just normal isn't it? That's just like the norm
>
> John: Is cisgender like your mental gender.
>
> Diana: K, like if you're born a boy, you identify your gender like, a boy. Like that.
>
> Adam: Ah.
>
> Riv: I feel like, if you're taught that there are other things apart from that, from a young age, then you'll be a lot more accommodating to it. It's like, they're doing it with religion, so why don't they start doing it with this kind of issue?
>
> […]
>
> John: I think if it's taught from like year seven for example, by year ten people already have a fixed opinion, but if you taught it from an early age then maybe it would stop like homophobia.
>
> **(Year ten focus group)**

Riv recognises that there is a greater possibility of acceptance if pupils are made aware of the variety of human experience at a younger age, and that by usualising that variety

of experience, it allows pupils to be who they are without the inevitability of resorting to stereotyping in order to position those who are deemed 'other'.

It is clear from this theme that pupils had a strong sense that individuals should be able to 'be who they are', but that they would benefit from their teaching covering or discussing identities that were less common, which would (they hoped) then stop issues like homophobia.

5.2.4.2 The inevitability of sex

Along with the bisexual erasure in classes, there was an air of inevitability about sex. The year ten focus group hinted at it above "this is how [all] straight people work". There was no incidence in any of my observational classes where not having sex (eventually) as part of a long-term romantic relationship was considered by staff or pupils. The use of 'long-term' is important; staff discussed not having sex with someone until you 'at least cared' about them, implying both a stigmatising of casual sex, and that in a short-term relationship, sex would be less likely to happen. Rather, sex was seen as the inevitable consequence of being in a longer-term romantic relationship. This inevitability of sex can keep asexual (or aromantic)-identifying people from knowing that there is a way forward that does not involve being sexual (or romantic) with another person (Carrigan 2011).

In a class observation, Kim was discussing conception with her year eight pupils. In the quote below, she participated in the fallacy that sex is inevitable, and necessary. She remained open to the pupil who disagreed with her, and a discussion point was made. There was no time given to any discussion of why someone might not have sex, and this risked positioning sex as normative, and IVF as necessary for those who could not conceive, rather than those who did not have sex:

> Kim: All people come from sex.
>
> Pippa: Not everyone was made from sex.

Kim: Can you explain that?

Pippa: They might come from a sperm donor .

Kim: Yes, some people use IVF.

[there is no explanation about which people might use IVF and why or what IVF is.]

(Year seven observation - Kim)

James: Who do you love?

Michael: Mum.

James : You love your mum?

Michael: Yes.

James: Is that a different love to romantic?

Michael: Yes! I wouldn't want to do 'stuff' with my mum.

James: So there might be something physical involved in romantic love?

Michael: Definitely.

(Year seven observation - James)

By asking "so there *might* be something physical involved in romantic love" (emphasis added) James left the possibility of 'no sex' open in his conversation. But when the pupil responds "definitely", this potential line of enquiry is not taken any further.

In year ten observations, focus groups and in all staff interviews, there was no explicit way for asexuality (or aromanticism) to exist (Carrigan 2011). Not only is there a heterosexist presumption, but also an assumption of sexual activity. All pupils are assumed to be (hetero)sexual beings unless explicitly stated otherwise (Renold 2003).

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have contributed to the literature by providing an analysis of how problematising and reductionism of genders and sexualities happens in the school environment, and how this reductionism happens with both staff and pupils.

This chapter has discussed how gender and sexuality are situated in the classroom and has highlighted that although the government guidance has stated that young people should feel that sex education applies to them, whatever their sexuality, teaching underlines ways in which this process is made difficult for pupils whose sexuality or gender identities do not fit normative identities. It is clear from pupil experiences above that they experience their SRE as essentialist to some degree, and some staff at least, struggle to know how to maintain an inclusive atmosphere. In interviews, staff were agreed that SRE should be relevant to all pupils whatever their sexuality (and gender), but in practice, they struggled to manage this.

This chapter shows that the presenting of queer identities in problematised ways results in a reductionist viewpoint (all sexuality is either 'gay' or 'hetero') and means that both staff and pupil constructions of sexuality and gender in stereotyped ways are not troubled, but instead allowed to stand as unchallenged viewpoints. This chapter shows the effects not just of the SRE policies upon teaching of GSD in the classroom, but how the general topics of gender and sexuality are permitted and performed within the school outwith classes. In the next chapter I discuss the various ways in which gender is constructed in the educational environment and the effects of these constructions.

Chapter 6: Constructions of gender within official and unofficial teaching spaces

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on 'gender roles' in class teaching and pupils' reactions. It builds upon the previous chapter of 'problematising and simplifying gender and sexual diversity', which showed how gender and sexuality were constructed and maintained in the classroom by use of stereotyping. In the current chapter, I show how the ways that masculinity and femininity are represented in the classroom facilitate a move towards rape culture, both within the immediate classroom and into the wider school culture. Teaching happens in both official and unofficial spaces, and although the bulk of this thesis considers the flow of information within the classroom, there is more to be considered than just the immediate classroom environment. Meaning-making happens against a much larger context than the classroom and must take cultural and institutional contexts into consideration. Relations between different types of peer cultures, and topics of power and difference are important in the creations of meaning (Kehily 2002) and what is learnt by the pupils may not have been the intended teaching of either the policy makers, or the teachers.

Gender is enacted within the classroom in very specific ways and I will show how these essentialised ways of enacting gender can reinforce and reify stereotyped notions of gender and do not necessarily easily allow for expansion beyond stereotypes. I will also show that what is expressed within the classroom is reflected in the wider school culture. In the previous chapter I showed that although government guidance states that young people should feel sex education applies to them, in class, however, gender and sexuality were problematised in a way that had a potential to limit exploration of sexuality and gender for pupils, especially those who might feel they do not 'fit' cishet identities. Pupils experienced their SRE as essentialist, feeling that it lacked the fluidity with which many of them experienced constructions of sexuality and gender. The current chapter demonstrates how gender and sexuality were acted out within the classroom and outside the classroom inside this essentialist frame, further contributing

to, and expanding on, the concepts in the previous chapter. In teaching within an essentialist framework, teachers use language ('boy/girl' 'gay/straight') that creates an accepted way of being; to exist outside of that takes energy and determination. To a large degree this chapter relies on my observations within the classroom, and the ways in which pupils spoke about themselves, with sometimes very concrete ways of being masculine and feminine and how this is reinforced (or not) by teachers, with the resultant effects that this has on wider beliefs.

Gender roles are covered here in part due to how these different types of gendered displays seemed to occur within the classroom, and in part because within a critical psychology approach it is necessary to move beyond a 'differences-as-deficits' model (Herek 2010; Parker 1999) that situates queer identities in relation to non-queer identities, creating a cisgender heterosexual hegemony (Berlant and Warner 1995). I argue that through certain ways of viewing gender, this deficit model is created by the use of structural stigma, endorsing a general culture that contains much in the way of heterosexual assumption (Berlant and Warner 1995; Herek 2010). This results in certain gender roles such as 'men as strong/dominant' being situated as normal and as taken for granted (Gray 2015), and facilitates the expression of beliefs that fall into notions common in ideas of rape culture, which can be defined as being an environment that "support[s] beliefs conducive to rape and increase risk factors related to sexual violence" (Burnett et al. 2009: 466). 'Doing gender' means that we have created differences between categories of 'men' and 'women', 'boys' and 'girls' that are not natural, essential or biological (West and Zimmerman 1987) and have erased those individuals who do not fit within those binary definitions.

The main themes in this chapter are focused around constructions of gender: embodiments of masculinity; the acceptability of being a girl/woman, and the resultant effect of gendered enactments within the classroom. See the thematic map below for subthemes.

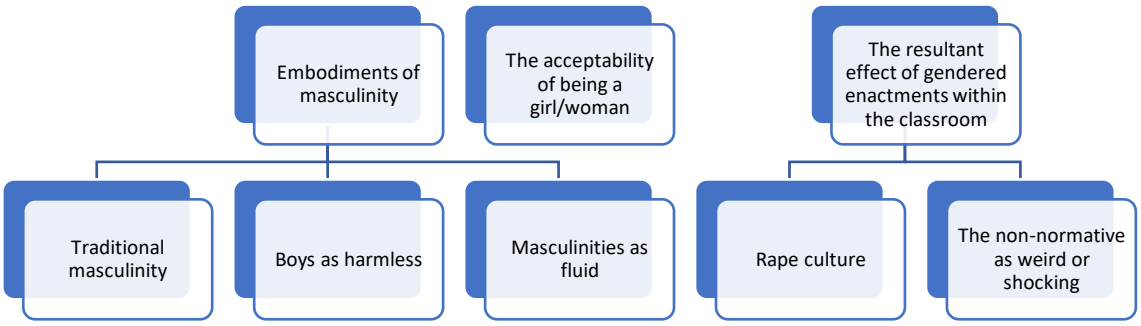

Figure three: Constructions of gender within official and unofficial teaching spaces

6.2 Embodiments of masculinity

6.2.1 Traditional masculinity:

In my observations, in both years seven and ten, I noted several instances of boys portraying traditional or orthodox masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), where they would dominate the classroom. Some of the boys in the class portrayed an elaborate styling of masculinity, ensuring that their heterosexuality and thus masculinity were clearly visible and openly portrayed within the classroom. In this theme I will show that across both age groups observed, boys use the 'currency' of traditional masculinity; dominance and aggression (constructed via their gendered performances) in order to achieve control in the classroom. This control can range from physical control of the classroom (showing who is 'really' in charge) to control over the conversations both with other pupils and with staff. In Kim's year ten class, the pupils were discussing homosexuality when the following happened:

> Immediately following a long conversation about whether someone might choose to be gay (or bi), a boy says "I'm going to wash my fingers they smell like gash". Kim replies "think about how you think about women". She gives him a short lecture about the way he treats women when he makes these kinds of comments. He seems completely unabashed.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

Here, an underage male pupil inferred he had recently been sexually intimate with a girl/woman (thus demonstrating his masculinity through his assumed heterosexuality). It is a sexist way to make innuendo about his own sexual prowess, and is suggested by Epstein and Johnson (1998) as being a mechanism to shore up a heterosexuality that might be challenged within SRE (this pupil is saying this within the context of the lesson set on 'homosexuality'), by way of exploration of fears and worries about heterosexuality. The pupil's representation of himself (unabashed) also does not give much scope for the teacher being 'in charge' of the classroom, suggesting at least an equal footing. At other times in the classroom, enactments of masculinity are less direct, but still apparent:

> In this class, students were not taught anything about anal sex, and the topic did not come up in group decisions. I heard mention of 'anal' several times in quick succession from the boys on one table but I was too far across the classroom (on the opposite side) to find out the exact context. It seemed clear that it was not a word they were using 'against' each other (i.e. 'being anal'). It was never taken up by the teacher who was within six feet of the commenters.
>
> **(Field notes from observation of Kim's year seven class)**

There were more than a few mentions of "anal" by boys only, in parts of the class where this formed no explicit discussion of the act and these were not responded to by pupils outside of that small group (or by staff). Although discussion of anal sex is legitimate in a discussion around sex, these conversations were never had as part of class discussion, where the only focus on sex was around sex for procreation (thus also reifying heterosexual intercourse). This suggests that, here, the use of "anal" is as a subversive

act (Allen 2013), a way to insert the sexual embodiment of masculinity into the sterile atmosphere of the SRE lesson. The excerpts discussed here allow the boys concerned to portray knowledge and status within the classroom in addition to the taught material, as well as attempting to subvert the 'official' teaching curriculum.

In year ten, it seemed to become more difficult for overt negative demonstrations of masculinity to be ignored. Although there was only one incidence of a student 'talking back' to a teacher, in several classes I observed, there were incidences of dominance displayed by those perceived as male over those perceived as female:

> Annie shouts at Dan who is doing something (that I cannot see) to her. At this point Kim stops talking and the students carry on talking to each other across the room. She goes to her desk and sits and waits. After five minutes the class quietens down then notices she has stopped interacting with them. She talks quietly about how it feels like a waste of time doing 'nice' tasks for them when they don't listen. A girl suggests "you sound sad" and she says she is. She apologises to a student who has been sent out of the other SRE class into this one and then apologises to several students by name which includes one boy, and most if not all of the girls.
>
> **(Year ten observation – Kim)**

> At one point a boy said he didn't want to learn and the teacher told him to leave the room. He responded that she could not "make" him and she told him again to leave. He got out of his chair at the back of the room and came right up to where she was standing at the front. He was several inches taller than her. He got very close - just a few inches away from her, and standing over her, said again that she couldn't "make" him. She told him to sit down and behave. He sat down but continued to be rowdy. She sent a pupil for the 'on call' [a backup teacher who can remove pupils from the class] but the pupil came back and relayed the message to the class that the on call teacher said he was busy and he would not be coming, leaving her with no backup and no way to force the removal of the boy from the room. I felt threatened by the situation; the boy was acting in a way that felt intimidating to me. The class seemed to treat this almost as routine - there was no silence around the event; pupils carried on talking, and afterwards there was no overt reference to it that I heard, certainly it wasn't mentioned on my table (four girls).
>
> **(Year ten observation – Mary)**

Mary's class was the only time that I saw another person physically intimidated, but what was clear here was that although she retained some control of the situation, it was mostly managed by her not being a threat. This was made clear by the boy's act of standing over her and his repetition that she could not make him, even as he 'chose' to go back to his seat. The situation potentially allowed for the pupil to position himself primarily as dominant (rather than as 'student') and the teacher as female (rather than 'teacher'): Stepping out of 'pupil' (a subordinate position) and in to (a type of) 'male' allowed for the accessing of power and dominance (Ferguson 1996) and allowed for the subjugation of the female (teacher). Whilst it is impossible to say what initially triggered the pupil to want to defy Mary, the pupil's action was to use his size in an intimidating manner. Gender is managed within systems of power, which is not a static entity but is created and maintained by individuals within systems; when both pupils and teachers adhere to their various social roles, discipline is maintained. If a student (as in the example above) chooses to move out of this, there is a potential for the teacher to lose control, because power is not inherently possessed by one group/person or another but instead is a mediated relationship. When one person steps outside of that relationship, the same power balance does not then exist (McCormack 2012). Kim and Mary managed their respective situations differently; in stepping out of the situation, Kim did not allow for the disruption of the social role, she waited until the class noticed of their own accord that she had removed herself, thus not providing a direct challenge, and Mary challenged directly.

This theme shows that across both age groups observed, boys use the 'currency' of traditional masculinity; dominance; aggression, constructed via their gendered performances in order to achieve the desired results, which are often about gaining control of the classroom. This control can range from physical control of the classroom (showing who is 'really' in charge) to control over the conversations both with other pupils and with staff.

6.2.2 Boys as harmless

The idea of 'boys as being harmless' was expressed mostly by teachers. Its form differed slightly according to which teacher was discussing the topic, but focussed on the innocence of statements or behaviour that were disruptive or stigmatising, positioning boys as helpless or unwitting in the face of potentially negative speech or actions. This positioning by staff assumed that all pupils were on an equal footing and did not take into account the effects that the behaviours might have on others, and this is demonstrated below:

> **Mary:** Because I think when the boys are with the girls, they; we were in a lesson together and the boys were very silly weren't they?

Mary's interview comes very shortly after the lesson mentioned above, where the pupil informed her that she could not "make" him leave the classroom and at the time, I felt her comment to be a reference to this incident. She reduces threatening behaviour to 'silliness' and does not reference the seriousness of the incident which saw her call for an 'on call' member of staff to help diffuse the conversation. This 'silliness' is repeated in Trevor's interview:

> **Trevor:** I think that approach [having a mixed gender classroom] works, I think that does work well you know, having a split. Erm, 'cos again in sort of the mixed lessons, you do; I mean the one [class teaching - I was not present] I just did there was fine, they behaved well, but you do get some silliness (I: mmhmm) you know, in the mixed lessons around saying inappropriate things, and for attention, basically, and trying to you know, be controversial for no reason sort of things.
>
> I: Do you have a sense of whether that's evenly split between boys and girls or whether it's more one than the other or?
>
> Trevor: I think that's more boys. Yeah. More boys who, who erm, like to be the centre of attention. Erm, it's just a means of doing that I think. Yeah. They think they're funny. Totally inappropriate often. So yeah. Much more boys.

Mary and Trevor both refer to disruptive behaviour as 'silly' and although Trevor suggests that it the behaviour is "totally inappropriate often" he does not seem to view this as a potential issue in the classroom. This seemed to be what James is referring to here as "laddy lads":

> **James:** There's still a group sort of male, sort of 'laddy lads', who will want to kind of openly dismiss this and kind of, take the mick out of it [inclusive teaching] and stuff.

The teachers position the boys as in some way immature and their behaviour as innocent (Chambers, van Loon, and Tincknell 2004; Preston 2016) but they do not position this 'silliness' (including harassment of girls by boys) as a wider problem. They also do not position it as something that creates a pattern of what is acceptable over time, leading to constructions of hegemonic masculinity as an adult (or outside of the classroom) and therefore in need of challenge inside the classroom. Even when James recognised that too much 'silliness' in class did have the potential to create an uncomfortable atmosphere for everyone, he portrayed the issue as being manageable by timetabling. There is no recognition in these conversations that lessons are a site not only where heterosexism, sexism and different masculinities are reflections of wider society, but that they produce and allow for maintenance and reinforcement of these ideals (Nayak and Kehily 1996) outside of the classroom. For James, the problem was individualised; rather than considering the systemic portrayals of masculinity in class as something that needed to be addressed, the problem was reduced to individuals and needing to ensure that a 'balance' of students was present in the room.

6.2.3 Masculinities as fluid

Around the identities of masculinity, pupils constructed themselves differently to the ways they were constructed by staff. It was also clear from the variety of data collected that pupils constructed themselves and their identities differently according to who they were with. In this theme, I offer a mini case-study by following the actions (reported or observed) of one pupil, Adam, to show how masculinities shift according to the situation,

and that it is also possible to hold conflicting identities (Connell 2005). In choosing one individual to follow I show very clearly the shift in identity positions in a way that might be diffused if I were following several students:

> Activity: Abuse. The class is watching a video short story – 'Katie' (a female pupil wearing a short skirt) is touched sexually in school by a boy who tries to manipulate two friends to do similar to Katie. After the video, James says "what are they seeing Katie as?" Several pupils respond with words such as "dirty", or "a slag". James says: "or?" A female pupil replies with "vulnerable". James: "what else?" A boy says "An object". James asks, "is this sexism?" A girl replies with "kind of". James responds "It is sexism. Is it against the law?" Most of the pupils nod or respond with some form of agreement (no-one suggests "no") and James asks: "Should you report it?" When the pupils respond with "yes" he asks "Why?". Some of the girls say, "for your own safety". James says: "And others'. Why would it be for others' safety?". Pupils respond: "to stop it happening to anyone else". James then comments "Adam in my other class said he would report it if he saw people doing it". Several girls immediately respond and say "he always grabs us!" James: "Really?" Some girls: "Yes!" "he's the worst one!" James responds with: "He's a bit of a hypocrite then". He moves on to the next scenario and nothing more is said.
>
> **(Year ten observation - James)**

In James' recounting of his story about Adam, he did not suggest anything to the class about whether he believed that Adam would report. He did, however, seem to express surprise ("really?") that Adam would touch a (female) pupil without consent. Fineran and Bennett (1999) suggest that it is not uncommon for teachers to underestimate both the frequency and the effects of peer sexual assault, which their study found affected 87% of girls across 342 high schools in the USA. James tells us that Adam constructed himself as a pupil who would not be supportive of sexual assault taking place, much less perpetrate it. The pupils construct Adam as the perpetrator of such incidences, suggesting that there is a shift for Adam in what is portrayed in different moments. Adam was in a class that I observed in this block of lessons. In that lesson I made the following field notes:

> James (whilst standing next to a table of boys) refers to them as a table of "red-blooded lads in the middle of puberty" and tells me to "by all means hover around them". One of said 'lads' replies with "come here LJ". He is Adam, the student who was accused of assault in the previous lesson.
>
> **(Year ten observation - James)**

After this display of over-familiarity, Adam did nothing inappropriate in conduct and responded like any other pupil did when asked questions by a visitor to the school: he answered appropriately and it was clear that he was a pupil of some intelligence. He was identified in James's first year ten class by the girls as 'the worst' example of perpetrating unwanted sexualised touch, feeling able to objectify and touch girls without consent on a regular enough basis, that several girls in the class commented in surprise when he was portrayed as the person who would willingly report any such assault that he witnessed. In his own class, he was actively and openly constructed by James after this revelation as a "red-blooded lad in the middle of puberty". He was also a participant in one of my focus groups, and in this, positioned himself very differently: as a person who cared that people's actions might cause harm to the well-being of others. Adam's teacher told me just before the focus group that Adam had a Kik (a social networking app with a minimum age restriction of 17) group that was "quite homophobic" and that he was the leader of the group.

Within the focus group, whose members all portrayed themselves as accepting of GSD, he showed an attitude that allowed him to have in-depth and nuanced conversations about GSD. When he was with pupils for whom GSD topics are less important (his Kik), he was positioned quite differently. This suggests that masculinities, at least for some pupils, are not static (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), even as pupils become older, and learn more about the social acceptance of varying masculinities. It also suggests that for pupils who have (or feel they have) an image to keep up and dominance to maintain, they are less likely to portray inclusive masculinity within the larger group. This is also reflected in wider research (Martino 2000) where more dominant participants within larger groups were unlikely to portray an inclusive or shifting masculinity.

In the focus group, there was one other boy (who quiet but demonstrated inclusivity when he spoke) and four girls; one of whom mentioned that she had a friend of a friend who was trans; one who was out as bi. It may have been, of course, that Adam was lying in the focus groups; Smithson (2000) argues that focus group participation is a social event including performance and that what arises in the focus group is constructed as a 'collective voice', and the collective voice here was LGBT-supportive. It may also have been that he did not see that his 'touching' of girls is causing harm to them, and thus this is not a changing identity for him. However, if his teacher was accurate about his Kik activities, this was a change of position from openly stigmatising, to openly inclusive. This supports Connell's (2005) claim that masculinities can change in response to gender relations in a particular social setting, and that identities are not static but are socially constructed and dynamic. These identities, both the constructions of masculinities and femininity although displayed here for the most part as static, clearly allow for positions of fluidity.

6.3 The acceptability of being a girl/woman

In this theme, women and girls are portrayed in some way as 'less' than boys and men. I discuss how students either directly portray women and girls as weak, or juxtapose them to examples of 'masculinity as strong', which inherently positions them as weak. In the theme of girls as unclean, I discuss how periods (and therefore people who have periods) are constructed as being unclean by pupils and staff. Much of this theme was observed in classrooms, rather than in direct conversations, and topics around femininity were portrayed as unknowable, unclean and/or undesirable.

6.3.1 Girls as weak

This theme takes the hetero- and cisnormativity from previous chapters and shows specifically how roles and experiences associated with femininity are subjugated. Here we see girls (and by extension women) portrayed as weak. In the first extract pupils started off by discussing sexuality and the acceptability of being gay (male) rather than

lesbian (female) and the conversation moves to a more general stance on how women and girls are perceived:

> A girl then comments that some best friends hold hands and a boy says that if a boy did that it would be weird. They talk about why it would be weird for boys and not girls and a girl says, “it’s because girls are seen as weak. It’s sexism”.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

> The tables are set up for a mock exam not in the standard format and so I start moving them. Two boys come in and they are asked to help as they are “big strong boys”. We move the rest of the tables.
>
> **(Fieldnotes for Mary’s year 10 class)**

> Mary stands at the front of the class discussing a BBC news article. The article has a photo of a woman at the top. Mary opens with “poor thing. She looks awful doesn’t she? Like she’s been up all night” and my first assumption is that the woman is the victim of something. However, it becomes clear that it is about a man who has been a victim of domestic violence from his wife (the focus of the article). “They had only been married two months. He had a black eye before his wedding day. I wonder why he married her? A relationship does not change when you get married. Most people don’t report it especially if you’re a man. A man is supposed to be able to control his woman”.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Mary)**

In the above example there are two things at play, one is the suggestion that the man in the scenario is somehow weak as he is being abused by a woman, thus providing a counter to the theme, but the teacher’s construction here is that a man should be able to ‘control’ a woman, therefore the message here is that the teacher believes that women should be weaker within what is perceived to be a heterosexual relationship. Whilst it is entirely possible that the teacher was trying to suggest that this idea of being able to ‘control’ a woman is a stereotype that prevents men from reporting abuses, the framing of the conversation - the suggestion that he would have known about this

before he married her and chose to marry her anyway, is a victim-blaming stance. Her sympathy ("poor thing") only being directed towards the perpetrator does not leave much room for the support of the victim in this situation. The idea of women automatically being subordinate was demonstrated further in James' class. When he is asking students to clean up some mess, he positions a male pupil as "the bin lady":

> When the class needed to have the bin sent around to collect some rubbish James gave the bin to a boy with the comment "you can be the bin lady". This led to chants from other boys about "bin lady bin lady". The girls did not join in.
>
> **(Year seven observation - James)**

This creation of a female gendered role places the boy as female and in a menial role. Where the traditional concept of 'bin man' is around large-scale refuse collectors, it is generally women who are 'cleaners'. Either (and none) of these constructions were available to James in the moment. In choosing to 'make' the boy pupil into a woman, he played in to sex-role stereotyping that creates women as menial workers. This played in to both a stereotype of 'the woman as a cleaner' and the chants themselves spoke to an emasculation of the boy himself as a suggestion that a boy being called female was in some way demeaning. Notably silent were the girls in the classroom in this particular incident and Basford, Offermann, and Behrend (2014) suggest that when gendered microaggressions occur against women (girls) in the form of stereotypes such as above, that they are much more sensitive to these than men (and boys) are.

6.3.2 Girls as unclean

The school had been donated 'Always' boxes, which contained a tampon, a night sanitary pad, a pant liner, and an information leaflet covering all of these. I observed two year seven classes where this was discussed:

> This is the lesson that the Always boxes will form part of, and in readiness, the requisite number of boxes have been taken from the office and are at the side of

the classroom. A boy on my table notices the 'Always' boxes and reacts with a dramatic – “Oh God!”, but no-one responds to him and it passes uncommented upon.

Later in the class:

Activity: Always packs. James talks about how some people feel there should be single gender lessons and how he feels that all lessons should be shared gender lessons to keep it open. He says “It's natural for girls to have periods”. He shows how a Tampax works, and tells the class that he had to get his wife to explain it to him and she had laughed at him last week because he didn't know how to do it.

He then displays a pant liner and calls it a “nappy-type thing” and says that you can wear it at the beginning and end of a period to “keep clean” and goes on to say that not everyone uses them. He then demonstrates a sanitary towel by unwrapping the packet and describing what you would do. Someone shouts out that it is “massive” (it is a night time towel) and he asks the class “how often you have to change it?”. Someone says “twice a day?” and he says that you'd have to read the instructions. He asks why people might choose to wear a tampon, and what it does. A girl responds that it goes in the vagina. He asks “It goes in to the vagina to do what?” A male pupil says “to stop the blood coming out”. James demonstrates again what the tampon looks like and asks what the string is for. Pupils answer “to pull it out”. He explains about toxic shock syndrome and how it is the body reacting to the tampon and says “sometimes they can even get lost”. A pupil asks “when you go for a wee do you have to take it out?” and he does not know the answer and looks over to me to answer it.

(Year seven observation - James)

James seemed to suggest that anyone in the class who might either choose a pad over a tampon, or who might choose not to use a liner would be ‘unclean’. When people start having periods, they often start with sanitary towels before (possibly) moving on to tampons (Brooks-Gunn and Ruble 1982, Irwin and Millstein 1982). When James (in the observation note) turned to me to answer the question as to whether you needed to remove a tampon to urinate, people in the room had questions that he had them direct at me and the biggest question was ‘why would anyone choose to use a tampon?’. I had two choices in that moment; to answer or not. Whilst I was there as an observer rather than a direct participant, I was aware that I did have an answer, and my choice was either

to give those pupils who asked the information they felt they needed around starting their periods, or to withhold that information from them. Given that not all pupils would in future be given (or feel able to ask for) the information from their parents, the choice not to give them the information requested did not feel 'fair'. I also would have been keeping this a mystery. I did not feel that in a 'sex education' lesson, with menstruation as the topic, that mystery would be the correct way to approach the situation, so I gave an informed response. It seemed that the pupils for whom it was relevant would have liked to have asked more questions, but there was no time in the teaching schedule to allow for this.

The alignment of menstruation as elimination (Rierdan, Koff, and Flaherty 1983), as evidenced by James who did not know if a tampon needed to be removed to urinate, positions women and girls as dirty, and the use of "nappy-type thing" as infantile if they choose sanitary towels and unwittingly renders some non-white pupils (for example, some Muslims) as fundamentally unclean. Thus, here, where those assigned female at birth are considered unclean; the choice of using tampons is not easily available to some Asian pupils. Islamic belief renders the menstruator as 'unclean' during the menstruation period and one must 'cleanse' oneself after menstruation, and tampons are not usually permitted. During menstruation one may not pray, for example (Orgocka 2004). The teaching of this class did not allow for the holding of different belief systems. James' construction suggested that cleanliness is available through use of tampons, creating a potential conflict for some pupils. Different teaching of menstruation and its acceptability would help to change the constructions of menstruation, as demonstrated by Allen, Kaestle, and Goldberg (2011); respondents who had had empathic conversations with menstruation experiencers, did not use narratives that included misogyny, in the form of periods as 'gross'. Changing this teaching could therefore lead to a much more inclusive view of menstruation that would draw all affected, no matter what their ethnicity, into an accepted position whilst allowing for religious inclusivity, and could be taught in such a way that does not immediately position menstruators as unclean or infantile.

6.4 The resultant effect of gendered enactments within the classroom

In this section I explored the effect of the way gender was portrayed and enacted in the classroom. This consisted of looking at the results of the ways in which masculinities and femininities were positioned. These effects included the non-normative as weird (including the use of "that's so gay") and rape culture (Preston 2016). These themes connected to allow for a particular construction of gender and gender roles. Non-normative people were constructed as "weird" or "shocking". Rape culture discusses how the attitudes of the boys and the deficit model of the girls both worked towards constructing a theme of rape culture within the school.

6.4.1 The effect of positioning gendered representations with regard to rape culture

This theme was tacitly and explicitly alluded to mostly by students, and also by staff. The ways in which men and boys (and women and girls) were presented, led to the possibility to talk in ways that create rape culture, and this can be seen in the extracts below. Rape culture is linked to the topic of gender and sexual diversity here, because of the ways in which men and boys create and maintain control in the classroom, via the construction of women as 'unclean', and through toxic masculinity often suggesting an objectification of women. A societal norm around rape myths and a societal norm around sexuality and gender are likely to add to the same type of atmosphere; that women (and those suspected of being, or identified as queer) are somehow 'less than' men - and thus less than human.

As well as varying intervals in classes that were not specifically around consent; in one lesson year ten pupils watched vignettes about consent and had to decide whether or not the situations were consensual. The pupil below displayed parallel viewpoints on the matter:

> Activity: Real love rocks video. The video shows 'Liam' penetrating a teenage (over 16 years old) girl when she is asleep. As the video is playing a pupil says "go Liam", but when asked as part of the class afterwards if this is consent says no. I am seated at the front near the teacher. This is not commented upon.

(Year ten observation - Mary)

Mary had opened the class with a discussion about a woman who had gone to jail for murdering her husband. She read her class a BBC article, adding in her own comments as she went. At one point Mary commented: “A man is supposed to be able to control his woman”. Both of these incidences in the class reinforced the rape culture theme here - that men are supposed to control ‘their’ women and that women are something to be owned. Although Mary may not have heard the “Go Liam” comment, from across the room, the comment was not made in hushed tones, and there was no comment on the statement from anyone, adding to a culture of permissibility within the room.

In another of Mary’s classes, the pupils received a lesson including a cartoon video of rape and sexting. The scenario was around the dangers of sexting, where a schoolboy (Johnny) in about year ten or eleven records explicit footage. In the scenario the girl (a fellow pupil) was drunk, and it was later revealed that she did not recall consenting as she was so drunk, so the footage was that of a rape. The scenario focused on the boy who took the footage and did not focus on the girl at all. This class had a worksheet to complete, and the worksheet focused almost entirely on how shooting this footage might have ruined Johnny’s life. There was one box that asked, “How does Nita feel?” In the cartoon, none of the female characters were given names, so it was not immediately possible to know who ‘Nita’ was. This was underlined in the class:

> The girls in the video – Johnny’s brief girlfriend and the person who is raped, are not named. I forget if Johnny’s friends were named at all, but as I watched it, I was horrified that I could clearly see what Johnny’s name was as it was repeated several times, but I had no idea what the two girls, one of whom is the pivotal person in the film, were called.
>
> This was reflected in the class observation– when they came to do the Johnny worksheet, The box says “how does Nita Feel?”. A boy in the class asks the teacher “who is Nita?” and she says that she must be the ex-girlfriend (not the

girl who was raped). They do not cover the implications of this box, or what it means that the women do not get named.

(Year ten observation - Mary)

For this resource, the (external) creators created several worksheets that covered (separately) both the points of view of Johnny and of Nita. It was however, possible to watch the video without knowing anything much about Nita's point of view, and it was not made clear which character Nita was. In focusing solely on Johnny in the class, this would seem to minimise the fact that a rape occurred; the word rape was not mentioned in this lesson (or the cartoon), where the concentration was solely on how Johnny's life was "ruined" (this from Mary) for taking the footage. Whilst Johnny is in no way the perpetrator of the rape, this focus on Johnny meant that it was possible to have a lesson that focused on a rape as its central point, without acknowledging a rape had happened, or covering the feelings of the person who was raped, and the danger is that many of the pupils will not understand that a rape occurred. This also serves to situate Nita in some way as responsible (for allowing herself to be put in that position) and not Johnny as the distributor (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, and Livingstone 2013).

In James' year seven class when discussing sex and consent, he discussed what sex might be with the pupils, and what the definition of rape is:

James to the room: "what is sex?" A boy says: "to do with two people, or one, or two the same". James replies: "sex can be masturbation BUT that's not a relationship. You might do it with someone else - that's mutual masturbation. it can be oral sex, or dry humping". A boy asks: "what's that?" And is answered by another boy who says: "when 'things' are together with clothes on". A third boy says "sex is 'putting a penis in a vagina'". James agrees that "yes, this is sex". He then asks the room: "why is consent important?" A pupil responds: "if you don't have consent you shouldn't have sex". James: "Yes and it would be a criminal offence". Pupil: "is it rape if no consent?" James: "if it's touching it would be sexual assault, if the penis and 'other things' go in the vagina, it's rape. If you are convicted it's on your record forever".

(Year seven observation - James)

There was no consideration here for any victim of the imagined assault. Whilst James clearly laid out that consent is needed in order for sexual assault and rape not to happen, there was no focus on why someone should gain consent, and it might be suggested that the focus on 'if you are convicted' meant that first you must get caught. This conversation was set up by James as the teacher agreeing that 'penis in vagina' is sex; a heteronormative construction and although there was room for non-heterosexual constructions here ('other things') this does not alter that the focus is not on the victim. This also did not allow for the rape of boys and men, or the construction of sex between two men.

I also observed Kim's consent class, and the pupils had various statements that they needed to decide whether to classify as positive or negative. Pupils had an A4 heart on one sheet and an A4 teardrop on the other sheet. They had to put statements on one or the other. From my field notes:

> I ask about the 'sending naked pictures' statement when they are either placed in between 'love'/'sad', or on 'love'. A boy says they are on 'love' because they show love. A girl says they are in the middle because they might be unsolicited, and a different boy replies that girls are "addicted to dick pics". A girl retorts "if it's [name] we're talking about". A boy says "if [she] and I were in a relationship she'd be happy" and a girl says "she would not", and then in reference to the statement says that dick pics would be unexpected "so no". A boy says that it's better to get dick pics because then you know what to expect.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

In this exchange, there was no real comeback to this question from anyone else on the table, in moving around the tables, 'naked pictures' was always on 'sad' or 'in-between', recognising that consent was an issue, but only girls mentioned that unexpected pictures would not have been welcome, and where a response came from a boy; that it was better to receive an unsolicited penis picture to 'prepare' you for the real thing. This "online sexual harassment" (Powell and Henry 2017:155) is a reinforcement of rape

culture; a 'non-consent' culture where women and girls do not get to have sexual autonomy or have their right to make decisions given any serious consideration (Powell and Henry 2017). Interestingly, in these exchanges, the concept of the female pupils sending images was never mentioned, perhaps because the girls were thinking about 'getting' images rather than 'sending' images. The proactive sending of images being the boys' domain is similarly found by Ringrose Regehr and Whitehead (2022) who note that sexting is not balanced equally; the demands are different according to gender. Ringrose et al.'s (2022) study mostly considered 'young men' and 'young women', and finds that the young women are asked for images but do not send them freely, but that young men are more likely to initiate sending of an image ('cyberflashing'), often to facilitate requesting an image in response. The rise in the sending of 'dick pics' is clear from the research, which finds that this has gone from being quite rare to being ubiquitous in the last 7 years (Ringrose et al. 2022).

Rape culture was also supported in more tacit ways. I observed one of Kim's year ten classes on several occasions, and frequently observed the behaviour of one boy, Dan, towards usually one girl (Annie, whom he was sat next to each lesson), and sometimes others behind him:

> I am sitting on the absolute other side of the classroom to Dan and Annie. Dan has in previous lessons trapped Annie into her seat with his chair and annoyed her by touching her or her belongings multiple times in a lesson. This lesson, he spent the whole lesson touching her jacket or stroking her hair or putting his hand in her jacket pocket. She cried out on more than one occasion but it wasn't referred to. He hit another girl in the face with a pencil and she cried out also. When putting his hand up to answer question he did it by waving his hand slowly up-and-down 2 inches in front of Annie's face, the girl he spent most of the time touching. This went uncommented upon by the teacher although she watched him do this.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

After this lesson I mentioned to Kim about Dan's behaviour to Annie. Kim was fully aware of what was happening, but did not feel she had the time in the class to be constantly

pulling Dan up on his behaviour, and in my observations Annie often (loudly) 'laughed off' Dan's approaches, which allowed Kim to seemingly construe Annie's response as some kind of acceptance rather than treat it as a form of harassment (Chambers, van Loon and Tincknell 2004). Dan spent at least some of every lesson deliberately touching Annie in non-sexual but uninvited ways, and spent more time trying to deliberately provoke a reaction of some type from her. Most of the time this behaviour went uncommented upon. I later spoke with James about how he handled this type of behaviour in his class and he was equally unsure - he felt that his options were to put all the boys likely to do this (the "laddy lads" as he called them) on one table, where he risked them taking over the class as they played off each other, or to separate them out on to different tables, where he risked them 'contaminating' each table. For the girls in the school, it seemed that the problem was already widespread:

> The class are watching scenarios that they then discuss afterwards. In one scenario, a boy attempts to clumsily de-escalate his friend from touching a fellow (and female) pupil in a sexual manner and gets punched in the face. The teacher asks: "was the punch worth it?" The girls say yes, that the girls will respect him. There is little response from the boys. Girl one asks: "why didn't he get punched in the other scenario?" [This scenario had been much less confrontational and the intervention had happened earlier in the scene] James replies: "because that was more subtle" and then goes on to ask "would boys do the right thing there?" [this scenario is that the boy who attempts to stop the assault it is talked into sexually assaulting the girl also] A majority of the girls reply with "no". The boys are silent here - no boy gives any response. A girl says: "The boys touch us all the time. Some are really bad". Another girl says: "not all, some have girlfriends". Another girl says "some do it anyway". This isn't discussed any further - there is nothing about what might be done, just a seemingly tacit acceptance that this is how it is to be a pupil in the school.
>
> **(Year ten observation - James)**

In James' class, as in Kim's, there was an acceptance that to be a girl in this school meant that you would be touched by a boy, whether you invite that or not. In a previous observation note, I mention that when specifically given Adam's name as a person who physically touches female pupils without consent, James labels Adam a hypocrite for saying he would report sexual assault and then moves on without comment, seemingly

dismissing the issue. Neither Kim nor James make an explicit statement that it is not ok to touch pupils without their consent, further reinforcing the idea that girls must 'put up with' boys' actions whether they were invited, or distressing and unwanted.

6.5 The non-normative as weird or shocking

Sexuality and gender are interlinked, and one cannot 'do' sexuality without 'doing' gender. Sexuality is by its nature for most people, gendered. Additionally, because of the way that sexuality and gender were taught here, non-normative sexualities are only able to be created as 'different', not 'usual'. As discussed in chapter four, there are several spaces within class, where explicit room could have been given to sexualities other than heterosexuality, therefore facilitating inclusivity. However, this did not happen in most, if not all of the classes I observed, which then allows for the positioning of homosexuality and bisexuality as non-normative and shocking. Teachers themselves also constructed some genders and sexualities as shocking:

> **Mary:** For some of them it [Stonewall's Fit video] would have been the first time they've ever seen a boy kissing a boy. So it's the initial shock. Not because they're against it, as though it would be something in themselves that they're trying to deny, but just seeing it for the first time would be so unusual.

Mary here constructed seeing two men kissing or the first time as shocking, reflecting a world where queer people are considered strange or unusual to non-queer people, something that Gazzola and Morrison's (2014) research participants highlighted in a focus group around trans identities; the unusual is shocking. This was underlined in Kim's class, when Maria (a year ten pupil) commented:

> Maria: Some people might not like gays. I don't like seeing men on men it makes me uncomfortable.
>
> […]
>
> John: Lesbians are more accepted in society than gays.

Maria: You mean porn stars.

Jack: Homosexuals get looks when they are out- that's just the way it is. Lesbians wouldn't get as many looks as gays- it's wrong.

(Year ten observation - Kim)

Lesbians are sexualised because of their appeal to men: they are popular in pornography and pornography viewing can be used as a marker of masculinity (Holland et al. 1998). This is not to suggest that women do not watch porn, but in the classroom discussions the female pupils were never positioned as consumers of porn, although the male pupils were on more than one occasion. It is also potentially acceptable to be a lesbian, because those assigned female at birth do not lose their dominant status by becoming a lesbian and boys think it's 'cool' to view lesbian pornography as it is part of the dominant hegemony (Pascoe 2007: 55). However being gay is not 'cool' for those assigned male at birth because engaging in homosexuality is seen as a risk to their masculinity (Pascoe 2005). Transgender, similarly, is positioned squarely in the undesirable category by some:

James: I think things like erm, you know, erm, transgender and these kind of things are much more accepted, and also understood than they were. There's much less kind of "uuuugh" and "errrrr" [in classes] and all this sort of stuff than perhaps there would have been before.

James' comment that there was *much less* 'uuuugh' and 'errrrr', (potential disgust reactions) suggested that there were still some pupils for whom this might be considered weird or unnatural and thus not accepted. Whilst it is possible that these reactions may be about the unfamiliar rather than the unnatural, James here framed the responses around acceptable as well as understood, suggesting that he believed that the reactions could be either (and both) disgust as much as not understood. In framing his comment this way, he suggested that these reactions are still present, even if less so than in previous times. Lyd's reaction below would seem to support this:

Lyd: But like if I myself saw like, two boys walking round school holding hands or something, I, myself, I'd be like 'woah' Cos you [don't]

Riv: [So proud.]

Lyd: You don't see it that often and it's, it's not weird, but it's out of the norm to see that cos, most people they're probably still like, in the closet, but it's not often that you do see that, so it IS shocking when you see it, because I would be like 'woah' like, cos it's not something that you see every day, is it?

[…]

Joy: See I say that if two boys were to hug it's more frowned upon than two girls hugging.

Marie: Yeah. [Because girls seem more touchy yeah]

Joy: [Because girls it's seen more] of a friendship thing rather than boys; it's just like 'why are you [hugging]?'

Adam: [More of an intimate]

Joy: Yeah if you see two lads hugging all their mates go 'oh gay gay gay' but like when you see two girls it's like-

Marie: Join in! group hug!

(Year 10 focus group)

It is clear from this excerpt that there is a gendered performance happening as well as links to sexuality – to act in a 'feminine' way (the 'hugging' of the girls) is to be gay. This learning/understanding of gendered sexuality is learned and reinforced not in the classroom but in the unofficial space of the wider culture (Donoghue 2007, Allen 2013) and are naturalised through repetition and reinforcement of heterosexuality as 'ideal' (Kehily 2002).

Riv, in this group, is bisexual and aligns herself with the hypothetical boys. Lyd however is caught up in the shocking – the portrayals of gender and sexuality that are not usually seen in class or in the wider environment. As a person who portrays herself as accepting, she feels it would be a shocking thing to see. I asked Riv if she felt that SRE classes spoke to her as a bisexual person:

Lyd: Yeah. They only really focus on gay and straight don't they?

Riv: Yeah. They say "there are straight people. This is how straight people work". This is…

Lyd: "Well we don't even know how. [it's a shady subject]"

Riv: ["We don't know how this bit works, but we know it exists"] They don't talk about the in between as much.

Adam: If they speak about it they'll speak about it but not educate you on it.

Riv: They just go "oh yeah this is a thing"

Ab: "But we're not going to tell you what it is"

(Year ten focus group)

There is a sense of a secret here 'we're not going to tell you' – a behaviour is acknowledged (perhaps) but not talked about in the same way that hetero people are. Lyd's comment on seeing two boys holding hands being shocking is underlined here by her comment that bisexuality ("this" in Riv's comment) is considered 'shady' (and therefore undesirable?) by staff and thus unable to be taught, and this has a direct impact on the wider school environment.

In year seven and eight pupils (demonstrated in focus groups and observations), discussed trans men and women, and non-binary people as 'normal', which is reflected in De Witte, Iterbeke, and Holz's (2019) study showing that pupils under 13 have more positive associations of homosexuality than older pupils. Pupils seemed to accept trans identities unconditionally; certainly, I heard no negative comments about trans identities in the class where it was discussed, or in the focus groups. By year ten however, it was felt that trans identities were unusual. This may be as a result of greater exposure to the media, or greater comprehension of constructions of difference or simply a factor of age: Chapman and Werner-Wilson (2008) suggest that parental attitudes affect adolescent attitudes towards sex and sexuality and parents may be more likely to discuss sex and sexuality with their adolescent children than their younger children, so younger teenagers may just not be as exposed to explicit ideas around stigma as older ones. In conjunction with this, the pupils' identities are developing throughout their time at

school (Meeus 2011) and their change in attitude may be a response to their own developing identity. De Witte et al. (2019) also found that parental attitudes towards 'homosexuality' are correlated with pupils' attitudes.

In all of the excerpts above, there is a common theme that some identities were seen as more unusual than others, and what was unusual was often felt to be uncomfortable and unfamiliar, which then presented a barrier in getting to know or accept someone outside of the normative mainstream. In this theme, very little was portrayed around usualising of identities from the staff (Courtney 2014); on the contrary, some of the SRE staff demonstrated that (to some degree, and not all) pupils would consider queer identities weird or shocking (as in Mary's interview above) and that this is a reflection of reality.

In this section I have discussed the ways in which masculinity, femininity and sexuality are constructed and discussed. Looking at the data covered here, it seems that men are portrayed (and portray themselves) as dominant over women and 'gays', often making use of the problematisation discussed in chapter five. Although there was a desire expressed by the pupils to have a different way through this expression of themselves, they seemed to feel that they were reliant on their teachers to help them achieve this. It would seem that SRE would be a positive place for constructions of gender to be considered and that this was seen as desirable by pupils.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of my data discussing gender roles, focusing on the themes of traditional masculinity, femininity and the effect the reinforcing of these roles has on viewing the non-normative as weird, and allowing for rape culture both within SRE lessons and the wider school. I have shown how constructions of masculinity in the school might reflect the wider social constructions of masculinities and what is perceived as acceptable within a heterosexual paradigm, and how the construction of 'gays' and women reflect wider cultural ideas about women and sexism

in general. The themes also reflect narratives used in wider society. We hear often that women are positioned as 'less' than men, and that 'boys will be boys'. It is also common for people to be suspicious of non-normative people of all types. Finally, possibly as a consequence of constructions of gender, rape culture surrounds us, and this is reflected in the classroom.

Normative gender and sexual diversity positions held in school do not always take the minority positions into consideration and do not consider that lessons do not just reflect back the heterosexist nature of society, but actively produce it (Nayak and Kehily 1996). This links back to chapter four, where the government guidance states that school sex education should be relevant for young people "whatever their developing sexuality". School sex education around sexualities here has very specific ways of being presented that are not relevant to all pupils, and even where teachers and pupils disagree with the dominant hegemony as it arises, it is a complex and difficult task to approach the subject in a way that will not have personal cost. To stand up for those marginalised groups risks aligning oneself with (or against) them and thus risks that person becoming marginalised in their own right. In the following chapter I discuss some more of the teacher roles in SRE; whether teachers are out of touch, unaware, or untrained, and consider what other restraints might be placed on teachers around the teaching of SRE in school.

In classes and interviews for this study, gender was not critically considered by participants in any depth. There seemed to be little active consideration about the roles that boys and girls are assigned that result in compulsory heterosexuality; which might have been done by the examination of stereotypes of boys and girls and actively working against this (Rahimi and Liston 2009). As part of this there would be space to recognise when harassment of female pupils in the school happens, which would allow for pupils and staff to begin to create different constructions of gender and sexuality. This lack of active consideration is discussed in chapter seven.

Chapter 7: The structural and personal barriers present in the school environment that lead to difficulties in working inclusively.

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter I focus on how structural and personal barriers impact the teaching of SRE. The themes are: A lack of recognition of the importance of SRE; the tension between 'that's just how it is' and the possibility of change; how personal intersections impact on teaching and that of 'not being able to keep up with the demands of the job'. The theme of 'a lack of recognition of the importance of SRE' discusses how SRE is viewed both within the wider school context and nationally with regard to the national curriculum; the theme of the tension between 'that's just how it is' and the possibility of change discusses the ability of pupils to change their behaviours and the differences that early teaching on 'difference' makes. 'How personal intersections impact on teaching' explores the ways in which queer is positioned as difficult to teach and teachers are positioned by students (or position themselves) as untrained to teach the topic. Finally, the 'theme of not being able to keep up' explores the tension that staff feel in not having enough time to teach all the topics they feel are important, but also the acknowledgement that staff are not as in touch with current popular culture as they and their pupils might wish, within the teaching of SRE. I will provide a critical analysis of the ways in which portrayal of and management of various topics (including actions and behaviour) contribute to perceptions of limitations in the teaching of queerness in the SRE class. Please see figure four below for a representation of how the themes and sub-themes are created in this chapter.

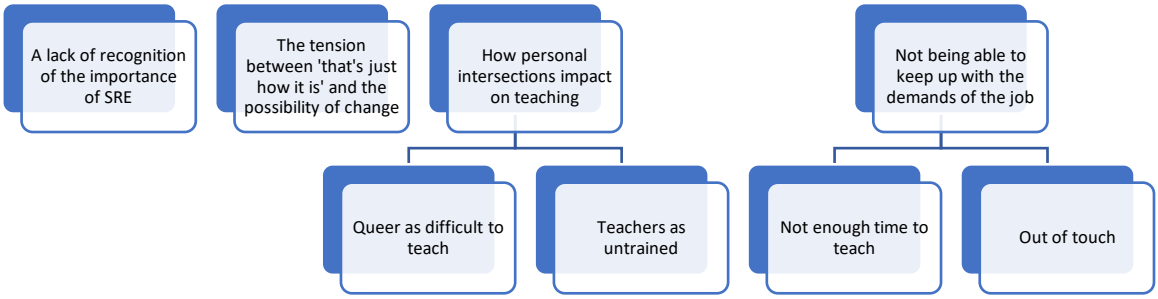

Figure four: The structural and personal barriers present in the school environment that lead to difficulties in working inclusively.

7.2 Limitations

7.2.1 A lack of recognition of the importance of SRE

The ways in which the overall school curriculum must be taught creates a lack of focus on PSHE in general. This is made clear when discussing Progress 8. Progress 8 is a government initiative, implemented in 2016 (Department for Education 2016), that aims to measure the projected and actual progress of students across their time in high school. It is "designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on an academic core" (Department for Education 2016: 2). James discusses below how he feels that PSHE might help the school to improve its Progress 8 scores:

> I: Do you think that- how do you think that PSHE and Progress 8 interact with each other?
>
> **James**: Erm. Not at all.
>
> I: You don't think that PSHE would make a difference in terms of?
>
> James: Yes. If it was taught well, if relationships improved, students understood themselves more, if they were more in tune with their emotions and knew how

> to deal with certain things better (I: mmhmm). It would, yeah that would help them in all their subjects. But I certainly don't think leadership would see it like that, or place emphasis on it enough to do something about it. (I: yep). Other than what's in place with pastoral care and everything that. It is good in many areas, like the college leaders [analogous to school 'houses'] do loads of good work.
>
> I: Yes, I've heard them consistently mentioned.
>
> James: But it could be more linked in, definitely.
>
> I: So it could become more, more integrated.
>
> James: Yeah. From the top down.

For James, teaching and learning experiences in all subjects would be improved if pupils were more emotionally aware. James felt that PSHE was a useful and helpful curriculum topic for the pupils' development but felt that the wider school leadership did not understand this. His linking to pastoral care in relation to PSHE suggests that the wider school leadership viewed PSHE as very much a 'soft subject' that did not necessarily contribute to pupils' attainment as it had no GCSE grades attached to it, which is reflected in literature (Ashcraft 2008) – there is little funding for a subject that does not directly contribute to attainment targets, with several studies recommending increased government funding for SRE programmes (see MacDonald 2009 and Papadopolous 2010). It is possible, however, that pupils who feel more represented in school, and who experience a high level of support around their 'soft skills' in PSHE/SRE class (particularly when considering 'interpersonal relationships') may do better in other areas also.

As well as structural barriers in terms of policy and academic requirements that are imposed upon the PSHE team, the school also has barriers in terms of its physical structure. Pupils progress through their school careers in individual year groups for academic subjects. Their tutor groups, however, are in a vertical structure, so a single tutor group will consist of pupils from year seven through to year 11. Within tutor groups, PSHE topics are required to be taught briefly twice a week. Not only is the teacher for these topics not a member of the PSHE team (and thus untrained in the specifics of the curriculum), they must also attempt to meet the needs and appropriate

teaching levels simultaneously for 11-year-olds and 16-year-olds. Considering the range of emotional and physical maturity between one child in any given year (Ingham and Hirst 2010), it would be extremely difficult to deliver content in a way that is relevant for all of those in year seven and year eleven at the same time; a one-size-fits-all approach will not benefit all (or even most) students (Hirst 2004). When considering the merits and drawbacks of a vertical system, Fincham (1991) suggests that for topics such as 'health education', these are taught outside of the vertical tutor group time and this is reiterated in Barnard's (2022) consideration for best practice using vertical tutoring; tutor groups are vertical, but *teaching groups* remain horizontal. Using the vertical tutor groups as teaching groups creates significant issues and goes against best practice for teaching RSE/SRE (Jenkinson, Whitehead, Emmerson and Wiggins 2021), which suggests that pupils should be introduced to topics slowly and have the information build up over time. It is impossible to introduce some topics slowly *and* in a timely manner in a way that befits both eleven and sixteen year olds. Both focus group respondents and individual teachers discuss the limitations of teaching in form time:

> I: Do you ever cover LGBT topics [in the English curriculum]? Does it arise in any of the books and things?
>
> **Dawn**: Only in discussions that the kids have. It's not. Like. We, as far as I know we haven't got any texts, or at least I haven't dealt with any texts that deal with it. I know that they do stuff in PSHE and stuff here, and like we've got the form stuff that we're supposed to do with them; PSHE, but that's, even that's difficult because you're trying to teach PSHE type subjects and have proper discussions with years 7s and 10s at the same time. It's like, when they were like "oh you need to cover sex ed" it's like "how the hell do you do sex ed with completely different year groups?"
>
> I: A really young 11-year-old and a really old 15-year-old.
>
> Dawn: Exactly, and you know, you could have different levels of experience and different experiences. It's like, yeah; it's really difficult to do.

For Dawn, it is difficult to direct the teaching on sex education in a way that is appropriate for both 11- and 15-year-olds. The curriculum is very different for year sevens than year tens (many year 11 students would be excused for this lesson by virtue of having other

school duties such as being a prefect or on committees and thus their attendance was not guaranteed), and Dawn cannot see a way through this limitation. Dawn (a maths and English teacher) begins this excerpt by discussing with me the books available in English teaching. Pupils do not have topics of gender and sexuality in their books, so, for her, the pupils learn about these in their SRE lessons and in their form PSHE topics. Within form time, the groups are structured in a way that makes the teaching of SRE topics extremely difficult, and this was mentioned to me in casual conversation by all the PSHE teachers; they disliked the vertical tutor groups for this reason – the PSHE staff view SRE as important and recognise that the school is not structured in a way that allows them to deliver (by proxy) SRE that is useful for all pupils in a way that horizontal tutor groups might allow for. For pupils, they feel that often, by virtue of their other roles in school, they miss out on the teaching available:

> I: You have your life [SRE] classes here and you've got [PSHE lead] this year. And you also do some stuff in your forms?
>
> Adam: We're meant to.
>
> Diana: (laughs)
>
> Geo: Most forms don't really. It depends what form tutor you have, but. If you have a laid-back form tutor you tend not to do stuff like that.
>
> Ann: And if you have other significant roles in the school then you tend not to go to form as much.
>
> Adam: Yeah
>
> Em: So prefecting. If you're on councils you miss form most days really. So you miss out on the socialising with your form and then anything that's brought up really.
>
> Adam: So like the five percent that do do the work that we're meant to do, not everyone's there and stuff like that. So, not sort, brushed under the carpet really.
>
> Riv: Saying what you said about the form tutor thing, sometimes it depends on the class to be fair, it's not entirely the form tutor's fault if nothing gets done. But stuff should be done in form yeah, but most of the time I don't think it really gets covered. Cos it's just like, nobody really…
>
> Diana: And I think that's a good opportunity to speak to the younger ones as well, cos things are, people are getting younger and younger and younger when they're starting to experience stuff like having sex and stuff, people are getting

younger and younger and are still, I think it's important that they do teach it younger rather than like, just covering it now.

(Year ten focus group)

There is a sense here that SRE-related topics are viewed as almost unnecessary by some staff, in that a teacher can decide whether or not to deliver the topic, and some pupils at least, feel that not all teachers place as much value on SRE as others. The structure of the school also means that those pupils on councils, or who are prefects will miss a majority of this form time teaching. This, in conjunction with the vertical structure, means that the head of SRE is having to consider two timetables at the same time; the horizontal structure for specific classes, and a vertical structure that encompasses something of the same information. Pupils in year seven will not see this covered in dedicated SRE classes for up to three years, in a way that feels age-appropriate for all, and without either simply duplicating material, or giving new material that risks not being seen by many of the older pupils who may have reasons to be out of the classroom. I wondered if staff felt unsupported in what seemed like a mammoth task, and I asked Kim:

I: Do you feel supported in your relationship, sex and relationship delivery?

Kim: Yeah.

I: So, not just in the department but also in the school in general?

Kim: (laughs) Erm in the department absolutely. It's important for us to do it and do it well. So we try and update and work together on that, so definitely in the department. In the school I feel it's not thought of particularly. It's not a priority. It's not counting towards targets. It's not Progress 8, it's not anything that is important to the powers that be, at school.

Kim feels that the school is not supportive because there are no attainment markers for PSHE. Whilst PSHE could be useful for Progress 8 (as discussed by James above), it is only the direct marker of 'progress' in the examined subjects that is being considered by the school. This lack of perceived support by the wider school is not limited to just this school. Other teachers in other schools feel similarly (Buston and Hart 2001, Preston

2016) about both lack of support and lack of guidance. Both teachers and pupils recognise that the school is not set up to prioritise PSHE teaching, and the staff specifically understand their specialist subject to not be as important as other subjects and thus they do not feel supported in the way they think they might if their subject were an examined subject. This is a finding that has been supported in other projects involving PSHE teaching. Taylor et al.'s (2014) study of a CBT programme that was rolled out in a PSHE class show positive results across the classes, yet staff felt unable to implement the programme long-term in the way it was intended because PSHE was not seen as important enough because it was not an examined subject and this pattern is seen repeated across interventions in PSHE and SRE (Elley 2013) with teachers feeling the impact of both funding cuts to schools and funding cuts in mental health services, so they experience the impact of this also (Formby Willis and Stevens 20160.

7.2.2 The tension between 'that's just how it is' and the possibility of changes

In this theme, I consider the impact of teaching gender and sexuality as imposed through the acceptance of and challenge to the status quo both within the school and within the local community. There is a tension inherent in this theme, with staff in particular positioning the state of affairs as a 'it's just how it is', suggesting that pupils are just acting in the ways that come naturally, that there is little point in trying to change this and move on, but at the same time along with student voices, present the corollary, that people are 'victims of circumstance' but that SRE could be taught earlier and differently and be used to have a positive effect. Overall, this theme explores the tensions in the ways in which participants position cultural limitations and whether these are immutable or changeable, and how relevant SRE teaching is in making a difference in these situations.

Pupils are often positioned by staff members as not being responsible for their actions. Pupils are variously positioned as 'boys being boys' or bullies being bullies', or as not being able to help themselves in some way, through genes or environment (Seidman, Fischer, and Meeks 2006). Staff also position the culture in school as unchangeable and therefore, pointless to try and change.

> After the interview with James was concluded, he told me there had been a complaint from a parent whose child was told by Mary that homophobia was to be expected as part of growing up.
>
> **(Field notes)**

For Mary, 'homophobia' was positioned as normal, thus positioning non-heterosexuality as a problem to which there would naturally be a backlash. In using 'as part of growing up' there seemed to be an expectation that the person might outgrow stigmatising behaviours, but no expectation that the behaviours would not be in some way inevitable (Seidman, Fischer, and Meeks 2006).

This excerpt constructs negative actions (stigmatisation; name-calling) as being in some way normal, or 'to be expected' from pupils. The implication is that in normalising stigmatising behaviour, it places the victim of the bad behaviour in the responsible position and as the one who should 'rise above' things. Not all staff positioned the pupils as demonstrating 'normal' stigmatising behaviour, although all of the staff did in some way position those using stigmatising behaviours as not being able to help it, in some way. I use excepts from both Ada and Kim to emphasise my point:

> I: Do you think some of that's just kind of inevitable with the year group?
>
> **Ada**: Er I think it's probably just because they've maybe got a father that's you know very anti-gay or, whatever, they just think oh, they've been used to, that's something they've not seen before. You know; everybody's family round here. We're all cousins (laughs). But I find it is quite limited in a lot of ways. It's overwhelmingly white, predominantly working class, erm, our main catchment area on mostly Field Edge [council estate] is quite a deprived area, so unfortunately there's a lot of political, social views that sort of come with that, we have a lot of students who are quite, negative about, homosexuality, about different cultures, different races, it's all, you know, religions.

> I: Do you feel like your challenging of them makes a difference? Or do they just keep coming back with the same?

Kim: For some of them it's so embedded. The views and it's what they've grown up with. It's what they've heard from their family, and friends maybe. So challenging won't make any difference. But hopefully it does to some. Just open their eyes to think about other people. Even if it just makes them think "Ok, I won't air that opinion".

Both Kim and Ada recognise that the positioning of pupils as victims of circumstance is not the same thing as positioning students as not being able to 'help' what they are doing. Ada begins by positioning a "white" "working class" attitude as an attitude intolerant of 'difference'. Although Kim begins similarly, by positioning pupils as unchangeable and her challenges as pointless, she then moves on to position the challenge as having some value. Similarly, as the librarian, Ada has complete control over which books are brought into the library (although she does not have any input in to the curriculum topics themselves), and she goes on to tell me how she manages what those students who read might be exposed to and why:

I: Yep. Are there erm, do you have books on LGBT topics as well?

Ada: Yes. And for non-fiction those are included with the 'sorted' [sex and health education] books. But I also look out for fiction books that might have LGBT characters in, because students might not necessarily realise that they're reading that kind of book and I think if you can just have that kind of character in there who's just part of the story.

I: Yep.

Ada: It sort of normalises.

I: Come across it.

Ada: I do keep an eye out for books like that.

I: Do you get any specific reactions from students about them or?

Ada: Erm, not a lot to be honest.

I: So it's just normal?

Ada: Yeah. It is quite good in that respect.

Ada went on to mention that in addition, she included characters with disabilities and minority religions, in order to "try to have as broad a spectrum as possible", but that

when she met with librarians from other schools, there was no sense that other librarians were doing this. Ada positioned herself as being responsible in her role for 'normalising' a range of people and identity positions. Other teachers also recognised that it might be possible to make small changes, even if they position the pupils as victims of circumstance:

> **Dawn**: I just, I think unfortunately, a lot of the kids here, their minds are made up before they come to school (I: yeah) and they're made up by their parents and the factors that they have outside of school. So their use of "oh that's so gay" is actually ingrained into them (I: mmhmm) and they don't know how to stop saying it because it's all they've ever said and heard. (I: yep) in the same way that a lot of them haven't met a gay person or a trans person or anybody who's different to themselves. And so yeah. They have no idea how to deal with it. (I: yeah) And I think you can educate and educate and educate, when you've got closed minds it's pretty difficult. I think we probably reach a few. So obviously it's worth it. But I would say probably, the ones I would say, your average 'Field Edge'ian, type one, nah.

Whilst staff seem to suggest that pupils are just the way they are and that negative behaviour is to be expected, they also recognise that at least 'some' pupils can be 'reached', which is reflected across different teaching environments (Westling 2010). Of those few pupils who can be reached and educated, their minds can be changed. If they cannot be changed into a different viewpoint on a topic, then at least they might begin to consider the views of other people around them (as suggested in Kim's comment) and perhaps not sharing their views on the topic. There is little sense from the staff that the school itself creates the setting in which certain behaviours become hegemonic (Kessler et al. 1985) and instead all teachers who spoke on the topic, viewed the culture of the school as being created by external factors.

Whilst a lot of the conversation comes from staff about the pupils, perhaps what is missing here is a sense of futility; there is a matter of factness in the way that the staff speak. Pupils also express the concept of 'not being able to help it', but when pupils express this, they positioned it as much more futile.

> Students then talked about school events and challenges that they might put in place to improve school atmosphere. One girl's idea was a friendship bench – someone who had no friends and wanted one could sit on the bench and someone would go sit with them. The loud boys immediately started saying that that kid would just get bullied and that no-one would sit on the bench in case they got bullied. A girl said there was no point trying to change the school atmosphere because it was always like this. The teacher said that they were the ones who could change it, and if they couldn't, what was the point? The girl said it would never change. There was a real sense of futility, like she would genuinely have liked to have been able to effect a change, but did not see how this could be done. There were no answers available from the teacher.
>
> **(Year ten observation - Kim)**

The conversation here demonstrated a sense that you 'can't help' pupils (unless they are younger) in a way that will change the school culture, and you cannot work to change the culture itself. There is a sense that both of these tasks are too big; the majority of the pupils are unreachable, and the culture would 'never change'. This differs from chapter five, where pupils in focus groups felt that SRE could help them to see people differently, if it was taught in different ways, suggesting that some individuals see some worth in SRE and challenges to the status quo, but to others it feels almost insurmountable.

At the same time as positioning pupils as victims of circumstance and potentially unreachable, both staff and pupils spoke of pupils being able to learn and change. Pupils position (other) pupils as malleable in the lower years, but as having calcified their opinions by year ten. They discuss this as reasons why their SRE does not have as great an impact as it might, and why they should have more expansive SRE sooner:

> I: Do you feel like you know very much about transgender issues?
>
> Riv: Through my own research but I had to go out and do that.
>
> Diana: I know things about it, but nothing from-
>
> Riv: School

Diana: Nothing to do with this.

Adam: If you wanted to know about it you'd have to go out yourself and like have a look and like, go get your hands dirty.

Geo: I assume the majority of people in our class won't really have much of an educated view on it.

Adam: The ones that are a bit er, challenged in their learning.

Geo: (laughs)

Adam: I think they'd er, struggle in like, knowing about it and not understanding. I think if it come in a bit earlier like [geo] said about year seven. Like if it was taught then, then people would understand it more instead of having just a fixed opinion and prejudice on it.

(Year ten focus group)

For this group, there is an understanding that the majority of opinions that are demonstrated are not well-informed, and draw on stereotypes from (probably) adults, the media etc., but that creating teaching around the topics at an earlier stage would create a level of understanding that did not currently exist. There is an acceptance that children can change, and that this happens less as they get older. This expectation is repeated by Dawn:

Dawn: But, I don't let it get to me, so. And I think they know that, so they possibly, because they know it's not going to get to me, they don't bother; I don't know. Yeah. I get, more gets to me from SLT [senior leadership team] than from the kids, so. The way we're treated by them, more than how the kids treat us, so it's fine.

I: Yeah, something about because the kids are just being themselves and-

Dawn: Yeah. They're kids. They make mistakes and they do stupid things and they learn from it. Whereas adults really shouldn't.

Dawn positioned making mistakes as part of growing up, and children as having that prerogative (unlike adults, who really should know better). She did not suggest that there was an end to the time when pupils should be allowed to make mistakes, but the majority of her teaching was with years seven to nine, the years Adam was suggesting it would be more useful to having a wider range of identities discussed in SRE leading to

more accepting positions for pupils to take. Ada did not suggest that there was an age-range in which pupils should be taught about language and identity, but she did suggest that whilst pupils may not make an active verbal change, they are still capable of considering another's point of view:

> **Ada**: You know they're going to carry on using that kind of [stigmatising] language. But they do stop and think about it. Which is nice.

This point is then reinforced by James:

> **James**: So I think with, with any sort of prejudice, er, my philosophy is, erm, while they're at school, don't, unless, unless, unless a student is being direct at a particular person bullying, if it's just a general opinion, the emphasis will be on stopping, checking, challenging, analysing, go again. So in other words, stop the lesson. Let's talk about this. Gradually, hopefully, they may actually start reflecting on what actually they're saying, and the reasons why they're saying it. (I: yep) and you may not, you may not get through to, to nine out of ten of them, but you might get through to one. I think that if you were to get all angry and you know, judgemental about their opinions, it's just going to reinforce their, their views probably.

James suggested that he did not expect to make an impact on most pupils, but that by reaching out to them, he hoped to allow for individual pupils to reflect on their use of language, with the aim of potentially making a change. He positioned the pupils as unthinking in their use of language, in much the same way as Ada; both suggest that pupils are not thinking about their actions, rather than that this is calculated. This again suggested that their attitudes had been created by external circumstances such as family, rather than created within the school.

Pupils are positioned as being capable of having a negative response pointed out to them as such (stopping and challenging) and potentially learning from that and adapting that

into their worldview. But pupils are also positioned by teachers and each other as open-minded and wanting to learn:

> Georgina: I think like we erm, we trust each other enough to have like a full debate about stuff (I'm going to put that on the floor).
>
> Matt: The majority of us are open to anything.
>
> **(Year eight focus group)**

This comment of Matt's was supported by my observations in year seven:

> This class was very lively and as a group, fairly informed on trans topics. It is the week of the trans report from the government and there are a lot of trans topics on the news and on morning TV. When the pupils were asked, they spoke a lot about various people they had seen on the TV, from young kids to adults. I heard no unaccepting remarks, and the class seemed very open to the fact that if you wanted to be a boy, you were a boy, etc.
>
> **(Year seven observation – James)**

These pupils seem to accept trans people, or if not, they do not voice that challenge. Whilst there was a level of not understanding, there did not seem to be judgements being raised. Dawn positioned the pupils as being curious and asking questions. Dawn's 'thing' in the excerpt below is her sexuality (she was explicit about this earlier in the interview). The repair that she makes is a repeat of an earlier statement about being on 'that' (lesbian) team:

> **Dawn**: I mean I'm very quick to; I'm very happy to talk to the kids when they ask me questions. (I: yeah) Quite happy to talk to them about anything pretty much, within reason. You know and they come in asking about all sorts of things, and it'll be stuff they've seen on the news, or something their friend has said and they don't understand it so they'll ask. I'm quite happy to talk about it. I had a kid the other day who said "miss, how do you know you're gay?" and I was like "what do you mean?" and he went "well you know other people say they know – how do they know?" and I said "I just guess it's one of those feelings, you just feel it, implicitly" and he went "oh" and I thought "I wonder if you feel like that"

> I left it – I didn't ask, so. Yeah. Yeah – I just, I just cover it as comes up. I'm not, I'm not one of these ones that's scared about it, but that's probably because I'm on- you know; that's my thing.

Again, the pupils were positioned as capable of learning new understandings. It is not possible to know the pupil in question's motivation and although Dawn wondered if that pupil may be considering his sexuality, she too recognised that the pupil might have any number of reasons for asking, including just wanting to know - to expand his horizons.

In another exchange, I experienced something that on the surface seemed similar to my classroom experience where my gender was discussed (see chapter five) but it felt very different. I was again wearing a shirt and trousers, and as I walked through the playground to reach the school building, I passed a group of three pupils, who seemed to be two girls and one boy. I would have aged them at least year nine, if not older. One of the girls said to the other two pupils "Is that a sir or a miss?" and then called out "Sir!" at me as I walked past. When I did not respond, she called out "Miss!". I still did not respond, and instead entered the building and headed to my class. Possibly because I was very easily able to remove myself from the situation, this did not seem so challenging, but I read more of a curiosity into the question, a genuine desire to know, rather than a comment for a comment's sake. This suggests that even older pupils can question identity in a way that is not hurtful - although the challenge was direct, it was not carried out in a demeaning way and did not seem to have intent to harm.

7.2.3 How personal intersections impact on teaching

I consider here how SRE is positioned with regards to what are seen as personal limitations - usually on the part of staff, by both staff and pupils. I begin by considering how queerness is positioned as a difficult subject to teach due to a lack of shared experience between the teacher and the subject, and I also consider how a fear of negative reactions is linked to this concept of 'difficult'. I also consider the constructions of staff as untrained, and how this exemplifies that it is difficult for staff to know what

they do not know what they do not know, unless something happens in order to make that process explicit. This theme underlines that the SRE teaching is often reactionary in nature, as it responds to questions and problems posed by pupils rather than covering that information as a matter of course. This, of course, reflects back to the structural barriers where staff have limited options regarding time and classroom setup available to them.

7.2.3.1 Queer as difficult to teach

Staff often declared themselves as more than willing to teach on queerness, but their reservations fell into two areas, either they were concerned that their lived experience was a cishet one, so they could not relate to the teaching and might get something wrong, or they were not concerned about the teaching of the topic, but they were concerned about the pupils' responses to the topic. Whether staff fully appreciate this or not, by positioning the topic as difficult to teach (and therefore not engaging with this fully), they teach pupils something about these topics – they are difficult (Atkinson 2002). Both queer and hetero staff noted that staff might struggle with some SRE teaching in places where they did not have the same (or potentially the same) experience as pupils:

> **Trevor**: Especially around these issues. It's bad enough talking about it when it's heterosexual you know, but talking about it with somebody with different sort of you know, sexuality, it's, it would be very difficult to look authentic, or seem authentic you know.

> **Dawn**: And obviously I've got my "keep calm and be who you are" and 'diversity'. But that's just me and like I say, I'm quite happy to do that whereas others might not be. (I: yeah) And I'd understand why they wouldn't be, because if you're not, you know, on that team and you're not knowledgeable about it then you're less likely to want to talk about it.

Trevor's response suggested that although the policy documents imply that teachers' personal views 'should not' come in to play in the teaching of sex education, for some

teachers at least, their own sexuality and gender (that to some degree are forming their awareness and viewpoints) are very much present in the room as they teach. Dawn suggested that she was aware that staff may not feel able to talk about something that they did not have a shared experience of, although as a lesbian member of staff teaching a small slot of SRE-related material to her tutor group, Dawn has no choice but to teach on areas that she has little or no direct/contemporary lived experience of ('heterosexual' relationships). Her comment does not in any way suggest that she (who, as she mentioned in the interview, was someone without intimate knowledge of heterosexual relationships) would be less likely to want to talk about those. Trevor's comment below exemplifies this idea that it is simpler talking from one's own experience:

> I: So there's a degree of that, when you teach is that you, you kind of having almost like a shared understanding with most of the kids that-
>
> **Trevo**r: Yeah, yeah
>
> I: You've been in their position.
>
> T: Yeah. And you can sort of talk from, you can give your, your erm experience to a certain extent, not sexual experience; I don't know about that (laughs).

Trevor felt that shared experience was useful, although he did not feel that sexual experience was shareable. By virtue of being a lesbian, Dawn did not share a sexuality with the majority of the students but felt able to teach a significant number of heterosexual pupils about all kinds of sexuality regardless. She was 'just her'. But others, even those who share a majority sexual orientation (whether deliberately made known to pupils or not) with their pupils, may not feel able to teach about the minority experience. This positioning of queer as difficult to teach suggests that it is risky (Robinson 2005) and positions children in need of being protected against what is normal variation in life, but positions these topics as difficult. In doing this, the staff risk maintaining a status quo (such as by being only reactive in discussing identities if raised) and thus underpinning societal inequalities that exist around these topics (Robinson 2005). What is not addressed here is the risk to *all* pupils (not just those who might be deemed to be members of a minority group) if these topics are not clearly discussed and

normalised within both curricula and wider school environment, with the potential to add to the risks of heterosexist and cissexist violence, which leads to negative impact for both victim and perpetrator (Robinson 2005). This is not 'protection of the children' (Walton 2021), this is damage of the children. The positioning of queer as risky teaching also seems to suggest that the idea of what children 'are' and what they 'should be' are not necessarily the same thing (Walton 2021). Queer pupils exist within classrooms and they deserve to see themselves represented as much as any other pupil does.

The other way in which the teaching of queer topics became an issue was where staff felt that they were personally comfortable, but would struggle with any negative attitudes and responses from students:

> **Kim**: Um, I guess it's attitudes. That's the main issue. Just, yeah, just the attitudes the children have, the attitudes they come with from home and experience at home. So sometimes I guess you're fighting against very old-fashioned views on these issues. It's not, it's not difficult in terms of delivering, I don't think. Not in my experience and there's quite a few kids are very open to asking questions and finding out more, but then you do have the typical homophobic comments in lessons, which is a challenge.
>
> I: And what do you do when those happen?
>
> Kim: Challenge them. Challenge them. That's it really. Try and get people to think of another point of view. It's hard to challenge people's opinions though because you can't personally attack their opinion and they're very much aware: "I'm allowed to say what I think. It's my human right to say this" (laughs).

Whilst teachers commonly said they would challenge 'homophobic' language and other negative comments when they heard them and my observations bore this out to some degree (outright negative speech was often challenged although minor comments were not), the excerpts from these conversations make it clear that they did not feel at ease with doing this, and evidence suggests that teachers worldwide express similar difficulties in knowing how to appropriately work with these challenging attitudes (Browne 2013). Staff wish to challenge these views, but without being seen as punishing.. The way in which Kim described this situation suggests a similarity to other

work such as Chambers, van Loon, and Tincknell (2004) who suggest that this is a failure to address power relations. This allowed a discourse of liberalism to flourish alongside stigmatising behaviour, allowing those in the dominant majority their "human right" to express themselves however they please. Kim is suggesting that there is a tension between challenging stigmatising language in the classroom and wanting to allow pupils freedom of expression and that she does not know the best way forward. Kim was trying to create an atmosphere of 'safety' and in doing so met another area of tension; she challenged 'homophobic' comments, which might have impacted what would otherwise be reproduced in the school playground, but her safe space then became challenging for those students who felt that they had a right to share their opinions, whatever those might be. Her safe space might not have been perceived as such for those on either side of the comments.

7.2.3.2 Teachers as untrained

This theme is almost a parallel theme to 'out of touch' (below); where pupils view teachers as out of touch, teachers see themselves as untrained. It is here as a separate theme as teachers seem to view *other* teachers as out of touch, and there are specific demonstrations within each theme where it is possible to see combinations of being both 'out of touch' and 'untrained', and thus it is important to show both sides of what may be the same coin. The sub-theme of being 'untrained' demonstrates that there were instances where teachers recognised that they may have been untrained in certain areas, and saw other teachers as out of touch, but did not seem to recognise that they have areas where they are (or were) potentially unaware of the most sensitive way to discuss a topic.

An important set of insights comes from Trevor, who was mid-way through his teacher-training at the time of interview. He discussed teacher training in-depth, and how the academic part of his teacher training related to the practical part of the training.

I: So you feel like they aim to give you the very basics?

Trevor: Yep! They give you the basics and keep you up to date I think, give you up to date information kind of thing (I: mmhmm) and explore the sort of, main drivers if you like, of policy (I: yep) around sexual health. But it's not really in depth, There's not massive amounts of sort of training around that area.

I: Yeah. So when it comes to LGBT topics, have you had any sort of direct 'being taught' experience around that?

Trevor: Erm… In (breathes out). Again, not a great deal to be honest. Not a great deal. I mean we have had some er, some elements of lectures around sexual health have sort of dealt with that. But not, not erm, a massive amount that was specifically around LGBT. We did have some again, more around the human rights side of things around LGBT. (I: mmhmm) We had some sort of er, er, sessions, seminars er, about that when we had outside speakers coming in talking about their experiences.

Trevor's 'human rights' side of LGBT is a presentation by outside speakers of their school experiences, rather than about how to teach inclusively. This mirrors the policy language that problematises queerness by situating it as a bullying issue, and also mirrors the way in which teaching is portrayed within the classroom. There is a clear path of progression from problematising in policy, to problematising in training to problematising in teaching. The focus on this problematising means that Trevor has not experienced a significant amount of training around queerness unless from a problematising focus, leading to a situation where he does not feel empowered to teach specific topics within the class:

I: Do you have an idea of like, if a kid made some, if a kid outed themselves in the class and wanted some kind of, same-sex advice, would you feel that your training has given you a place to?

Trevor: I, I would, I would feel difficult with that, not because, because I'd have difficulty with the subject (I: mmhmm) I'd have some kind of moral or whatever value driven sort of, inhibitor or whatever. It, it, no. It would just be, sort of knowledge that would be a struggle for me. And talking about it with authority if you like.

Trevor demonstrated that he did not feel that he had the training necessary to speak from a position of authority on queerness if asked by a pupil in class and that this would be important for him. This emphasis on training is also discussed by James. Here James is talking about the difficulties with doing tutor-group teaching on SRE well:

> **James:** Across the rest of the school, the counselling, the family support, the pastoral care is really good. Erm from college leaders ['colleges' are equivalent to 'school houses'] and like you say, those areas. But I think from a form point of view its' very difficult to be er, to say it's good at the moment because I think the skills of the form tutors are not great in terms of erm.
>
> I: Do they get training to do PSHE?
>
> James: No.
>
> I: Right. So you're just getting generally a tutor whose an English teacher or a maths teacher, they also get a form and they also have to teach PSHE.
>
> James: So, when we're giving them lessons we try and give them something they can almost open up and there you go. Try and make sense. So essentially I'd only give stuff out that they'd have a chance of doing, a bit more common sense-y. Something a bit more would be, would benefit from a class discussion type thing.

The PSHE skills of the form tutors were not perceived as being as good as the dedicated SRE teachers and those staff were not given training in how to deliver PSHE topics. The only way to enable this teaching was to create something that teachers could do without having to create their own lesson plan. This echoes Trevor's comment that without training, it is difficult to teach this topic well, but whereas teachers like Trevor were at least trained in PSHE, form tutors are trained in a variety of other subjects, none of which is likely to be PSHE, thus making it difficult for them to teach this topic well. The feeling that teachers need certain personal characteristics in order to teach SRE is echoed by Timmerman (2009) whose study of teacher characteristics for sex education found a similar result - certain characteristics yielded better outcomes in the SRE classroom.

The untrained nature of the teachers is visible in the classrooms. In my first lesson, I observed the following from James in a year seven class:

> James asked the class “so who knows what a transgender is?”. […] He appeared fairly comfortable in the conversation with the pupils, but it was apparent to me that he did not have a firm basic knowledge of the topic, and on one occasion turned to me to confirm whether it was possible for trans people to have children’.
>
> **(Year seven observation - James)**

This exchange with pupils underlined James’ earlier comment that he could teach with authority, even when he did not know the topic area well. He did not appear to struggle at any point with the topic, even when he did not know the answers, but it was clear to me as someone who does know the topic that he did not understand it well. Dawn also pointed out the untrained nature of staff. Whilst the excerpt below could be considered ‘out of touch’, had training been implemented for staff, the teachers would not need to ask, as they would have received training on the topic:

> **Dawn**: It’s a lot easier when you’re on that team I think. (I: yeah) I think a lot of straight people wouldn’t know what to say. (I: Yeah) And it’s funny; it’s even funny when it comes down to the terminology because I’ve had straight teachers ask me “what’s the difference between butch and femme?” and “what does; what do you call people who are not gay?” And stuff like that; it’s like “how do you not know that?” (laughs).

For Dawn, ‘butch and femme’ were just knowledge, but for untrained teachers, it was a world that is not understood, suggesting that as with Trevor, it would be difficult to teach about confidently.

Staff at the school are able to hold internal ‘continuing professional development’ (CPD) sessions that provide training for other members of staff. James spoke about his frustrations about the ways in which some members of staff spoke about queer identities, and then mentioned that he had provided CPD, which was not well-attended:

> **James**: When I did my, I did a couple of professional development sessions after school. One of which I've been promised to be able to do to the whole staff. The other two could have been to the whole staff, but hardly anybody signed up for them. But in that, my message is: you challenge anything you hear, whenever it happens. (I: mmhmm) Going back to the same thing of, don't, if it's not directly at somebody in a 'homophobic bullying' way, erm, they say "check, challenge, analyse as a class and then move on again", but don't just let it go. You know. Make it clear that that is not normal. That's not accepted behaviour. So it doesn't become the norm.
>
> I: And not many staff signed up for it?
>
> James: No again. It's simply because that is voluntary.

Staff it seems, did not have the capacity to attend a training that was not mandatory, was outside of working hours, or did not seem directly relevant to their teaching interests, leaving the staff who make these links feeling frustrated that they could not provide guidance on a topic that was important to them. This theme demonstrates that there was little in the way of training available to staff, either as part of their initial training, or as CPD events within school hours. The lack of training resulted in not having the tools to deconstruct gender and sexuality hegemonies that allow for the continuation of hetero- and cisnormativity (Preston 2016).

7.2.4 Not being able to keep up with the demands of the job

Across the data types there is a sense that staff cannot 'keep up', and there are different ways in which this is demonstrated. There is a sense that staff struggle with time pressures within the classroom. When a discussion that would benefit the pupils arises, staff must weigh up the value of a full and frank conversation with the ability to be able to synchronise the teaching with other SRE classes that are running concurrently, and they are also constrained by only having a six-week block to teach all of the SRE topics that their created curriculum should cover. A full and frank conversation that takes up more than its allotted time would inevitably take time from another topic within SRE. The other way in which the theme of keeping up is displayed is that of staff knowledge. Staff feel that in many ways, students and wider society are ahead of their own understandings and they (staff) are not the 'expert' on the topic that might be expected

by the students. When staff do not know the information, they are also limited by time; the time to look for and give responses, as this must either take time out of the lesson, or must use school time allotted to other things, or the staff member's own personal time. Overall, this theme suggests that staff feel they cannot keep up with the demands of the job, that it requires more from them than they have time to give. Staff mentioned in interviews that they were limited in various ways about how and which topics they could teach. These barriers were also referenced by pupils, who understood that they would have liked more time to discuss topics but that they had been moved on to new areas. Lessons often had the teaching outcomes for that particular lesson displayed, so it was possible to see what the structure required, and to compare that with how the lesson was progressing. This meant that often either 'breadth' or 'depth' could be covered, but often not both; there was not enough space in the timetable to cover all the topics that arose within a class at the depth sometimes desired by staff or pupils.

7.2.4.1 Not enough time to teach

Kim discussed her difficulties with the space allotted:

> I: So you feel that the teaching itself, the curriculum is inclusive?
>
> **Kim**: Yes? Mostly? Yeah.
>
> I: What are the difficulties then?
>
> Kim: I don't know. I guess it's [queerness] not covered that much within our curriculum? And partially I guess that's time. Because we have to fit in citizenship and RE into our lessons, so we can't go into things as much as we probably need to. Which is hard. I don't like having to stop and move on because I'm very much aware that I've got to do this lesson and this assessment. But that's just the way it is.

Kim was aware that students were being given partial teaching in some (or all) areas, because of the assessment or wider lesson requirements to cover set topics at set times. This resulted in pupils being given partial knowledge and incomplete education as the remit of SRE becomes ever-wider. This was clearly demonstrated within Kim's class as referenced in my field notes:

> Kim's itinerary for the day was written on the board and I could see that we were supposed to move on from a brief discussion of sexuality to the film 'Fit' fairly soon within the lesson. However, a small group of pupils began an interesting and insightful conversation about sexuality and Kim appeared reluctant to stop them. In my observations of classes we often seem to move from one topic to another fairly fast, and in amongst the nuanced conversation by some of the pupils, other pupils demonstrated a lack of understanding and amounts of bravado around the topic. Kim referenced that the class was supposed to be moving on but that she did not want to stop a conversation that was, as she said to the students, "so good". The conversation lasted almost half of the lesson, and it was clear that some pupils had interesting and novel approaches that they were willing to share with others and that Kim felt that the whole class would benefit from this approach. This then put Kim almost a lesson behind all the other teachers. Difficult when teaching of each class is supposed to be synchronised.
>
> **(Field notes: Kim's year ten 'homophobia' observation)**

Kim's class here was engaging in student-led critical debate, which is the model the school works within. This allowed students to voice their own opinions and reason these out with others, with the watchful eye of the teacher. The problem was not with the debate, but with the time allotted - there was not enough time within the class to allow for a full and frank discussion to run its course, as classes should be synchronised between cohorts. Trevor reflected on this in a similar way; that there were suggestions about what should be taught and that over time, the number of topics had grown (as evidenced by the fact that the school now covers grooming and sexting where it did not previously), but the amount of time given to SRE has not grown at all:

> I: Do you think PSHE makes a difference, kind of, in the form it's taught now, do you see that it makes a difference to the students?
>
> **Trevor:** In the form that it's taught now. Erm. (pause) I, I, I think (pause) I think, no. It doesn't really make as much of a difference as it should do, personally. (I: mmhmm) It's, it tick boxes. I think. Erm, you know, there's a lot of government sort of edicts that have come down you know, that you have to cover this, you have to cover that, and I think you know, schools look at that and that's the way they design their curriculums, you know. That the, not just, PSE it's everything

As Trevor reflected, it was not just the PSHE curriculum that was growing; other fields also made advances. However, PSHE was the subject with the greatest application to the emotional lives of pupils. Trevor's reflection suggested that the government is somewhat removed from the process of teaching, handing out statements about what the teaching must consist of, but without consideration to actual students' lives. James as the head of PSHE recognised the problem also:

> **James:** Yeah, so I came here in charge of citizenship because it was still sort of very new, and the school wanted somebody to lead on that because it was a new idea. And then, so from that point onwards I taught PSHE, because often citizenship and PSHE go alongside each other and then gradually as, erm, time went on, one of my colleagues left and RE, PSHE and citizenship have all been gradually diluted. Particularly PSHE because there was no grade attached to it (I: yep). So I took over all three. Erm, around six years ago. And again it's since then, since the conservative government bought in the new baccalaureate, there's even less emphasis on schools to focus on citizenship, RE and PSHE. (I: mmhmm) because of the targets towards the humanities and the other subjects. So it's been erm. Trying to steer a ship through a, erm, like an ever-decreasing sea. If that makes any sense.
>
> I: Yeah. So how much kind of time less do you have now than six years ago?
>
> James: When I first came here there was er, a lesson a week of, in fact there was two lessons a week of PSHE. And there was a lesson of citizenship a week. And RE was separate as well. And gradually it's come to now, where we have one lesson a week of PSHE, RE and Citizenship combined. […] And so we know we can't cover everything that we'd like to cover.

James clearly struggled with the school's management of the curriculum as a result of government requirements, noting that it was more difficult to focus on PSHE (which includes SRE). As well as the explicit statement that there was less time now, James' comment about steering a ship through an ever-decreasing sea can be read as a tacit understanding of not being able to travel as far as he would like to with regard to the topics that could be discussed. James recognised that SRE (or the wider PSHE) has not kept pace with the times. The world is significantly different in 2017 (the time of interview) to 2000 when the PSHE curriculum was created but it has been difficult to manage that within a smaller curriculum space. This reflects in its practical application,

the findings that PSHE-allocated time has declined by a third in the last decade (Gov.uk 2021).

7.2.4.2 Out of touch

Students were also very aware that the curriculum was not keeping up with their lives and did not "meet the needs of all pupils" (SREG), instead only meeting the needs of the more intelligent pupils who can extrapolate to other situations. Adam in the quote below was comparing 'us' (people in the top set) with 'them' (those in lower sets). He also felt that for more vulnerable people, potentially this SRE teaching was not enough:

> I**:** Do you feel like your classes equip you to go out there and have a successful relationship of any kind with any kind of person?
>
> Adam**:** For us I would say so yes, but for other people, potentially not. Because er, some people can be easily influenced and stuff like that. It's a bit of a hard one because if someone is like that then you can't exactly do too much but I suppose it could be done a bit more on like, teenage relationships on how they are now instead of how they were I don't know, like five years ago or something.
>
> I: You feel like stuff's moved on but school hasn't?
>
> Riv: Mmhmm.
>
> Adam: Yeah.
>
> **(Year ten focus group)**

Adam's view here suggested that teaching was behind in its approach. For pupils, technology and therefore the related topics had moved on, and their teaching was out of date. Along with this idea of moving on, there was a sense that SRE was not helpful for all students the way that it is currently taught and risks leaving some pupils vulnerable, something echoed in Pound, Langford, and Campbell's (2016) study. This speaks to a disparity in learning abilities, and individual differences and the ways in which SRE was taught within the constraints of the curriculum. The concept of not keeping up with current technology was echoed in interviews with teachers:

Kim: Did you see the grooming lessons and things like that?

I: Yeah.

Kim: Obviously that wasn't around when we were at school, even though it clearly would have been.

I: Yeah.

Kim: But that's the sort of thing that is important for these kids and being ahead of that, and-

I: And they're so ahead of you in terms of technology .

Kim: Yeah, yeah.

I: And we know what the words are. I do know what Kik is, but I've never seen it.

Kim: It's just, I don't understand what they're talking about sometimes.

Kim openly acknowledged that she did not always understand the words her pupils were using, especially around technology. The 'grooming' lesson Kim was referencing was based on technology; the vignettes played to pupils were around text messages sent and received. Kim could not keep up with the terminology that might become important for the teaching of various topics within her classroom. This 'keeping up' was reflected within wider societal changes such as greater exposure to topics such as transgender, as discussed by James and Kim:

I: How confident do you feel in responding to kids asking questions about anything about you know, same sex, or transgender – those kinds of things?

James: I think I feel very confident in my thought process dealing with it, so in other words, and this is something again, it's something that we got ourselves involved with, which was a pilot scheme called [..] and er we, we actually did a lot of sex education lessons for teachers. We, online and after school and stuff. And one of the things we learnt was that, which has really worked, is you answer any question. Any age. (I: mmhmm). If you don't know the answer you just say 'I don't know the answer, I'll try and find out for you and do my best'. So the important thing is I guess is, is, then responding to that student, getting back to them, in confidence or just in front of the whole class, depending on what it is. I mean obviously we can look things up on the internet straight away, which we try and do sometimes.

I: So if; how confident to do you feel in responding to things that kids ask you about like same sex or transgender topics?

Kim: Fairly confident? I do; I have to go and research some things. I don't know everything. It's so wide, what we teach. I just couldn't know everything. And some things I know are from TV. (I: Yeah) (Kim laughs) not fiction! But you learn things off tv don't you? So. But I'm confident if they ask me a question, generally I can answer it, but if I don't I'll just find out for them. I'll do it in the lesson most of the time. I'll just google so that they know.

[…]

I: There's nothing really around trans topics or anything like that.

Kim: Only if they ask. Then that's it, we'd talk about it. But there's nothing specific that we teach, no.

For James, the pilot project was useful in terms of helping him with his individual teaching, but he was not able to translate this in to wider teaching of staff around SRE topics, as any training/CPD that he offered to staff was optional and staff did not take up the opportunity.

Kim went on to tell me that in the previous year eight class the topic of trans identities had been brought up and covered in some depth, but that it had been pupil-driven. Once brought into the class, Kim was happy to teach about it, even if she was not aware of all of the facts, she was happy to go look them up to give the class the answers they were looking for. Kim's teaching in the class seems to be driven by a cisgender assumption; that people are cis unless they say otherwise (Lev 2013), as she indicated that she would happily discuss transgender if it was brought up by pupils, but could not consider routinely creating a space that includes trans identities in the same way that non-heterosexualities, or sexting are included without needing to be requested by students. This relies on pupils feeling safe enough to be able to ask, thus relying on pupils' own knowledge of the topic (Corteen 2006). For James this is a point of frustration – the world has moved on but PSHE has not, and in this particular school he has felt his specialist area to be side-lined:

> **James**: The PSHE national curriculum's been there for about 15 years now. It hasn't changed. And obviously, because the world's changed so much in 15 years it's kind of ridiculous that nothing's been made official yet still. As a, as a sort of improvement. (I: yes). And PSHE is still non-statutory. So obviously, our management in this school, until it becomes statutory they'd always been like, "well ok, let's deal with everything else first, and then, if we want to be outstanding perhaps, then maybe we could give more support to this area".

All of this section points to the SRE curriculum's inability to keep up with a modern society, although the staff manage this in an open and friendly way, being prepared to do research in their own time, in order to give pupils the best response that they can. It underlines that for SRE, pupils are responsible for instigating their own learning on at least some of the topics that might otherwise be expected to be covered by SRE in a way that this is not necessarily the case for other subjects. This reflects James' view that there is a reduced focus on PSHE and SRE than there is on other topics. Whilst student-led learning can be positive, it relies on pupils knowing what they do not know, and feeling safe enough to ask. In general, teachers struggle with their own lack of knowledge and cannot keep up with technology and terminology, and need to spend additional time conducting their own research.

7.3 Conclusion

These results demonstrate a number of ways in which both staff and pupils feel the limitations of the SRE curriculum and its teaching. Staff feel constrained by a lack of recognition for SRE within both the senior management team and therefore the curriculum, feeling that other topics, including GCSE topics, but specifically STEM subjects, are pushing SRE (and wider PSHE) out of the curriculum. Staff are frustrated as they see the potential benefit of SRE for pupils' personal development (just as outlined in the SRE guidance). Staff and pupils feel limited by the school set-up, with some SRE passed out to tutor groups, which, due to their vertical nature, cannot hope to simultaneously provide the right level of information for those at the beginning and end of their high school careers.

As well as struggling with a lack of recognition for SRE, both staff and pupils also discussed a sense of inevitability within the classroom. Pupils were positioned by staff as being unable to change due to home circumstances, or specific belief systems, although pupils themselves discussed whether more explicit SRE around non-heterosexualities and transgender identities might help those who are less accepting, to become more so. Pupils were keen to point out that this already happened with religion - they are taught about several different world religions and felt that this helped them to become more understanding. Both staff and pupils mentioned the possibility of change, but for staff, it was on an individual level; they might get through to one pupil and make a change. For students, having a broader coverage earlier in their school life would lead to a more global acceptance of those they did not currently understand.

It is not only pupils who discuss a lack of understanding and difficulties with that. When staff talked about teaching concerns, they felt that teaching inclusively was difficult for two reasons. Some of the heterosexual staff had concerns about their ability to teach inclusively in an authentic way (although the lesbian teacher did not have the same apprehensions when teaching about heterosexualities), and others were concerned that teaching inclusively would invite 'homophobic comments'. Staff wanted to provide an atmosphere in which all pupils felt comfortable but recognised that in teaching inclusively, the lesson would be open to negative responses from some pupils, potentially harming other pupils. In not teaching inclusively, it is possible to ignore some genders and sexualities, and so they are not brought directly into the class by the teacher, possibly absolving some of the sense of responsibility. Staff felt untrained in the topic; no staff had had specific training on how to teach inclusively, and a lack of CPD is linked to a lack of confidence in teaching the subject (Sundaram and Sauntson 2016a). This suggests that were opportunities made available to staff within their standard working hours, that they may feel able to commit to this, and thus enhance their confidence allowing them greater understanding of current topics.

There was a recognition that staff simply did not have enough time to teach all of the topics that they felt important to cover, due to a lack of prioritisation from the school as a result of governmental focus on STEM subjects and the Baccalaureate. Their overall PSHE time is reduced, meaning that all topics within PSHE have less time. Although PSHE curriculum time is governed by the school, the curriculum is driven by a desire to see good performance in league tables, as this performance helps facilitate the quasi-marketisation of education by informing parental choice of school (Goldstein and Leckie 2016). Schools therefore focus their resources in ways that help to facilitate this.

The other way in which the participants felt they were not 'keeping up' was within the teaching itself. Teachers and staff felt that staff were behind on the current affairs that they were expected to be the experts on, and for staff they did not have the time to keep up. This led pupils in places, to feel that they must know what they needed to know in order to be able to find out what the knowledge is. This created a dangerous vacuum where students would be uninformed if the information was not covered and they did not do their own research (Formby 2011a) and in order to find out, were required for example, to look on the internet for information. With the school having less time for teaching SRE, there is a concern that the teaching will focus on majority needs, rather than focusing on improving pedagogy that will allow them to respond to diversity in the classroom (Messiou et al. 2016).

From the analysis in this chapter, it is clear that pupils and staff variously position different limitations of SRE, school and wider structural limitations, based on government and external (to the department) limitations, a sense of inevitability, personal teacher intersections and an inability to be able to keep up, both in terms of time allotted and in terms of societal change. This chapter makes it clear that SRE does not stand alone as a regular (mandatory) curriculum subject, and that the barriers as discussed have impacted the content and teaching style of the subject. This has wider implications as it suggests that each school is different and will have different limitations that impact upon how and what SRE is taught, suggesting that delivery across England is

not uniform. It also suggests that the 'more difficult' an environment is, the more difficult it is to teach SRE.

This chapter has clear links back to the policy chapter, with its positioning of schools and their approaches to SRE, as well as linking to each of the empirical chapters; problematising identities, and the ways in which teaching occurs and the ways in which gender is performed within the class and wider school environment. In my final chapter, I discuss the implications of these findings, along with their limitations, and directions for future research.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Summary of findings

This thesis has provided a policy analysis of what is considered the 'official' SRE provision in schools, and has also explored how gender and sexuality are enacted, considered and responded to within schools. A key focus in my study has been to ascertain the experiences of both staff and pupils within the school system, through analysis of interviews with staff, focus groups with pupils, classroom observations and fieldnotes in one school in the Midlands. Participants' responses point to various ways in which sexuality and gender are positioned and problematised, and how barriers both within and outside of school can influence this positioning, leading to frustration on the parts of both pupils and teachers. This research has shown that schools (as exemplified by this one school) have various places where a range of genders and sexualities could be made apparent, or usualised. To a large degree however, this did not happen in the official teaching sessions outside of a siloing of the 'homosexuality lessons', and schools are dominated by a hetero- and cisnormative presumption, which is reflected across education as a whole (Robinson 2002). Participants (both staff and students alike) called in to question how useful this assumption is for the teaching of students, and policy analysis shows a divide between individual policy, and the goal as stated in the government guidance (Department for Education and Employment 2000) as being relevant for every child "whatever their developing sexuality". This thesis has shown both how these presumptions are created, and the effect these presumptions have had on the SRE classroom, and staff and pupils themselves both in and outside of the classroom. This discussion will cover a summary of each of the chapters covered, followed by reflections on both my fieldwork, and more general reflections around my position within the research. I will then look at limitations of the research, followed by implications and future directions and a final conclusion.

Conducting research into gender and sexuality at school is a complex task, bringing as it does, 'sex' together with 'school'. As a researcher, I am brought into contact with symbolic boundaries along the axes of the public/private, the appropriate/inappropriate, teacher/pupil, etcetera. This research has shown that the

official teaching and the unofficial teaching are somewhat different in approach, with pupils' understandings of sex, sexuality and gender often different and in tension to the 'approved' versions that they are being taught (Kehily 2002). Whilst 'sex education' is only a (vanishingly) small part of the official curriculum, sexuality and gender permeate the daily life of the students (Gilbert 2014).

To situate this research, I began this thesis with a review of the literature, covering the history of Section 28 and its prohibition on promoting 'homosexuality'. I covered how this was interpreted by schools, and considered the later effect on teaching of SRE. I also considered Section 28's effects on later SRE policy and how its legacy affected the ways in which SRE was created and continues (at least until the most recent amendments) to be treated as a curriculum subject (Greenland and Nunney 2008). I have discussed how the SRE curriculum is (or is not) inclusive, including the silence around certain genders and sexualities and how the heterosexual matrix (DePalma and Atkinson 2006) is assumed. I show that people who do not identify as hetero or cisgender routinely consider their SRE as less good, or less inclusive than those who do identify in these ways. I also researched the wider effects of schooling on queer students, situating pupils' SRE experience within their wider school culture, and then moved on to discuss health outcomes for queer adults and how this related to their school experience.

In chapter three I described my theoretical stances and the conceptions that informed the study. Most importantly I described why a critical psychology approach was paramount and why queer theory was of relevance to my work. Critical psychology leads us to an understanding that language shapes meaning and that this in turn relates to how we create our realities. People are located within social contexts both in individual interactions and in a wider societal context (Clarke 2007), and these systems reflect both oppression and systems of privilege. Because discourse is combined with power in this way, it necessarily means that "some accounts of reality are more powerful than others" (Clarke 2007:324). Individuals need to be better informed about choices enable us to lower our oppressive practices, and the application of a queer theory approach requires

self-reflection and understands identity to be fluid, arising from constructions. Queer theory, in a similar way, asks that we deconstruct discourses and actions and disrupt the normalcy of both the sexual and gendered orders, via a process of changing routine and discourse. In this way, we empty social categories of contents in an attempt to stop new creations of further structure. My theoretical and philosophical approaches dovetailed to allow for an approach that looked at the individual, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the school site, employing ethnographic approaches. The use of queer theory, with its rejection of a minoritising logic of 'toleration' (Warner 1993) and resisting 'the normal' allowed a philosophy through which to challenge normative approaches. Whilst I have in places spoken of minorities and majorities, I have done this due to the constraints of the existing framework of the school. My approaches facilitated an in-depth exploration of the experiences of staff and pupils, as well as considering how these are situated within a wider policy context. A further important part of the chapter was looking at the topic of reflexivity and positionality. This was important to consider given my experience of my identities and the personal nature of the work for me and my participants.

In recognition of the expanding and changing nature of SRE, it was important to provide a synopsis of the findings of this study. By critically discussing the nature of the policy and teaching of SRE with regards to gender and sexual diversity, it was anticipated that the transferability of these findings to other schools and policies would become apparent. Chapters four to seven explored first the policy backdrop to the teaching, followed by the voices of staff and pupils. Through separate chapters, there is a single overarching structure that allows a portrayal of how gender and sexuality are performed (Butler 2010) within classroom and the wider school culture.

In chapter four I presented an analysis of a sample of school SRE policies in the West Midlands on the understanding that policy and practice are related. I considered SRE policies for several schools, and my analysis suggested that schools record both a desire to be unbiased, and a desire to adhere to specific values, and that within this they

position sexuality and gender in certain ways that often lead to the problematisation of certain ideals of gender and sexuality. School policies largely assumed a heteronormative and cisgender presumption and provided little or no focus on non-heterosexualities or on trans identities. Where policies did focus on these, it was usually in the form of 'homophobic' (and rarely also 'transphobic') bullying, resulting in essentialising of queer students identities into something problematic (Airton 2013).

The policy themes were not 'waiting around to be discovered' (Braun and Clarke 2006); they were created by me, and there is no doubt that my own ideologies and preconceptions informed my analysis. It is possible that much as I have suggested that the policies have worked to present SRE and gender and sexuality in a certain way, I have mirrored that process within this analysis; the data made itself intelligible to me by way of drawing me in to particular moments that I felt interested in or became aware of; information that I reacted to in some way. In the choosing of what to analyse and how to do this, I have created a particular approach and way of looking at SRE and sexuality in school. However, my findings are close to other work presented on this topic; Røthing (2008) found similar approaches to homonormativity in schools in Norway, and Sundaram and Sauntson's (2016) SRE guidance critical discourse analysis also finds similarly therefore adding credence to this research.

Going into chapter five I considered the ways in which sexuality and gender were positioned within the classroom and wider school culture. In seeking to understand students' experiences of SRE, I argued that we cannot hope to understand these experiences without taking their wider informal networks (the larger school environment) into consideration (Measor 2004). In problematising teaching of queer identities, it is possible that this shores up the heterosexual cisgender pupils' experiences of self (Robinson 2005) and engenders a resultant dismissal of the queer experience. It is also likely that as teachers try to bring in individualised cultural representations of queer people, that pupils will draw on other constructions, based on the person's job, appearance, the news article they were in, etc., (Britzman 1995) and

this will lead to individualising. In this chapter, when queer identities were (re)presented as problems that were encapsulated rather than usualised, as stereotypes (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2015), or as vulnerable people who must be cared for in some way, queer pupils were, as a result, positioned as having little agency as autonomous beings and were instead positioned as victims (Marshall 210) in some way. This problematising approach also meant that staff could focus on individual queer students or queer topics, rather than consider the more systemic school issues that might serve to create a problematic atmosphere for pupils no matter what their gender or sexuality (Payne and Smith 2013). At the same time, the reductionist nature of the way that SRE was taught created a 'damage limitation' model, which serves to focus on STIs and contraception (Corteen 2006) and left (at least some of) queer pupils' needs unattended to. McLean's (2008) study found that several participants realise at a later age that they were bisexual, as bisexuality just had not been considered as a topic of exploration at a younger age, and the reductionist nature of SRE policy and teaching are in danger of allowing for an easy replication of this finding here.

Chapter six looked at the ways in which femininities and masculinities were constructed, and moved on to look at the effect of gender within the classroom, which resulted in non-heterosexualities and transgender identities being viewed at least by older pupils as 'odd'. The chapter also looked at the links to these portrayals of gender, including rape culture (Burnett, Mattern, Herakova, Kahl, Tobola, and Bornsen 2009), and a culture that reified masculinity and related again to the position of queerness as odd. Yet, this chapter also discussed how some individuals were able to withstand these 'typical' constructions and were able to accept the existence of non-heterosexualities and trans identities. Walkerdine (1990) argues that girls, and women teachers are positioned variously through discourses, including those of femininity, passivity and irrationality. Hey (1997) exposes the myth of such feminine passivity by showing how girls' relationships with each other are "invested in the production of certain forms of power and subjectivity" (Hey 1997: 23). Masculinities of all types are often constructed as being in opposition to femininities (Anderson 2009). Whilst observing some very hetero- and cisnormative actions on behalf of staff and students, I also observed some very 'queer'

responses also. It seemed to me that often the normative responses from the staff and students came from a place of well-meaning, but uninformed, behaviour with the additional embodiment of 'expected' gender roles ('boys' being disruptive, 'girls' doing the care-taking work for example) (Corteen 2006). Chambers, van Loon, and Tincknell (2004) discuss similar issues, finding that teachers focused on pregnancy and prevention, with no recognition of what they termed 'misogynistic bullying' that kept girls in their places, something that was portrayed in my experience of the classroom also, when girls' experiences of the actions of boys as problematic were dismissed as an individual problem unworthy of further exploration.

Several studies have documented young men's disruptive behaviour in sex education classes (Allen 2006), and this behaviour may be associated with their disaffection with these programmes (Measor, Tiffin, and Fry 1996). This literature suggests that sex education may not be meeting young men's needs, or their interests and something would need to change in order to facilitate this process. According to Hilton 2001:37) ''sex education material needs, therefore, to be approached from the viewpoint of boys in order to capture their interests''.

Chapter seven was the final analytic chapter, with a discussion of the barriers that were in place in the school. The chapter discussed first how a lack of recognition of SRE was limiting in terms of what and in which ways SRE could be taught, with staff feeling that SRE could be given higher status in the school, potentially leading to positive effects (Formby Willis and Stephens 2021). I then discussed the sense of inevitability that both staff and students felt about identity. I discussed how pupils were positioned as having concrete identities that could not change, or if they could, that this must be facilitated earlier in their school career than currently happened. The chapter moved on to discussing the effects of how personal intersections impact teaching inclusively; that queerness was considered a difficult topic to teach and that staff did not feel well-enough trained to teach SRE inclusively. When considering the training of teachers, there was almost solely a focus on stopping homophobic practices as opposed to positive

inclusion, leading to the sense of liberalism as discussed by Chambers, Van Loon and Tincknell (2004). The chapter ended with a discussion of how staff felt they cannot keep up; firstly, they did not have enough time to teach everything they needed to due to wider curriculum pressures. Secondly, popular culture is constantly changing and staff did not feel up to date with technology and terminology. This thought process is echoed by the students who felt that at least some staff were not wholly aware of current societal attitudes, which is echoed across the education system by pupils (Pound, Langford and Campbell 2016). These participants' information pointed to a wider range of stories from other schools and other policy analyses and whilst I acknowledge that my research is limited to one school, I suggest that this school, these staff and those pupils, were not so different to other staff and pupils in other schools, and I have supported this contention through providing a variety of research to explore these points.

The lack of perceived support by the wider school is not limited to just this school. Other teachers in other schools feel similarly about the lack of support and the lack of guidance (Buston and Hart 2001; Preston 2016). Both teachers and pupils in the present study recognised that the school is not set up to prioritise SRE teaching, and the staff specifically understood their specialist subject to not be as important as other subjects as it was not an assessed topic, and thus was not prioritised. Again, this is reflected in schools and by pupils across the country (Alldred, David and Smith 2003; Formby and Wolstenholme 2012).

It is clear from the above that sexuality and gender are usually positioned in hetero- and cisnormative ways, and that this has impacted students, both in the classroom and in the wider school. However, despite the school being alluded to by some participants as a 'not so safe' place to be for queer pupils, the school, knowing that I would probably find hetero- and cisnormativity as part of the curriculum, agreed to let me play a full part in all the relevant SRE classes, and to hold unsupervised focus groups with pupils. Over 30 other schools approached declined to participate in this study. The fact that

Brockmount allowed me this access and suggested some non-heterosexual staff for me to interview is indicative of cracks in heteronormativity (Allen 2015).

Currently class teaching focuses on hetero and cisnormative ways of being (Abbott, Ellis and Abbott 2015) - it was essentially a given that a young girl (as defined currently by her uniform - there were no known trans pupils at the school) would want to grow up, get a boyfriend, get married (or at least be in a long-term relationship) and inevitably, have children. There was little space in the curriculum to allow for someone coded as female to grow up and 'be a boy' (except in the focus groups), and also little space to allow for a girl to grow up, have a girlfriend and have babies, or not have any partner (and either have sex or not have sex). As noted in the policy analysis, schools promote a particular ethos within their policies, and this was overtly carried over into the teaching of at least some classes (Abbott, Ellis and Abbott 2015). As noted in the introduction, this school is situated in an area with a high pregnancy rate, which meant that staff were very aware of these statistics, leading to a significant focus on pregnancy and motherhood (albeit with less focus on fatherhood, potentially adding to the disenfranchisement of boys who then see this as something of an irrelevance (Biddulph 2007; Brown and McQueen 2020)).

My research is culturally located and there will be identities, experiences and voices that are not located within this study and my conclusions would not necessarily apply to these. This research does not aim to make generalisations across schools, although it may be possible that general themes might be similar. I am considering here a specific set of classrooms, within a particular school, not all classrooms in all schools (LeCompte 1987). My research contributes to an existing body of research by highlighting the links between policy and teaching, and by providing a multi-faceted look at how SRE was taught and experienced in one high school, with a particular focus on gender and sexual diversity taking into account direct observations, the reported accounts by both staff and pupils.

This thesis adds to existing literature on SRE teaching in schools and provides one of the first pieces of research combining consideration of policy with both teaching observations and data from individual participants (via interview and focus groups). I produce a cohesive body of research giving a variety of views, opinions and subject positions. I have shown where there are connections between policy and teaching (staff do *want* to be unbiased for example) and staff are working hard to cover what they feel the basics of the policy are, they also feel that there are places missing, and these are not covered in the policy guidance. This is not an uncommon scenario (Rudoe 2019). It is difficult to know where the gaps in teaching are informed by the gaps in policy and where they are informed by a lack of teaching space and perceived importance of the SRE curriculum (outside of perhaps the high regional pregnancy rate).

I have shown that staff feel that a more comprehensive SRE curriculum would benefit students' emotional needs and perhaps this would lead to a school culture that was more accepting in nature, and this was reflected in students' understandings also. 'Too little, too late' seemed to be the ethos behind much of what the students felt; that learning about 'difference' earlier in their school careers would give people more words to explore themselves. Staff similarly felt 'too little' time, importance was given to SRE teaching, which they felt was deserving of more space.

8.2 Reflections

As I reflect on my experience of the study, I consider again my ontological position that there are multiple constructions of realities that people act upon and react to, creating meaning in their experiences (Burr 2015). This means that there was no pre-existing reality that I had access to, and instead an understanding that there is no exact way to portray this social reality, and that my subjectivity must be made explicit (Roberts and Sanders 2005). For me, my use of ethnographic methods within a social constructionist approach allowed for a level of reflexivity that demonstrated my stance, allowing for multiple types of data and viewpoints to be collected.

By using a reflexive approach within all aspects of the study (Braun and Clarke 2019), from considering my own constructed identities, through the topic, the participants, the research setting, analysis and the writing up of the work, I believe that I have represented the findings of the study as faithfully as possible. I chose to use ethnographic methods (Brewer 2000) as this seemed to allow the best 'fit' for my data collection and research stance. It allowed me to spend time with my participants and begin to understand some of the ways in which they constructed their every-day lives, focusing on the experience of my participants within their cultural context.

My own subjectivity as a gender/queer researcher has, of course, informed my entire study. I began this research from a very personal place; I had, it may be said, an agenda. I started from a very definite reactionary place to the situation that had happened at my university, and wanted to find out more about what was happening for people in education at a younger age. Whilst I did not go into the research thinking that the SRE component of PSHE was failing pupils, I had had my own (limited) experience of SRE as a pupil. I have also heard small parts from young people in my life, and suspected that there might be much to learn. This starting point, along with my own identity positions, obviously impacted my observations, interpretation and analysis (Braun and Clarke 2019). Once engaged in the study, I was uniquely situated to pick up on nuances in ways that a cishet researcher might not. Conversely, my position as a gender/queer researcher might also have meant that I missed other aspects that would be picked up on by a cishet researcher. I was aware of both the positive and negative aspects of how I was both an insider and an outsider at the same time (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). I noticed at several points in my PhD process that various supervisor comments on draft chapters reflected differences to my own – some of these comments (from supervisors working with queer theory approaches) challenged me to look further than my own identity and more into queer theory (Rasmussen and Gowlett 2015), and other comments (from researchers not working in queer studies or with queer theory) were challenging in that they did not always 'see' the things that I was seeing. Both sets of comments caused me to consider further my positionality; was I 'reading too much' into what I felt I was seeing? Was I not seeing enough? Was I just not explicit enough about

what I was trying to say? I think that each of these positions have been true, and in becoming aware of them early in my research has allowed for a finessing of my analysis (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). This ensured that I was not reading into what was not present, and that I was challenging myself to go further than the most simple of readings.

My approach, of both queer (Renn 2010) and critical psychology (Fox and Prillitensky 1994) has allowed for an understanding that the information I have written about is value-laden rather than value-free. Although I have in places, been limited by the language available, I have sought to problematise certain actions and discourses, in the hope that this may lead to potentials for social change (Fox and Prilleltensky 1997). In taking this approach I have sought to understand the meanings that have been ascribed to events by participants, understanding the social world to be dynamic and created and that my own identities impact on these understandings (Pillow 2003). Participants have voiced their truths and created their understandings of the world. These are suggestive rather than conclusive (Crotty 1988) but in trying to render the taken for granted as strange, I have attempted to allow space for a new understanding of genders and sexualities in SRE lessons, and in providing an overview of individuals' subjective experiences, and the impacts that this might have for the future.

8.3 Limitations of the study

There are several limitations inherent in the study. Whilst using triangulation of data collection methods allows for greater credibility, direct observations are not without their critique – each researcher will bring their own perspectives, interests and histories to their observations (LeCompte 1987) and other researchers may have chosen to focus on different aspects of what happened in the classroom. My position and my identity absolutely impact on the data I have analysed. It may also be that those who are being overtly observed will be impacted by the observations and therefore their actions are not the actions that would occur were I not present; my mere presence may have had a direct effect on the work. Although the data on the 'observer effect(s)' are varied as to whether they feel there is an impact, with some feeling there is little to no impact and

some feeling there is significant impact, and still others feeling that the impact varies across demografics (Sporrong et al. 2022), data from my field notes reflects the impact my presence did have on the staff; James mentioned to me that he did not know if he would have brought up trans as a topic, were I not in class. For the pupils however, I believe I was largely 'just another observer' out of several they experience in any given term, and whilst it is possible that my presence made a difference to their actions, none of the teachers commented that pupils had acted in any way differently in lessons I was present for. Direct observations are one of the most widely used methods for assessment in schools (Hintze, Volpe, and Shapiro 2002) and my method was extremely flexible. I did not seek to adopt a systematic method such as frequency or event recording (Hintze, Volpe and Shapiro 2002), as I was not setting out to record certain types of behaviours (and indeed, did not know what actions and behaviours I might see) but instead chose a very naturalistic approach and recorded that which I could, which seemed interesting. This of course, means that I have missed several things that might have occurred were I counting incidences, or length of time, and as a result I have missed important information (Hintze, Volpe and Shapiro 2002). However, as I was aiming for an overall Gestalt, I felt that the flexibility of my approach would allow for a more interesting dataset than a more inflexible approach might. I did not attempt to seek consent for audio or video recording of the classroom as this would have required active consent from the caregivers of around 30 students per class and in order to observe each staff member, I would need to observe approximately 100 individual pupils, and would have needed every single pupil present to have returned a consent form. Whilst this would undoubtedly have afforded me better/more reliable data, it was not feasible. In not recording this data, however, I was reliant on my ability to record several things that were happening at once. I was also reliant on my memory for field notes that were written immediately after the class visit, and both of these are not perfect ways to approach data collection. Add to this that individuals are not 'just' speaking, and they do not 'wait their turn', motionless until they can contribute, and this leaves me with a significant amount of interaction that I cannot accommodate (Mondada 2019). However, I attempted to capture as much of the interaction as I could and whilst I understand that I am limited in terms of what is physically achievable, I could not know in advance of the analysis what might prove relevant or not (Hammersley 2017). This is in part, why I chose

multiple methods of analysis. Interviews carry their own sets of limitations; it is possible to both wittingly or unwittingly direct interviewees to give certain types of responses (Hammersley 2017). There is no reason to suspect in both interviews and focus groups that participants were giving anything other than as full a response as they could. All types of data collection have inherent limitations, and intrinsic benefits.

My role within the class is another limitation to consider. I took a fairly passive role within the class on the whole, staying in my seat unless advised by teachers that I could roam freely. As a 'non-staff' adult, I was always conscious that in talking to the pupils I risked taking their attention away from the direct task at hand and risked them being reprimanded for not working as instructed. Although I very much wanted to take a 'least adult' position (Atkinson 2019), it was made very clear to me from the start from the staff that felt they did not have enough time to cover the topics that they needed to cover. I did not wish to cause any further delays that would create extra burden on the staff, nor did I want to cause trouble for students. When considering my role in the class I was also drawn to wondering whether there was an effect of the public places performance (Goffman 1959). Although at a macro level, classes are used to observers being present, at a micro-level, my existence on the table of some pupils is directly relevant (where it may not be so much to the pupil across the class with their back to me). In one year-seven observation, a pupil on my table called the teacher over to ask "I haven't seen it, but in 50 shades of grey, they use a spatula, and a whip. Why?" Of course, I cannot say whether this pupil would have asked the question if I were not present, but it is possible that there is an aspect of public performance here (the pupil potentially wished to show a superior level of knowledge about a topic they theoretically should not have, given their age). This is but one example, and it is likely that there are other examples that are more low-key, where my mere presence in the classroom effected changes.

In considering the variety of data-gathering approaches, there are moments in the interviews and focus groups that seem potentially contradictory to the observation data.

This is acceptable within a social constructionist framework that considers views to be created, and creates the possibility for people to move from one position to another within very similar moments, as each moment is constructed as opposed a concrete truth on offer. This kind of example can be seen in the theme with Adam, where he constructs himself differently (and is constructed differently) in direct observations, from reports of other students in different observations and in focus groups. This speaks to the consctructionist nature of my approach; there is no one fixed way of being (Ebin and Van Wagenen 2006) and instead we construct ourselves according to environment (Burr 2015). Transferability and fittingness should take into consideration the school demographics; the school was largely Caucasian and working class, and other schools will have different cultural nuances that this study cannot account for.

Whilst I created a semi-structured interview schedule to allow for expanses into areas I was not aware of, it is still the case that the schedule was of my design and it is possible that I have missed important information that might have been of use because I chose this rather than an unstructured interview. Further, it may be possible that I was not sufficiently aware enough of the nuance of what I was being invited to, to follow a particular path (Hammersley 2017). In analysing the transcripts, I chose to go with a playscript notation rather than Jefferson notation (Potter and Hepburn 2005) and I recognise that some of the nuance of the data is lost as a result. As I was unable to record the classroom data I could not have analysed that data in this way. Although I accept Potter and Hepburn's (2005) argument that by focusing on the minutiae of the interview I would gain a broader overall picture of the interview data, this would have by necessity prioritised my interview and focus group data over the classroom data and it was important to me to treat the two with parity. It is also possible that both interview and focus group participants were subject to social desirability and were telling me information they felt I wanted to know, rather than their genuine thought processes, but because my methods involve triangulation, the dangers inherent in this are reduced.

When considering my policy analysis, I chose schools in the West Midlands, striated in a way that reflects the national breakdown of schools, in order to try and ensure a level of representativeness nationally. With this type of sampling, it was not possible to exactly match the national breakdown of schools. School type varies enormously from area to area, with a greater number of independent schools in the southeast, for example, than any other regional area. This means that what is relevant across my particular sample type might not be relevant for other sample types. Taking this into consideration, however, some schools of each main type were included in my sample, with schools of each type being present in the main themes. This suggests that there are not major differences in policies of different school types.

This study also has limitations in terms of language used. No language is perfect and any choice I made about how to reference specific and more general identity constructions is fraught with difficulty. When I reference homosexuality (bisexuality; transsexuality), or LGBTQ+ it creates a focus on a minoritising discourse (Ellis and High 2004) rather than a focus on wider society; this might be considered a deficit model (Akerlund and Cheung 2000), thus perhaps limiting the queer nature of the analysis. Whilst I striven to look outwards with my language use, rather than inwards, and have focused on how the hetero/cisnormative conventions have applied, it is possible that the research has contributed to further minoritise people. I have tried, where possible. to use the term 'queer' and to use this in a way that simply means the challenging of the cishet status quo. It is possible, however, that the essentialist bias of the culture I am situated in has taken some of the nuance out of the term, and that I have in places unintentionally applied this as a direct synonym for 'LGBT'.

As an outsider to the school, I was demarcated by my visitor pass, and thus it is possible that challenges that might be made were I an insider (i.e. 'talking back' to a teacher), did not occur. This may mean that I was missing vital information about school life because my assumptions were allowed to stand, or because it did not occur to staff (or pupils) that I would see things differently from another member of staff. It is also possible that

staff were aware that I viewed something differently, but did not seek to correct it, fearing a negative consequence for the school. It was directly stated in one interview however, by one member of staff, that she was much franker with me than she would have been to an insider researcher. This directly contradicts some research that suggests that there is often more frankness with an interviewer known (at least over a period of time) to the participant (Kühne 2018), this interviewee was not one I had observed. It may have been however, that her sense of 'knowing' comes from the sense that she mentioned, of us being 'on the same team' and thus both the positive and negative implications of being an outsider researcher are clearly demonstrated within the research.

My research considers the topic of microaggressions (Sue 2017), and this concept is not without its critics. Not all individuals will perceive an incident the same way; what is a microaggression to one may be unremarkable, or indeed complimentary, to another (Nadal et al. 2016). Because sexualities (and some genders) are invisible, people must first work out if the microaggression happened, and then decide how to react (Shelton and Delgado-Romero 2011). There have been several critiques of microaggressions in recent literature (such as Lilienfeld 2017) that have argued that research into microaggressions is currently too undeveloped to have valid empirical validation, and that research should be halted until further empirical evidence can demonstrate the impact of microaggressions. Sue (2017) argues in response that Lilienfeld approaches this from a position of privilege; a narrative that can elide or erase the experience of those who experience microaggressions, and that approaching microaggressions from a reductionist approach would risk removing external validity. Microaggressions are difficult to study because of their emphasis on lived experience, but evidence as to their negative effects is clear. A comprehensive review conducted by Nadal et al (2016), covering all research published at the time, showed deleterious effects, and which would also be demonstrable as potential issues within the classroom.

Precisely because qualitative research is not generalisable in the traditional sense, it is important to be sensitive to context, and I explain the context by situating my sample; findings may differ according to context. Although the results from this school are not generalisable in the traditional sense, this school would seem on the surface to be an academy school much like many other academies of its type that sit in a mostly white working-class area, with some teachers who are trained to deliver a PSHE curriculum. This school has been open enough to participate in the study, suggesting the school at least, is confident it does not sit at the extreme negative end of SRE teaching and is open to constructive comments. It is clear, however, that findings may well differ according to context, and that in different schools, teaching may happen very differently. Where the policy analysis was concerned, care was taken to consider policies across all of the main school types, and aside from some religious schools providing a larger focus on religion in their SRE policies, the data shows that there is a mix of school types across most of the themes analysed. This suggests that to a large degree, policies at least in the geographical area chosen are similar across school types, and where individual differences occur, they are not necessarily as a result of school type, but of individual schools themselves.

There are many implications of this study, from ways in which policy is enacted, to ways in which teaching is carried out and experienced. With regard to the government guidance, the Sex Education Forum (formed before the guidance was written and consisting of 30 member organisations from religious to parenting groups to sexual health groups (Thomson 1997)), created a consensus statement on the role and nature of SRE. Despite initial mistrust, as many of these groups had never worked together before, the consensus statement was endorsed by all 30 organisations. The statement rejected a traditional 'information' model of SRE that would be values-free. Instead the SEF suggested that SRE should be situated within a model that emphasised the "human and social dimensions of sexuality" (Thomson 1997: 263) that would help to promote social skills and encourage exploration of attitudes and values stressing the "complexity and value of human relationships" (Sex Education Forum 1992:5). The construct of values proved to be a difficult place for all groups to compromise, and perhaps reflects

the ambiguity in policies today. The Sex Education Forum suggests that national policy should recognise and protect diversity, and local policy should identify shared values and work to close the gap between policy and experience. Thomson (1997) suggests that policy as it stood could end in two different camps (religious vs secular groups), each debating their own versions of pupils' imagined futures. Without including the voices of the pupils concerned, she suggests that the moral complexity surrounding the topic has been simplified, leading to voices not being heard. This, as will be shown shortly, may have changed somewhat.

Although SRE policies and the government guidance sought to situate themselves as unbiased and inclusive, SRE was also placed within a moral framework that emphasised the family and a stability of relationship, which by default worked to 'promote' a certain type of cishet norm. The themes across all the analyses largely also worked to present heteronormativity, positioning non-normative identities as 'other', as problematic, with heterosexual and cisgender identities being the norm from which everything is based. This analysis demonstrated that far from being unbiased and inclusive, themes within SRE policy documents often worked within a very particular bias (the framework of marriage and children) and supported these by creating discourses of hetero- and cisnormativity. This highlighted how the policies (including the guidance document) worked to create a normative culture in which queerness is absent, silent and/or othered. The curriculum does more than merely reflect experience, it *creates* experience (Clarke and Peel 2007) via the existence of the hidden curriculum (Kessler et al 1985). This serves to reflect and reinforce the ways in which gender and sexuality are presented both within SRE classes and in wider school (and to beyond school).

The difficulty with the policies being based on a set of cishet assumptions, is that non-cishet identities are not given equal consideration. By forcing non-cishet identities into 'problematic' identities, when discussed, these will reinforce the heterosexual matrix (Butler 2010). The conflation of sex-gender-sexuality leads to the normalisation and privileging of heterosexuality (DePalma and Atkinson 2009, Clarke and Kitzinger 2004),

because questioning heterosexuality is not normative, but questioning homosexuality is. The problematising of homosexuality goes some way to reinforcing the heterosexual matrix; by positioning homosexuality as a problem or an issue (either by adding it to a list of 'sensitive issues' or by listing 'homophobic bullying' in the SRE policy), the suggestion that it is not possible to be non-cishet without 'problems' is further reinforced and creates the queer pupil as either (vulnerable to being) wounded or as “resilient hero” (Allen 2015: 368).

The assimilation of 'homosexuality' into normative culture can be seen in the policies. Where the original policy was written with a focus on marriage that excluded same-sex relationships, because equal marriage was not available, school policies overnight went to being inclusive. It is noted, however, that although civil partnerships have been available for over a decade since all of the policies were last updated, no policy notes that civil partnerships might be a valid alternative to marriage. Although I argue that civil partnerships in themselves can be perceived as normative institution (available to people who can afford them as a way to benefit from social – hetero norms), and often desired by those who wish to 'fit in' (Jowett and Peel 2017), in this instance, mentions of ‘civil partnership’ would serve as a reference that an active structural form of same-gender 'stable relationship' structure was available. However, this is not included in any policies, thus explicitly privileging some forms of official relationship structure - whilst remaining silent on others.

Some of the effects of such privileging and othering can be seen in wider research; Olson-Kennedy et al. (2016) provide research that suggests that trans children who have socially transitioned, and who are supported in their identities, have comparable mental health rates to cisgender children of the same age, suggesting that support and acknowledgement of one’s gender can be vital to the ongoing health of a child. As Smolkin and Young (2011) suggest, all children should be able to see themselves culturally represented in books available to them (something this school’s librarian works hard to achieve). I suggest that in conjunction with studies that suggest that queer pupils

routinely rate their SRE as poorer than cishet pupils, and that this needs to go further than a text book and that all pupils should be able to see themselves represented within their classes, SRE included. Wiltse and Boyko (2015) found that it is not as a result of 'homophobia' that staff do not teach queer topics, and that a staff member can be inclusive in their views, yet still find it difficult to teach queer topics, and some of their reasons I have seen echoed in my research; a feeling that staff would not be being fair if they did not allow 'free speech' to those vociferous in their 'anti' views.

8.4 The new RSE guidance

The statutory guidance was updated (Department for Education 2019) as I was nearing completion of my thesis, with significant changes to language, and although there is not space to conduct a full analysis here, I would like to take some time to consider the changes between the old guidance and the new. The guidance changes the order of the acronym. Where it was SRE, now the topic is 'Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)'.

At first glance, the new guidance takes a much more humanised approach, placing students and their experiences at the start of the policy, with reference to well-being and happiness. This is unlike the old policy, which takes a much more distanced approach. The policy states that RSE is now compulsory in all schools, although parents still have right of withdrawal (from the sex education component only) until three terms before their child turns 16. Much as before, schools are still free to determine how to teach their RSE "in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum" (Department for Education 2019; 8) but it should be applicable to "real life" situations, and for the first time, the guidance document links to resources from Public Health England that schools may consider when teaching on these topics. It also provides in an appendix, a list of other resources schools may utilise, including from Sexwise, the PSHE association and Stonewall, as well as giving an example model secondary curricula from Catholic education.

For the first time, the online nature of many pupils' lives is mentioned with specific reference to social media and there is clear guidance that the importance of internet safety is considered within the RSE component of delivery (Department for Education 2019), with a focus on helping pupils to understand risks and harm and how, and whom, to report issues to. SRE for young people has been described as being at its most 'effective' when it explores media and peer influences on sexual behaviours (Formby 2011b) .

In the older policy (Department for Education and Employment 2000) it was possible to copy and paste large sections of the policy into the school's own policy, and indeed, I found this across many of the policies in chapter 4. It is still possible to do that with this guidance document, however, the document is much more explicit on how schools can produce their own document and what it should contain.

In the new policy, it is still possible to have a "balanced debate" about "issues that are seen as contentious" Department for Education 2019:12) - and I believe this to be a mistake. Although I believe that religious views can be taken in to consideration, I do not believe (for example) that trans people's existences should be available for debate; studies have shown that trans children, and those exploring their gender, tend to have worse outcomes than cis children (Olson-Kennedy et al. 2016), and this will not be improved by the possibility of a classroom 'debate'.

This guidance document still reduces both gender and sexuality to binaries, discussing "girls and boys" and "homophobia", but for the first time, there is mention of "transgender", albeit as part of a generic mention; "we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this [unclear from context] area of the curriculum" (Department for Education 2019: 15). Where the wording once said that SRE should meet the needs of all pupils whatever their *sexuality* it now says "the needs of all pupils" (Department for Education 2019: 15). In addition, the government guidance

document states that 'LGBT' content should be fully integrated into the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson. It also states for the first time, that gender identity should be explored in a sensitive and respectful way.

The previous recurring statements about "the importance of marriage for family life and bringing up children" (Department for Education and Employment 2000: 4) have been removed and instead the new guidance talks about marriage and committed relationships with no reference to the importance of "bringing up children".

Whilst there are still some areas of the guidance that would benefit from consideration (notably to include bisexuality as more than a single mention in the expansion of the LGBT acronym, and the inclusion of asexuality as a valid orientation), it is clear that much work has been done in order to try to ensure that the current guidance is more inclusive of identities outside of cishet ones and provides a path to teaching that is inclusive in delivery, being clear that 'LGBT' identities should not be siloed in to one standalone lesson.

There are significant changes in the new RSE guidance, which will potentially impact on teaching within the classroom. These changes will not happen overnight however, in much the same way as the impacts of Section 28 were in existence long after the repeal of this (Greenland and Nunney 2008) and there is little in the guidance that actively helps teachers to change their teaching. Therefore, I suggest that although the current research project was carried out under the old guidance, much of my findings will remain relevant for some years in to the future; much as teachers several years after Section 28 was removed from the legislation still believed they could not teach about 'homosexuality' (O'Loan et al. 2006). The new guidance will take time to filter down into new ways of teaching, given a staff team with very little time devoted to RSE classes that need to fit in to a results-driven curriculum.

8.5 Future school policies and teaching

Future SRE policies should include specific reference to queer relationships and identities, with direct reference to these potential student identities when mentioning relationships, safer sex, 'marriage' or relationships and consent. Although there is always a line to be drawn about essentialising identity, and a concern that by naming various identities we necessarily exclude others, currently ‘homophobia’ and ‘homosexuality’ are forced to stand for a great deal of other identity positions, thus marginalising and rendering invisible other identity positions such as bisexuality and trans identities, which has potential to have a negative impact on pupils (Moore 2016). It is possible that the use of ‘homosexuality’ as the word for all non-cishet identities does more harm to those exploring trans identities than other sexualities, as there is the potential to recognise ‘homosexuality’ as sexual behaviour or feelings that do not relate to a mixed gender relationship (whether the person identities as bisexual, or gay or otherwise). However, it is not possible to recognise homosexual as an easy stand in for transgender. This is supported by evidence that trans pupils rate their SRE as worse than LGB students do.

Policies should explicitly mention trans identities in a positive manner, and this mention should then extend into class teaching around trans identities in a positive and non-pathologising manner. As well as introducing trans identities in this way, class teaching on sexuality would benefit from focusing on all pupils’ potential experiences of sex (including the validity of not wanting to have sex; another sexuality that has received very little attention). This would enable teaching to do more than essentialise sexuality into discrete categories, and instead to talk about a variety of human experience, leading to better outcomes for students (Zilliacus, Paulsrud and Hom 2017). This teaching of a more fluid sense of sexuality might then give pupils more ‘permission’ to experience certain things without being forced to ‘pigeon-hole’ themselves, or, as one of my participants mentioned, to think of themselves as “experimenting” on people. They might instead just seek to enjoy what they enjoyed, and not continue what they did not. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore how school SRE/RSE policies might change as a result of the changes in the law around the delivery of SRE/RSE, but a brief preliminary glance shows me that several of the schools covered in chapter four have

indeed updated their policies. Future research might consider how these policies have changed since production of the new guidance.

Classes would benefit from having 'expert' voices in the classroom, either from peer educators (young parents of all genders for example) or from people with other lived experience (adult trans or other LGB people) (Formby and Donovan 2020), and this was something that pupils in focus groups felt that they would appreciate; they wanted to hear from experts of one type or another and they recognised that their teachers were not those experts. Research, although still minimal, suggests that students who have external speakers for their sex education perceive those speakers to be more 'expert' than their teachers, and tend to be more comfortable discussing sensitive topics with them (Allen 2009), suggesting that external speakers may have an important role in sexuality education, and that using guest speakers can result in a broader curriculum. Using guest speakers, is more a more complex process (vetting the educators, to avoid poor information (Sperling 2022) as well as ensuring educators are prepared to align with the school's policies, and gaining funding are all issues that need to be considered) than providing all of the information in-house (McRee, Madsen and Eisenberg 2014) and in an environment where schools are increasingly asked to do more with less (Gov.UK 2021) this may be difficult. Within the classroom, if the teacher stays, it may negate some of the impact of having an external speaker, but if the teacher leaves, they will be unaware of some of the reactions of their students to part of the curriculum. Using a guest speaker (in instances with more than one SRE teacher, as in this study) also suggests that more students will get similar teaching, which is delivered by one person, rather than the same topic being delivered by multiple people. It may also be possible (Sperling 2022) that the materials delivered by the specialist educator may not be of the best quality, but the same may be said of the more generalist SRE/RSE teacher. Specialist educators may also work under different confidentiality rules to the school, which is likely to help pupils feel less threatened and more open to discussing their experience, but may in turn make staff feel more threatened (Elley 2013).

8.6 Conclusions

Further research could focus on the lived experience of microaggressions (Sue 2017) within the classroom. Whilst studies into pupils' experiences of SRE routinely demonstrate that LGB pupils rate their SRE as worse than cishet pupils do, and trans pupils often rate their experiences as worse than LGB pupils, there is little to suggest why this is so. Microaggressions are linked to cis- and heteronormativity, but there is little research that has directly considered microaggressions as the focus of study into SRE teaching in UK schools. An examination of this might allow for further deconstruction of such normativity within the classroom. With the change in the guidance, and with the explicit inclusion of trans identities for the first time, it may be that for these pupils their experience of teaching changes significantly.

This research brings together not only the reports of pupil and staff experiences, but also direct observation of the classroom environment. Observation does not mean that I can make definitive claims as to what pupils experienced, either in this study or more broadly across the UK. It does mean that this research covers direct experience of the teaching environment, and in reporting on the speech and actions that occur within the classroom, I can present one possible set of experiences and discuss what other experiences might be, based on those observations. Additionally, the research within Brockmount was set alongside contemporary SRE policies, enabling a deeper understanding of the links between policy and teaching (Brewer 2000).

This work contributes to a greater understanding of the English SRE teaching system before the changes to the system in 2020, and the ways in which the teaching was facilitated and hindered by policy, both local and national, driven by local need. It highlights the tension between local need and national events. Until this point, there has been no single piece of research drawing together a policy analysis alongside teaching experiences in an English high school with a focus on gender and sexuality, and this research gives a unique insight into topics of sexuality and gender in ways that have not previously been discussed.

This research shows that there is a clear gap between the teaching of certain topics and the understanding of those topics, echoing research from Buston and Hart (2001). There is a clear disparity between what teachers feel they are teaching and what they are teaching. None of the SRE teachers in this study had overtly recognised the heterosexist presumption in their classes, and it was not until the head of SRE was showing me (as a person with explicit focus on 'LGBT' topics) the slides about marriage for the class that he had created, that he suddenly saw that although he had briefly covered same-sex marriage, he had then gone on to spend the rest of the slides talking about a man and a woman. In an example of the impact of this research study, in the following school year, facilitated by the PSHE lead, I was contacted by the pupils who had been in year ten, as they wished for my advice and help on making their SRE lessons more inclusive, and had chosen to do this as part of their project for their year 11 citizenship GCSE coursework.

There is also a clear demarcation between styles of teaching; where staff would generally like to be able to cover both breadth and depth; because of the rapidly expanding nature of SRE due to its low status (Alldred David and Smith 2003), they were required to employ shallow teaching covering a large teaching area, rather than deep teaching covering one or two areas in-depth. This means that pupils must facilitate their own learning by using outside sources. Whilst this is potentially a progressive way of teaching, pupil-led; pupils would benefit from being signposted to places in order to help them to learn from more reliable information.

It is clear from the analysis of both policy and teaching experiences, that it is possible for each individual school to interpret the guidance in a different way; no policies were specific on which particular topics must be taught and how each must be taught, although some policies dictate the atmosphere in which SRE should be taught. However, those are open to interpretation by the teacher, and it seems obvious that schools teach what they feel they need to teach. Perhaps those teachers feel that there is little in the way of policy support, but within the context of SRE topics, consider that they need to

cover specific subjects, whether discussed or not. It is not possible to say whether all schools are operating within policy, but it is possible to suggest that there may be a gap in the transmission of messages.

Staff are doing as best they can with the information they have, but both staff and pupils feel that staff would benefit from more training, and from more time devoted to the teaching of RSE in itself. In this school, the PSHE staff feel that an effective RSE education would improve on government Progress 8 scores, helping schools to improve their national standing. With the focus on the Ebacc, however, staff feel that there is less space for RSE than ever before, and the time allowed for teaching does not allow for RSE that is as effective as it might be. For both staff and pupils, effective RSE might involve bringing in outside educators, and would definitely allow for more time on many subjects. Although the updated government guidance is inherently more inclusive of a greater number of pupils, and signposts to resources, this, as demonstrated in previous chapters, does not in itself lead to better understanding of how to teach RSE. It is significant that RSE has now become a compulsory subject, as this may allow for more curriculum time. However, it is possible that, as with Brockmount, PSHE will include both RE and Citizenship GCSE topics, and for many schools may not result in any additional teaching on the topic. Only further research will make this clear.

Although it is possible that the policy guidance will feed down to RSE changes, thus creating a more inclusive RSE classroom, there is also a broader culture to consider; whether strictly adhered to or not, policies shape the ethos of the school. School culture is at least in theory, based upon the policies of the school (Allen 2013).

In conclusion, it can be seen that whilst schools may not overtly accept the influence of policy over teaching, policies set the tone for the school, and teachers will be expected to adhere to the spirit of these. This study has shown that SRE/RSE is being asked to cover an ever-wider knowledge base, with at least for some schools being given little in

the way of internal or wider support to achieve effective teaching. This will result in pupils who to a large degree, like their teachers, but who feel that something is missing from their teaching. The class observations and my field notes suggest areas where expertise is lacking, and this is not always known to the teachers to allow them to correct this - something that could be rectified with greater recourse to training.

Glossary

Asexual - not experiencing sexual attraction

Biphobia - stigma or prejudice perpetrated because of the assumption of someone's bisexuality

Bisexual - being attracted to more than one gender. Or 'the same, and other genders'

Cis/cisgender - Identifying with the sex assigned at birth

Cishet - cisgender and heterosexual

Gay - being attracted to people who are the same gender as you

Gender and sexual diversity (GSD) – the full range of genders and sexualities available to humankind

HBTphobia - Homo/bi/transphobia

Hetero/Heterosexual - being attracted to those of the 'assumed opposite' gender to oneself

Homophobia - stigma or prejudice perpetrated because of the assumption of someone being 'gay' (or bi)

Homosexual - being attracted to people who are the same gender as you

LGBT/LGBTQ+ - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer + other 'non-normative' identities

Non-binary – a person who does not identify as being either wholly or partially (just) male or female

Pansexual – someone who is attracted to others regardless of gender

Queer - an umbrella word used by some to mean 'not cis', 'not het' or 'not cis het'. It is also used to mean someone who is committed to deconstructing categories around gender and sexuality, thus leaving us with the potential that someone can be cis and het and queer.

Straight - being attracted to those of the 'assumed opposite' gender to oneself

Transphobia - stigma or prejudice perpetrated because of the assumption of someone being trans

Trans/transgender – a person who does not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth. Can be a binary or non-binary person. I recognise that this term is 'leaky and imperfect' (Pearce, Erikainen, and Vincent 2020: 693) and that not identifying with the sex assigned at birth (or shortly after in the case of some newborns) does not necessarily mean one need adopt a trans identity.

References

Abbott, K., Ellis, S., and Abbott, R. (2015) '"We don't get into all that": An analysis of how teachers uphold heteronormative sex and relationship education'. *Journal of Homosexuality* 62 (12), 1638-1659

Airton, L. (2013) 'Leave "those kids" alone: On the conflation of school homophobia and suffering queers'. *Curriculum Inquiry* 43 (5), 32-562

Akerlund, M., and Cheung, M. (2000) 'Teaching beyond the Deficit Model: Gay and Lesbian Issues among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans'. *Journal of Social Work Education* 36 (2), 279–292

Albury, K. (2014) 'Porn and Sex Education, Porn as Sex Education'. *Porn Studies* 1 (1–2), 172–181

Alldred, P., David, M., and Smith, P. (2003) 'Teachers' views of teaching sex education: pedagogy and models of delivery'. *The Journal of Educational Enquiry* 4(1)

Allen, K., Kaestle, C., and Goldberg, A. (2011) 'More than Just a Punctuation Mark: How Boys and Young Men Learn about Menstruation'. *Journal of Family Issues* 32 (2), 129–156

Allen, L. (2009) '"It's not who they are it's what they are like": Re-conceptualising sexuality education's "best educator" debate'. *Sex Education* 9(1), 33–49

Allen, L. (2015) 'Picturing Queer at School'. *Journal of LGBT Youth* 12 (4), 367–384

Allen, L. (2013) 'Behind the Bike Sheds: Sexual Geographies of Schooling'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 34 (1), 56–75

Allen, L. (2006) '"Looking at the Real Thing": Young Men, Pornography, and Sexuality Education'. *Discourse* 27 (1), 69–83

Allen, L. (2019) 'Bearing witness: Straight students talk about homophobia at school'. *Sex Education* 19(6), 661-674

Allen, L. (2020) 'Heterosexual students' accounts of teachers as perpetrators and recipients of homophobia', *Journal of LGBT Youth* 17(3), 260-279

Allen, L., Rasmussen, M.L., Quinlivan, K., Aspin, C., Sanjakdar, F., and Brömdal, A. (2014) 'Who's Afraid of Sex at School? The Politics of Researching Culture, Religion and Sexuality at School', *International Journal of Research and Method in Education* 37 (1), 31–43

Altheide, D., and Johnson, J. (2011) 'Reflections on Interpretive Adequacy in Qualitative Research'. in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. ed. by Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. London: Sage

Anderson, E. (2009) *Inclusive Masculinity: The Changing Nature of Masculinities*. London: Routledge

Ansara, Y.G., and Hegarty, P. (2012) 'Cisgenderism in Psychology: Pathologising and Misgendering Children from 1999 to 2008'. *Psychology and Sexuality* 3 (2), 137–160

Ashcraft, C. (2008) 'So much more than 'Sex Ed': Teen Sexuality as Vehicle for Improving Academic Success and Democratic Education for Diverse Youth'. *American Educational Research* 45 (3) 631–667

Asselin, M. (2003) 'Insider Research: Issues to Consider When Doing Qualitative Research in Your Own Setting.' *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development* 19 (2), 99–103

Atkinson, C. (2019) 'Ethical complexities in participatory childhood research: Rethinking the 'least adult role''. *Childhood 26(2)*, 186-201

Atkinson, E. (2002) 'Education for Diversity in a Multisexual Society: Negotiating the Contradictions of Contemporary Discourse'. *Sex Education* 2 (2), 119–132

Bacchi, C. (2014) *Analysing Policy*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson

Barker, M.-J., Richards, C., and Bowes-Catton, H. (2011) '"All the World Is Queer Save Thee and Me. . . ": Defining Queer and Bi at a Critical Sexology Seminar'. in *Bisexuality and Queer Theory: Intersections, Connections and Challenges*. ed. by Alexander, J. and Anderlini-D'Onofrio, S. London: Routledge, 171–188

Barker, M.-J., Richards, C., Jones, R., Bowes-Catton, H., Plowman, T., Yockney, J., and

Morgan, M. (2012) *The Bisexuality Report: Bisexual Inclusion in LGBT Equality and Diversity*. Milton Keynes: The Open University

Barnard, P.A. (2022) 'Developing secondary schools as learning organisations: a systemic contribution'. *International Journal of Educational Management*

Barrett, B., and Bound, A. (2015) 'A Critical Discourse Analysis of No Promo Homo Policies in US Schools'. *Educational Studies* 51 (4), 267–283

Basford, T., Offermann, L., and Behrend, T. (2014) 'Do You See What i See? Perceptions of Gender Microaggressions in the Workplace'. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 38 (3), 340–349

Bauer, G., Lawson, M., and Metzger, D. (2021) 'Do Clinical Data from Transgender Adolescents Support the Phenomenon of "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria"?' *The Journal of Pediatrics*

BBC (2019) 'Birmingham LGBT School Row: Protest Parents "Manipulated"'. *BBC News* [online] available from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-48457650>

Berger, P., and Luckmann, T. (2011) *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Open Road Media

Berlant, L., and Warner, M. (1995) 'What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?' *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 343–349

Biddulph, M. (2006) 'Sexualities Equality in Schools: Why Every Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) Child Matters'. *Pastoral Care in Education* 24 (2), 15–21

Biddulph, M. (2007) Rules of Engagement: Boys, Young Men and the Challenge of Effective Sex and Relationships Education'. *Pastoral Care in Education* 25 (3), 24–33

Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D., Alan Radley, and Radley, A. (1988) *Ideological Dilemmas: A Social Psychology of Everyday Thinking*. London: Sage

Blake, S. (2008) 'There's a Hole in the Bucket: The Politics, Policy and Practice of Sex

and Relationships Education'. *Pastoral Care in Education* 26 (1), 33–41

Blunt, C., and Pascoe, S. (2021) *Crispin Blunt and Sue Pascoe: The Press Are Whipping up a Moral Panic over Transgender Pupils* [online] available from <https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2021/08/crispin-blunt-and-sue-pascoe-the-press-are-whipping-up-a-moral-panic-over-transgender-pupils.html>

Boshe, S. (1983) *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*. London: Gay men's press

Bragg, S., Renold, E., Ringrose, J., and Jackson, C. (2018) 'More than boy, girl, male, female': exploring young people's views on gender diversity within and beyond school contexts, *Sex Education* 18:4, 420-434

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2), 77–101

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2019) 'Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis'. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11 (4), 589-597

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2021a) 'To Saturate or Not to Saturate? Questioning Data Saturation as a Useful Concept for Thematic Analysis and Sample-Size Rationales'. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 13 (2), 201–216

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2021b) 'Can I Use TA? Should I Use TA? Should I Not Use TA? Comparing Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Other Pattern-Based Qualitative Analytic Approaches'. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 21 (1), 37–47

Braun, V., and Kitzinger, C. (2001) 'Telling It Straight? Dictionary Definitions of Women's Genitals'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5 (2), 214–232

Brewer, J. (2000) *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Britzman, D. (1995) 'Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight'. *Educational Theory* 45 (2), 151–165

Brooks-Gunn, J., and Ruble, D. (1982) 'Psychological Correlates of Tampon Use in Adolescents'. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 96 (6 II), 962–965

Browne, K. (2013) 'Challenging behaviour in secondary school students: Classroom

strategies for increasing positive behaviour'. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work* 10 (1), 125-147

Browne, S., and McQueen, F. (2020) 'Engaging young working class men in the delivery of sex and relationships education', *Sex Education* 20(2), 186-20

Burbidge, M., and Walters, J. (1981) *Breaking the Silence: Gay Teenagers Speak For Themselves*. London: Joint Council for Gay Teenagers

Burgers, C., and Beukeboom, C.J. (2020) 'How language contributes to stereotype formation: Combined effects of label types and negation use in behavior descriptions'. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 39 (4), 438-456

Burnett, A., Mattern, J., Herakova, L., Kahl, D., Tobola, C., and Bornsen, S. (2009) 'Communicating/Muting Date Rape: A Co-Cultural Theoretical Analysis of Communication Factors Related to Rape Culture on a College Campus'. *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 37 (4), 465–485

Burr, V. (2015) *Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge

Burton, A. (1995) 'Things That Could Make a Difference: Integrating Lesbian and Gay Issues in Secondary Schools'. *Health Education* 95 (5), 20–25

Buston, K., and Hart, G. (2001) 'Heterosexism and Homophobia in Scottish School Sex Education: Exploring the Nature of the Problem'. *Journal of Adolescence* 24 (1), 95–109

Buston, K., Wight, D., Hart, G., and Scott, S. (2002) 'Implementation of a Teacher-Delivered Sex Education Programme: Obstacles and Facilitating Factors'. *Health Education Research* 17 (1), 59–72

Butler, J. (2010) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge

Bye, S. (1984) *An Investigation into the Lives of Socially and Geographically Isolated Gay Teenagers*. Unpublished B.A. project, Sociology Dept. University of Essex

Byrne, D. (2021) 'A Worked Example of Braun and Clarke's Approach to Reflexive Thematic Analysis'. *Quality and Quantity*

Callis, A. (2014) ‘Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer: Non-Binary Identities and the Sexual Borderlands’. *Sexualities* 17 (1–2), 63–80

Callis, A. (2009) ‘Playing with Butler and Foucault: Bisexuality and Queer Theory’. *Journal of Bisexuality* 9 (3–4), 213–233

Carlile, A. (2020) 'The experiences of transgender and non-binary children and young people and their parents in healthcare settings in England, UK: Interviews with members of a family support group'. *International Journal of Transgender Health* 21(1), 16-32

Carrigan, M. (2011) ‘There’s More to Life than Sex? Difference and Commonality within the Asexual Community’, *Sexualities* 14 (4), 462–478

Chambers, D., van Loon, J., and Tincknell, E. (2004) ‘Teachers’ Views of Teenage Sexual Morality’. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25 (5), 563–576

Chang, T., and Chung, Y.B. (2015) ‘Transgender Microaggressions: Complexity of the Heterogeneity of Transgender Identities’, *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 9 (3), 217–234

Chapman, E., and Werner-Wilson, R. (2008) ‘Does Positive Youth Development Predict Adolescent Attitudes about Sexuality?’ *Adolescence* 43 (171), 505–523

Chestnut, E., Zhang, M., and Markman, E. (2021) ‘“Just as Good”: Learning Gender Stereotypes from Attempts to Counteract Them’, *Developmental Psychology* 57 (1), 114–125

Chonody, J., Rutledge, S., and Smith, S. (2012) ‘“That’s so Gay”: Language Use and Antigay Bias Among Heterosexual College Students’, *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* 24 (3), 241–259

Clarke, V. (2007) ‘Men Not Included? A Critical Psychology Analysis of Lesbian Families and Male Influence in Child Rearing’, *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 3 (4), 309–349

Clarke, V., and Braun, V. (2018) ‘Using Thematic Analysis in Counselling and Psychotherapy Research: A Critical Reflection’, *Counselling and Psychotherapy*

Research 18 (2), 107–110

Clarke, V., and Braun, V. (2008) 'Gender'. in *Critical Psychology: An Introduction (Second Edition)*. ed. by Fox, D., Prilleltensky, I., and Austin, S. London: Sage, 232–249

Clarke, V., Ellis, S., Peel, E., and Riggs, D. (2010) *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer Psychology: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Clarke, V., and Kitzinger, C. (2004) 'Lesbian and Gay Parents on Talk Shows: Resistance or Collusion in Heterosexism?' *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 1 (3), 195–217

Clarke, V., and Peel, E. (2007) *Out in Psychology. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexal, Trans and Queer Perspectives*. Chichester: Wiley and sons

Coffey, A. (1999) *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Reality*. London: Sage

Coll, L., O'Sullivan, M., and Enright, E. (2018) 'The Trouble with Normal':(re) imagining sexuality education with young people', *Sex education* 18(2), 157-171

Connell, R. (2005) *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity

Connell, R., and Messerschmidt, J. (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society* 19 (6), 829–859

Corteen, K. (2006) 'Schools' Fulfilment of Sex and Relationship Education Documentation: Three School-Based Case Studies', *Sex Education* 6 (1), 77–99

Courtney, S. (2014) 'Inadvertently Queer School Leadership amongst Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) School Leaders', *Organization* 21 (3), 383–399

Crotty, M. (1988) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage

Davies-Arai, S. (2018) *Inclusive Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (RSE): Statutory Guidance and External Providers*. UK: TransgenderTrend

Davis, P., Denman, S., and Pearson, J. (1997) 'A Survey of Attitudes to Sex Education among Secondary School Governors in Nottinghamshire', *Health Education*

Journal 56, 231–240

Delamont, S., Atkinson, P., and Pugsley, L. (2010) 'The Concept Smacks of Magic: Fighting Familiarity Today', *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26 (1), 3–10

Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (2018) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage

Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (2011) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage

DePalma, R., and Atkinson, E. (2009) '"No Outsiders": Moving beyond a Discourse of Tolerance to Challenge Heteronormativity in Primary Schools', *British Educational Research Journal* 35 (6), 837–855

DePalma, R., and Atkinson, E. (2006) 'The Sound of Silence: Talking about Sexual Orientation and Schooling', *Sex Education* 6 (4), 333–349

Department for Education (2020) *Understanding Relationships, Sex and Health Education at Your Child's Secondary School: A Guide for Parents*. UK: Department for Education

Department for Education (2019) *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education*. [online] (November), 1–6. available from <https://consult.education.gov.uk/pshe/relationships-education-rse-health-education/supporting_documents/20170718_ Draft guidance for consultation.pdf>

Department for Education (2016) *Progress 8*. UK: Department for Education

Department for Education and Employment (2000) *Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (Circular 0116/2000)*. UK: Department for Education and Employment

Diamond, L. (2008a) 'Female Bisexuality From Adolescence to Adulthood: Results From a 10-Year Longitudinal Study', *Developmental Psychology* 44 (1), 5–14

Diamond, L. (2008b) *Sexual Fluidity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Donoghue, D.O. (2007) '"James Always Hangs out Here": Making Space for Place in

Studying Masculinities at School', *Visual Studies* 22 (1), 62–73

Dover, M. (2016) 'The Moment of Microaggression: The Experience of Acts of Oppression, Dehumanization, and Exploitation', *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26 (7–8), 575–586

Dwyer, S., and Buckle, J. (2009) 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 54–63

Ebin, J., and Van Wagenen, A. (2006) 'Developing Successful Sexual Health and Support Services for Bisexual People. Lessons Learned from the BiHealth Program'. *Journal of Bisexuality* 6 (1–2), 165–189

Elley, S. (2013) *Understanding sex and relationship education, youth and class. A you work-led approach.* Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan

Ellis, V., and High, S. (2004) 'Something More to Tell You: Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Young People's Experiences of Secondary Schooling'. *British Educational Research Journal* 30 (2), 213–225

Epps, B., Markowski, M., and Cleaver, K. (2021) 'A rapid review and narrative synthesis of the consequences of non-inclusive sex education in UK schools on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and questioning young people'. The Journal of School Nursing

Epstein, D., and Johnson, R. (1994) 'On the Straight and Narrow: The Heterosexual Presumption, Homophobias and Schools'. in *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 197–230

Epstein, D., and Johnson, R. (1988) *Schooling Sexualities*. UK: McGraw-Hill Education

Epstein, D., O'Flynn, S., and Telford, D. (2003) *Silenced Sexualities in Schools and Universities*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books

Epstein, R., Idems, B., and Schwartz, A. (2013) 'Queer Spawn on School'. *Confero* 1 (2), 173–208

Erickson, F. (1984) 'School Literacy, Reasoning, and Civility: An Anthropologist's Perspective'. *Review of Educational Research* 54 (4), 525–546

Evans, D. (1989) ‘Section 28: Lay, Myth and Paradox’. *Critical Social Policy* 9, 73–95

Fairbairn, C., Kennedy, S., McGuinness, T., and Thurley, D. (2018) *Polygamy*. House of Commons Library Briefing Paper

Fenwick, T., and Sanders, S. (2012) ‘Teaching out Prejudice – Celebrating Equality’. *Education Review* 24 (1), 61–70

Ferguson, A. (1996) ‘Can I Choose Who i Am? And How Would That Empower Me? Gender, Race, Identities and the Self’. in *Women, Knowledge and Reality, Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*. ed. by Garry, A. and Pearsal, M. London: Routledge

Fifield, S. (2001) *Teaching On (the) Edge: Negotiating the Cultural Intersections of ‘Gay’ and ‘Science Teacher’*. Delivered at the symposium ‘The Ends of Scientific Knowledge’. Held 2001 at the University of Wisconsin, USA

Fifield, S., and Swain, H. (2002) ‘Heteronormativity and Common Sense in Science (Teacher) Education’. in *Getting Ready for Benjamin: Preparing Teachers for Sexual Diversity in the Classroom*. ed. by Kissen, R. Washington DC: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Fincham, D. (1991) 'Horizontal or vertical?' *Integrating pastoral and academic concerns. School Organisation, 11(2),* 241-251

Fineran, S., and Bennett, L. (1999) ‘Gender and Power Issues of Peer Sexual Harassment among Teenagers’. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 14 (6), 626–641

Finlay, S.J., and Clarke, V. (2003) ‘“A Marriage of Inconvenience?” Feminist Perspectives on Marriage’. *Feminism and Psychology* 13 (4), 415–420

Formby, E. (2015) ‘Limitations of Focussing on Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic “Bullying” to Understand and Address LGBT Young People’s Experiences within and beyond School’. *Sex Education* 15 (6), 626–640

Formby, E. (2011a) ‘Sex and Relationships Education, Sexual Health, and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Sexual Cultures: Views from Young People’. *Sex Education* 11 (3), 255–266

Formby, E. (2011b) '"It's Better to Learn about Your Health and Things That Are Going to Happen to You than Learning Things That You Just Do at School": Findings from a Mapping Study of PSHE Education in Primary Schools in England'. *Pastoral Care in Education* 29 (3), 161–173

Formby, E., and Donovan, C. (2020) 'Sex and relationships education for LGBT+ young people: Lessons from UK youth work', *Sexualities* 23(7), 1155-1178

Formby, E., Willis, B. and Stevens, A. (2016) *Inspiring equality in education grant evaluation: Final report*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University

Formby, E., and Wolstenholme, C. (2012) '"If There's Going to Be a Subject That You Don't Have to Do..." Findings from a Mapping Study of PSHE Education in English Secondary Schools'. *Pastoral Care in Education* 30 (1), 5–18

Forrest, S. (2000) '"It's for Girls Really": Boys' Participation in School-Based Sex Education'. in *Changing Families, Changing Communities : Researching Health and Wellbeing among Children and Young People*. London: Health Development Agency, 110–123

Forrest, S., Biddle, G., and Clift, S. (1997) *Talking about Homosexuality in the Secondary Scho*. Horsham: AVERT

Forrest, S., Strange, V., Oakley, A., Johnson, A., Stephenson, J., Black, S., Flux, A., and Charleston, S. (2004) 'What Do Young People Want from Sex Education: The Results of a Needs Assessment from a Peer-Led Sex Education Programme'. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 6 (4), 337–354

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*.

Foucault, M. (1976) *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage Books

Fox, D., and Prilleltensky, I. (1994) *Critical Psychology: An Introduction*. London: Sage

Gavey, N. (1992) 'Technologies and Effects of Heterosexual Coercion'. *Feminism and Psychology* 2 (3), 325–351

Gazzola, S., and Morrison, M. (2014) 'Cultural and Personally Endorsed Stereotypes of Transgender Men and Transgender Women: Notable Correspondence or

Disjunction?' *International Journal of Transgenderism* 15 (2), 76–99

Giffney, N., and O'Rourke, M. (2009) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory (Queer Interventions)*. London: Routledge

Gilbert, J. (2014) *Sexuality in School: The Limits of Education*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press

Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma; Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New Jersey: Penguin Books

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books

Gold, R. (1958) 'Roles in Sociological Field Observations'. *Social Forces* 36 (3), 217–223

Goldstein, H., and Leckie, G. (2016) 'Trends in Examination Performance and Exposure to Standardised Tests in England and Wales'. *British Educational Research Journal* 42 (3), 367–375

Goodrich, K., and Luke, M. (2016) 'Navigating the Complexities at an LGBTQQI-Identified Charter School: An Ethnography of c/Overt Narratives'. *Journal of Educational Research* 109 (2), 137–147

Gov.UK. (2021) Department for Education – statistics: school workforce. Available from www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce

Grant, R., and Sugarman, J. (2004) 'Ethics in Human Subjects Research: Do Incentives Matter?' *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 29 (6), 717–738

Gray, E. (2015) *'Miss, Are You Bisexual?' The (Re)Production of Heteronormativity within Schools and the Negotiation of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Teachers' Private and Professional Worlds*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Lancaster: RMIT University

Green, J., and Thorogood, N. (2018) *Qualitative Methods for Health Research*. London: Sage

Greenland, K., and Nunney, R. (2008) 'The repeal of Section 28: it ain't over 'til it's over', *Pastoral Care in Education*, 26(4), 243-251

Griffin, C. (2003) ‘More than Simply Talk and Text: Psychologists as Cultural Ethnographers’. in *Culture in Psychology*. ed. by Squire, C. London: Routledge

Guasp, A., Ellison, G., and Satara, T. (2014) 'The Teachers Report: Homophobic Bullying in Britain's Schools in 2014'. Stonewall

Gupta, K. (2017) ‘“And Now I’m Just Different, but There’s Nothing Actually Wrong With Me”: Asexual Marginalization and Resistance’. *Journal of Homosexuality* 64 (8), 991–1013

Harris, R., Wilson-Daily, A. E., and Fuller, G. (2021) 'Exploring the secondary school experience of LGBT+ youth: an examination of school culture and school climate as understood by teachers and experienced by LGBT+ students'. *Intercultural Education*, 32 (4), 368-385

Hallett, R., and Barber, K. (2014) ‘Ethnographic Research in a Cyber Era’. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 43 (3), 306–330

Hamilton, F., and La Diega, G. (2020) *Same-Sex Relationships, Law and Social Change*. London: Routledge

Hammack, P., Frost, D., and Hughes, S. (2019) ‘Queer Intimacies: A New Paradigm for the Study of Relationship Diversity’. *Journal of Sex Research* 56 (4–5), 556–592

Hammersley, M. (2017) ‘Interview Data: A Qualified Defence against the Radical Critique’. *Qualitative Research* 17 (2), 173–186

Hammersley, M. (2006) ‘Ethnography: Problems and Prospects’. *Ethnography and Education* 1 (1), 3–14

Hammersley, M., and Atkinson, P. (2019) *Ethnography*. London: Routledge

Hansard (1987) *Aids*. Volume 121: debated on Monday 26 October 1987

Harré, R., Moghaddam, F., Cairnie, T., Rothbart, D., and Sabat, S. (2009) ‘Recent Advances in Positioning Theory’. *Theory & Psychology* 19 (1), 5–31

Hayfield, N. (2020) *Bisexual and Pansexual Identities: Exploring and Challenging Invisibility and Invalidation*. London: Routledge

Hayfield, N., Campbell, C., and Reed, E. (2018) 'Misrecognition and Managing Marginalisation: Bisexual People's Experiences of Bisexuality and Relationships'. *Psychology & Sexuality* 9 (3), 221–236

Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., and Halliwell, E. (2014) 'Bisexual Women's Understandings of Social Marginalisation: "The Heterosexuals Don't Understand Us but nor Do the Lesbians"'. *Feminism and Psychology* 24 (3), 352–372

Hayfield, N., and Jowett, A. (2017) 'Bisexualities and Non-Binary Sexualities: Reflecting on Invisibility, Erasure and Marginalisation'. *Psychology of Sexualities Review* 8 (2), 1–5

Haywood, N., Walker, S., O'toole, G., Hewitson, C., Pugh, E., and Sundaram, P. (2009) *Engaging All Young People in Meaningful Learning after 16: A Review Learning and Skills Network (LSN) and Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities*. Learning and Skills Network (LSN) and Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Herek, G. (2015) 'Beyond "Homophobia": Thinking More Clearly about Stigma, Prejudice, and Sexual Orientation'. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 85 (5), S29–S37

Herek, G. (2010) 'Sexual Orientation Differences as Deficits: Science and Stigma in the History of American Psychology'. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5 (6), 693–699

Herek, G. (2004) 'Beyond "Homophobia": Thinking about Sexual Prejudice and Stigma in the Twenty-First Century'. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 1 (2), 6–24

Hey, V. (1997) *The Company She Keeps: An Ethnography of Girls' Friendships*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Hilton, G. (2001) 'Sex Education - the Issues When Working with Boys'. *Sex Education* 1 (1), 31–41

Hintze, J., Volpe, R., and Shapiro, E. (2002) 'Direct Observation of Student Behavior'. in *Best Practices in School Psychology*. ed. by Harrison, P. Bethesda: National

Association of School Psychologists, 993–1006

Hirst, J. (2004) 'Researching Young People's Sexuality and Learning about Sex: Experience, Need, and Sex Relationship Education'. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 6 (2), 115–129

Hobbs, G., and Vignoles, A. (2007) *Is Free School Meal Status a Valid Proxy for Socioeconomic Status (in Schools Research)?* London: Centre for the Economics of Education

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., and Thomson, R. (1998) 'The Male in the Head'. in *The Male in the Head*. London: the Tufnell Press, 171–191

Holt, V., Skagerberg, E., and Dunsford, M. (2016) 'Young People with Features of Gender Dysphoria: Demographics and Associated Difficulties'. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 21 (1), 108–118

Van den Hoonard, W. (2003) 'Is Anonymity an Artifact in Ethnographic Research'. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 1, 141–151

House of Commons Education Committee (2015) *Education Committee Life Lessons: PSHE and SRE in Schools*. London: The Stationery Office Limited

House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2016) *Transgender Equality: First Report of Session 2015-16*. London

Hunt, R., and Fish, J. (2008) *Prescription for Change: Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Health Check 2008*. Leicester: Stonewall

Ingham, R., and Hirst, J. (2010) 'Promoting Sexual Health'. in *Promoting Health and Wellbeing through Schools*. ed. by Aggleton, P., Dennison, C., and Warwick, I. London: Routledge

Irwin, C., and Millstein, S. (1982) 'Emerging Patterns of Tampon Use in the Adolescent Female: The Impact of Toxic Shock Syndrome'. *American Journal of Public Health* 72 (5), 464–467

Iyer, P., and Aggleton, P. (2015) 'Seventy Years of Sex Education in Health Education Journal: A Critical Review'. *Health Education Journal* 74 (1), 3–15

Jackson, P. (1985) ‘Social Geography: Race and Racism’. *Progress in Human Geography* 9 (1), 99–108

Jackson, S., and Weatherall, A. (2010) ‘The (Im)Possibilities of Feminist School Based Sexuality Education’. *Feminism and Psychology* 20 (2), 166–185

Jenkinson, A., Whitehead, S., Emmerson, L., Wiggins, A., Worton, S., Ringrose, J., & Bragg, S. (2021) Good Practice Guide for Teaching Relationships and Sex (uality) Education (RSE). London: UCL

Jensen, T. (2005) ‘When Faith and Goodwill Is Not Enough: Researcher Positions in Interactive Research with School Children’. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 4

Jones, T. (2011) ‘Saving Rhetorical Children: Sexuality Education Discourses from Conservative to Post-Modern’. *Sex Education* 11 (4), 369–387

Jowett, A. (2017) ‘“One Can Hardly Call Them Homophobic”: Denials of Antigay Prejudice within the Same-Sex Marriage Debate’. *Discourse and Society* 28 (3), 281–295

Kamberelis, G., Dimitriadis, G., and Welker, A. (2018) ‘Focus Group Research and/in Figured Worlds’. in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 1202–1239

Kehily, M.J. (2002) *Sexuality, Gender and Schooling*. London: Routledge

Kessler, S., Ashenden, D., Connell, R., and Dowsett, G. (1985) ‘Gender Relations in Secondary Schooling’. *Sociology of Education* 58 (1), 34–48

Kjaran, J., and Sauntson, H. (2020) *Schools as Queer Transformative Spaces*. Abingdon: Routledge

Kühne, S. (2018) 'From strangers to acquaintances? Interviewer continuity and socially desirable responses in panel surveys'. *Survey Research Methods* 12 (2) 121-146)

Lamb, S., Lustig, K., and Graling, K. (2013) ‘The Use and Misuse of Pleasure in Sex Education Curricula’. *Sex Education* 13 (3), 305–318

LaSala, M.C. (2003) ‘When Interviewing “Family”: Maximizing the Insider Advantage in

the Qualitative Study of Lesbians and Gay Men'. *Research Methods with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations* 15 (1–2), 15–30

Lawrence, J., Kanabus, A., and Regis, D. (2000) *A Survey of Sex Education Provision in Secondary Schools*. Horsham: Avert

LeCompte, M. (1987) 'Bias in the Biography: Bias and Subjectivity in Ethnographic Research'. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 18 (1), 43–52

Lev, A.I. (2013) 'Gender Dysphoria: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back'. *Clinical Social Work Journal* 41 (3), 288–296

Lilienfeld, S. (2017) 'Through a Glass, Darkly: Microaggressions and Psychological Science'. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12 (1), 178–180

Littman, L. (2018) 'Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Study of Parental Reports'. *PLoS ONE*

Loutzenheiser, L. (2015) '"Who Are You Calling a Problem?": Addressing Transphobia and Homophobia through School Policy'. *Critical Studies in Education* 56 (1), 99–115

MacDonald, A. (2009) *Independent Review of the Proposal to make Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education Statutory*. Report. www.education.gov.uk.

MacKenzie, A., Hedge, N., and Enslin, P. (2017) 'Sex Education: Challenges and Choices'. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 65 (1), 27–44

Maginn, P. (2007) 'Towards More Effective Community Participation in Urban Regeneration: The Potential of Collaborative Planning and Applied Ethnography'. *Qualitative Research* 7 (1), 25–43

Malinowski, B. (1927) 'Lunar and Seasonal Calendar in the Trobriands'. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 57, 203–215

Mandell, N. (1988) 'The least-adult role in studying children'. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 16(4)*, 433–468

Marshall, D. (2010) 'Popular culture, the 'victim'trope and queer youth analytics'.

International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 23(1), 65-85

Martinez, A., and Emmerson, L. (2008) *Key Findings: Young People's Survey on Sex and Relationships Education*. London: National Children's Bureau

Martino, W. (2000) 'Policing Masculinities: Investigating the Role of Homophobia and Heteronormativity in the Lives of Adolescent School Boys'. *The Journal of Men's Studies* 8 (2), 213–236

Massey, D. (2013) *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity

Mayberry, M., Chenneville, T., and Currie, S. (2013) 'Challenging the Sounds of Silence: A Qualitative Study of Gay-Straight Alliances and School Reform Efforts'. *Education and Urban Society* 45 (3), 307–339

McCormack, M. (2012) *The Declining Significance of Homophobia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

McCormack, M., and Anderson, E. (2010) 'The re-production of homosexually-themed discourse in educationally-based organised sport', *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 12(8), 913-927

McLean, K. (2008) 'Silences and Stereotypes: The Impact of (Mis)Constructions of Bisexuality in Australian Bisexual Men and Women'. in *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, 4 (3)

McPhillips, K., Braun, V., and Gavey, N. (2001) 'Defining (Hetero) Sex: How Imperative Is the "Coital Imperative"?' *Women's Studies International Forum* 24 (2), 229–240

McRee, A-L., Madsen, N., and Eisenberg, M. (2014) 'Guest Speakers in School-Based Sexuality Education', *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 9(2) 205-218

Measor, L. (2004) 'Young People's Views of Sex Education: Gender, Information and Knowledge'. *Sex Education* 4 (2), 153–166

Measor, L., Tiffin, C., and Fry, K. (1996) 'Gender and Sex Education: A Study of Adolescent Responses'. *Gender and Education* 8 (3), 275–288

Meeus, W. (2011) 'The Study of Adolescent Identity Formation 2000-2010: A Review of

Longitudinal Research'. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 21 (1), 75–94

Mellor, D., and Epstein, D. (2006) 'Appropriate Behaviour? Sexualities, Schooling and Hetero-Gender'. in *The Sage Handbook of Gender and Education*. 378–391

Messiou, K., Ainscow, M., Echeita, G., Goldrick, S., Hope, M., Paes, I., Sandoval, M., Simon, C., and Vitorino, T. (2016) 'Learning from Differences: A Strategy for Teacher Development in Respect to Student Diversity'. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 27 (1), 45–61

METRO (2014) Youth Chances Survey of Service Providers: Baseline Report, London: METRO

Meyer, E., Taylor, C., and Peter, T. (2015) 'Perspectives on Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSD)-Inclusive Education: Comparisons between Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual and Straight Educators'. *Sex Education* 15 (3), 221–234

Miller, J. (1999) 'Cultural Psychology: Implications for Basic Psychological Theory'. *Psychological Science* 10 (2), 85–91

Mock, S., and Eibach, R. (2012) 'Stability and Change in Sexual Orientation Identity over a 10-Year Period in Adulthood'. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 41 (3), 641–648

Mondada, L. (2019) 'Contemporary Issues in Conversation Analysis: Embodiment and Materiality, Multimodality and Multisensoriality in Social Interaction'. *Journal of Pragmatics* 145, 47–62

Moore, A. (2016) 'Inclusion and exclusion: A case study of an English class for LGBT learners', *Tesol Quarterly* 50 (1), 86-108

Morgan, D., Kreueger, R., and Scannell, A. (1998) *Planning Focus Groups*. London: Sage

Motschenbacher, H. (2019). Language and sexual normativity. in The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality. Ed. by Barrett, R., and Hall, K. (2021) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nadal, K., Issa, M.A., Leon, J., Meterko, V., Wideman, M., and Wong, Y. (2011) 'Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: "Death by a Thousand Cuts" for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth'. *Journal of LGBT Youth* 8 (3), 234–259

Nadal, K., Skolnik, A., and Wong, Y. (2012) 'Interpersonal and Systemic Microaggressions toward Transgender People: Implications for Counseling'. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 6 (1), 55–82

Nadal, K., Whitman, C., Davis, L., Erazo, T., and Davidoff, K. (2016) 'Microaggressions Toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Genderqueer People: A Review of the Literature'. *Journal of Sex Research* 53 (4–5), 488–508

Namaste, K. (1994) 'The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Poststructuralism, and a Sociological Approach to Sexuality'. *Sociological Theory* 12 (2), 220–231

Nayak, A., and Kehily, M.J. (1996) 'Playing It Straight: Masculinities, Homophobias and Schooling'. *Journal of Gender Studies* 5 (2), 211–230

Newcombe, M., McCarthy, M., Cronin, J., and McCarthy, S. (2012) '"Eat like a Man". A Social Constructionist Analysis of the Role of Food in Men's Lives'. *Appetite* 59, 391–398

Nixon, D., and Givens, N. (2004) '"Miss, You're so Gay." Queer Stories from Trainee Teachers'. *Sex Education* 4 (3), 217–237

No Outsiders (2019) *No Outsiders* [online] available from <https://no-outsiders.com/>

Nock, M., and Kurtz, S. (2005) 'Direct Behavioral Observation in School Settings: Bringing Science to Pratice'. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice* 12 (3), 359–370

O'Loan, S., McMillan, F., Motherwell, S., Bell, A., and Arshad, R. (2006) *Promoting Equal Opportunities in Education: Project Two. Guidance in Dealing with Homophobic Incidents*. Edinburgh

Office of National Statistics (2020) *Civil Partnerships in England and Wales: 2019* [online] available from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/civilpartnershipsinenglandandwales/2019>

Ofsted (2013) *Not yet Good Enough: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education in Schools* [online] available from

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/not-yet-good-enough-personal-social-health-and-economic-education>

Olson-Kennedy, J., Cohen-Kettenis, P., Kreukels, B., Meyer-Bahlburg, H., Garofalo, R., Meyer, W., and Rosenthal, S. (2016) 'Research Priorities for Gender Nonconforming/Transgender Youth: Gender Identity Development and Biopsychosocial Outcomes'. *Current Opinion in Endocrinology, Diabetes and Obesity* 23 (2), 172–179

Opdenakker, M.C., and Van Damme, J. (2006) 'Teacher Characteristics and Teaching Styles as Effectiveness Enhancing Factors of Classroom Practice'. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 22 (1), 1–21

Opperman, E., Braun, V., Clarke, V., and Rogers, C. (2014) '"It Feels so Good It Almost Hurts": Young Adults' Experiences of Orgasm and Sexual Pleasure'. *Journal of Sex Research* 51 (5), 503–515

Orgocka, A. (2004) 'Perceptions of Communication and Education about Sexuality among Muslim Immigrant Girls in the US'. *Sex Education* 4 (3), 255–271

Papadopoulos, L. (2010) *Sexualisation of Young People Review*. London: Home Office

Parker, I. (1999) 'Radical Psychology'. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 1 (1), 3–18

Parveen, N. (2019) *Birmingham Anti-LGBT School Protestors Had 'misinterpreted' Teachings, Judge Says* [online] available from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/26/birmingham-anti-lgbt-school-protests-judge-ban-permanent>

Pascoe, C.J. (2007) *Dude You're a Fag. Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Los Angeles: University of California Press

Pascoe, C.J. (2005) '"Dude, You're a Fag": Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse'. *Sexualities* 8 (3), 329–346

Payne, E., and Smith, M. (2013) 'LGBTQ Kids, School Safety, and Missing the Big Picture: How the Dominant Bullying Discourse Prevents School Professionals from Thinking about Systemic Marginalization or... Why We Need to Rethink LGBTQ Bullying'. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*

Pearce, R., Erikainen, S., and Vincent, B. (2020) 'TERF Wars: An Introduction'. *Sociological Review Monographs* 68 (4), 677–698

Peel, E. (2001) 'Mundane Heterosexism: Understanding Incidents of the Everyday'. *Women's Studies International Forum* 24 (5), 541–554

Pilcher, J. (2005) 'School Sex Education: Policy and Practice in England 1870 to 2000'. *Sex Education* 5 (2), 153–170

Pillow, W. (2003) 'Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16 (2), 175–196

Plummer, K. (1989) 'Lesbian and Gay Youth in England'. in *Gay and Lesbian Youth*. ed. by Herdt, G. London: Haworth Press, 195–223

Popoviciu, L., Haywood, C., and Mac an Ghaill, M. (2006) *The Promise of Post-Structuralist Methodology: Ethnographic Representation of Education and Masculinity*. vol. 1

Potter, J., and Hepburn, A. (2005) 'Qualitative Interviews in Psychology: Problems and Possibilities'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 2 (4), 281–307

Pound, P., Langford, R., and Campbell, R. (2016) 'What Do Young People Think about Their School-Based Sex and Relationship Education? A Qualitative Synthesis of Young People's Views and Experiences'. *BMJ Open* 6 (9), 1–14

Powell, A., and Henry, N. (2017) *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age*. London: Palgrave MacMillan

Prasad, P., and Mills, A. (1997) 'From Showcase to Shadow: Understanding the Dilemmas of Managing Workplace Diversity'. in *Managing the Organizational Melting Pot: Dilemmas of Workplace Diversity*. ed. by Prasad, P., Mills, A., Elmes, M., and Prasad, A. London: Sage, 3–28

Preston, M. (2016) '"They're Just Not Mature Right Now": Teachers' Complicated Perceptions of Gender and Anti-Queer Bullying'. *Sex Education* 16 (1), 22–34

Proctor, G. (2017) *The Dynamics of Power in Counselling and Psychotherapy: Ethics,*

Politics and Practice. 2nd edn. PCCS Books

Quinlivan, K. (2013) 'The Methodological Im/Possibilities of Researching Sexuality Education in Schools: Working Queer Conundrums'. *Sex Education* 13 (SUPPL 1), 56–69

Radley, A., and Chamberlain, K. (2012) 'The Study of the Case: Conceptualising Case Study Research'. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 22, 390–399

Rahimi, R., and Liston, D. (2009) 'What Does She Expect When She Dresses Like That? Teacher Interpretation of Emerging Adolescent Female Sexuality'. *Educational Studies* 45 (6), 512–533

Rand, E. (2014) *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*. Tuscaloosa: Univeristy of Alabama Press

Rasmussen, M.L. (2004) '"That's So Gay": A Study of the Deployment of Signifiers of Sexual and Gender Identity in Secondary School Settings in Australia and the United States'. *Social Semiotics* 14 (3), 289–308

Rasmussen, M.L., and Gowlett, C. (2015) 'Queer Theory, Policy and Education'. in *Education Policy and Contemporary Theory*. ed. by Kalervo Gulson, Clarke, M., and Petersen, E. London: Routledge

Renn, K. (2010) 'LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field'. *Educational Researcher* 39 (2), 132–141

Renold, E. (2006) '"They Won't Let Us Play... Unless You're Going out with One of Them": Girls, Boys and Butler's "heterosexual Matrix" in the Primary Years'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27 (4), 489–509

Renold, E. (2003) '"If You Don't Kiss Me, You're Dumped": Boys, Boyfriends and Heterosexualised Masculinities in the Primary School'. *Educational Review* 55 (2), 179–194

Renold, E. (2000) '"Coming out": Gender, (Hetero)Sexuality and the Primary School'. *Gender and Education* 12 (3), 309–326

Restar, A. (2020) 'Methodological Critique of Littman's (2018) Parental-Respondents Accounts of "Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria"'. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 49 (1), 61–66

Rierdan, J., Koff, E., and Flaherty, J. (1983) 'Guidelines for Preparing Girls for Menstruation'. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 22 (5), 480–486

Riggs, D. (2006) '"This Reads like a Conspiracy Theory", or; Mundane Heterosexism Hurts Too!' *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review* 7 (3), 310–313

Riggs, D.W., and Due, C. (2013) 'Moving beyond Homonormativity in Teacher Training: Experiences from South Australia'. *Sex Education* 13 (SUPPL 1), 99–112

Ringrose, J., Harvey, L., Gill, R., and Livingstone, S. (2013) 'Teen girls, sexual

double standards and 'sexting': Gendered value in digital image exchange'. *Feminist Theory* 14(3), 305–323

Ringrose, J., Regehr, K., & Whitehead, S. (2022) 'Wanna trade?': Cisheteronormative homosocial masculinity and the normalization of abuse in youth digital sexual image exchange. *Journal of Gender Studies* 31(2), 243-261.

Rivers, I. (2000) 'Social Exclusion, Absenteeism and Sexual Minority Youth'. *Support for Learning* 15 (1), 13–18

Roberts, J., and Sanders, T. (2005) 'Before, during and after: Realism, Reflexivity and Ethnography'. *Sociological Review* 53 (2), 294–313

Robinson, K. (2002) 'Making the invisible visible: Gay and lesbian issues in early childhood education'. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 3(3), 415–434

Robinson, K. (2005) 'Doing anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism in early childhood education: Moving beyond the immobilising impacts of 'risks', 'fears' and 'silences'. Can we afford not to?' *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(2), 175–188

Røthing, Å. (2008) 'Homotolerance and Heteronormativity in Norwegian Classrooms'. *Gender and Education* 20 (3), 253–266

Rudoe, N. (2018) ‘Lesbian and Gay Teachers and Sex/Uality Education Policy Enactment in Schools’. *Discourse* 39 (6), 926–940

Rudoe, N. (2010) ‘Lesbian Teachers’ Identity, Power and the Public/Private Boundary’. *Sex Education* 10 (1), 23–36

Sauntson, H. (2019) ‘Challenging Gender and Sexuality-Based Discrimination in UK Schools. Young Women’s Experiences of Illegitimation and Resistance’. in *Schools as Queer Transformative Spaces*. Taylor and Francis

Sauntson, H. (2013) ‘Sexual Diversity and Illocutionary Silencing in the English National Curriculum’. *Sex Education* 13 (4), 395–408

Sauntson, H., and Simpson, K. (2011) ‘Investigating Sexuality Discourses in the U.K. Secondary English Curriculum’. *Journal of Homosexuality* 58 (6–7), 953–973

Savin-Williams, R. (2005) *The New Gay Teenager*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Savin-Williams, R., and Ream, G. (2007) ‘Prevalence and Stability of Sexual Orientation Components during Adolescence and Young Adulthood’. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 36 (3), 385–394

Scott, L., and Thomson, R. (1992) ‘School Sex Education: More a Patchwork than a Pattern’. *Health Education Journal* 51 (3), 132–135

Sedgwick, E. (1994) *Tendencies*. London: Routledge

Sedgwick, E. (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet*. Los Angeles: University of California Press

Seidman, S., Fischer, N., and Meeks, C. (2006) *Handbook of the New Sexuality Studies*. London: Routledge

Sex Education Forum (2015) *Heads or Tails? What Young People Are Telling Us about SRE*. UK: Sex Education Forum

Sex Education Forum (2014) *SRE Policy Guidance*. London: Sex Education Forum

Sex Education Forum (1992) *An Enquiry into Sex Education: Report of a Survey into*

Local Education Authonty Support and Monitoring of School Sex Education. London: Sex Education Forum/National Children's Bureau

Shannon, B. (2016) 'Comprehensive for Who? Neoliberal Directives in Australian "Comprehensive" Sexuality Education and the Erasure of GLBTIQ Identity'. *Sex Education* 16 (6), 573–585

Shelton, K., and Delgado-Romero, E. (2011) 'Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Clients in Psychotherapy'. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 58 (2), 210–221

Shenton, A. (2004) 'Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects'. *Education for Information* 22 (2), 63–75

Showden, C. (2012) 'Theorising Maybe: A Feminist/Queer Theory Convergence'. *Feminist Theory* 13 (1), 3–25

Smith, J. (2014) 'A Practical Guide to Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Qualitative Research Psychology'. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne Psychological Journal* 20 (1), 361–369

Smith, J.D., Schneider, B., Smith, P., and Ananiadou, K. (2004) 'The Effectiveness of Whole-School Antibullying Programs: A Synthesis of Evaluation Research'. *School Psychology Review* 33 (4), 547–560

Smithson, J. (2000) 'Using and Analysing Focus Groups: Limitations and Possibilities'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 3 (2), 103–119

Smolkin, L., and Young, C. (2011) 'Missing Mirrors, Missing Windows: Children's Literature Textbooks and LGBT Topics'. *Language Arts* 88 (3), 217–225

Sperling, J. (2022) 'Guest Speakers and Sexuality Education: An Ethnographic Look inside One California High School', *American Journal of Sexuality Education*

Sporrong, S., Kalleberg, B., Mathiesen, L., Andersson, Y., Rognan, S., and Svensberg, K. (2022) 'Understanding and addressing the observer effect in observation studies'. in *Contemporary Research Methods in Pharmacy and Health Services* (261-270). Cambridge: Academic Press.

Stein, T. (2004) ‘Expanding Our Notions of Homophobia and Sexual Prejudice’. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 1 (2), 3–5

Stonewall (2017) *School Report 2017*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge

Strange, V., Forrest, S., Oakley, A., Stephenson, J., Jonhson, A., and the RIPPLE Study Team (2006) ‘Sex and Relationship Education for 13-16 Year Olds: Evidence from England’. *Sex Education* 6 (1), 31–46

Suárez-Orozco, C., Casanova, S., Martin, M., Katsiaficas, D., Cuellar, V., Smith, N., and Dias, S. (2015) ‘Toxic Rain in Class: Classroom Interpersonal Microaggressions’. *Educational Researcher* 44 (3), 151–160

Sue, D.W. (2017) ‘Microaggressions and “Evidence”: Empirical or Experiential Reality?’ *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12 (1), 170–172

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C., Torino, G., Bucceri, J., Holder, A., Nadal, K., and Esquilin, M. (2007) ‘Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice’. *American Psychologist* 62 (4), 271–286

Sullivan, C., and Forrester, M. (2018) *Doing Qualitative Research in Psychology: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage

Sundaram, V., and Sauntson, H. (2016a) ‘Discursive Silences: Using Critical Linguistic and Qualitative Analysis to Explore the Continued Absence of Pleasure in Sex and Relationships Education in England’. *Sex Education* 16 (3), 240–254

Sundaram, V., and Sauntson, H. (2016b) *Global Perspectives and Key Debates in Sex and Relationships Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan

Sykes, H. (2011) ‘Hetero- and Homo-Normativity: Critical Literacy, Citizenship Education and Queer Theory’. *Curriculum Inquiry* 41 (4), 419–432

Talburt, S., and Rasmussen, M.M. (2010) ‘“After-Queer” Tendencies in Queer Research’. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 23 (1), 1–14

Taylor, J. A., Phillips, R., Cook, E., Georgiou, L., Stallard, P., and Sayal, K. (2014) 'A qualitative process evaluation of classroom-based cognitive behaviour therapy to reduce adolescent depression'. *International journal of environmental research*

and public health, 11(6), 5951-5969

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., and Braun, V. (2017) 'Thematic Analysis'. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* 17–36

Testa, R., Habarth, J., Peta, J., Balsam, K., and Bockting, W. (2015) 'Development of the Gender Minority Stress and Resilience Measure'. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 2 (1), 65–77

The British Psychological Society (2018) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. UK: British Psychological Society

The Charity Comission (2021) *Charity Commission Confirms Registration of LGB Alliance* [online] available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-confirms-registration-of-lgb-alliance>

Thomson, R. (1997) 'Diversity, Values and Social Change: Renegotiating a Consensus on Sex Education'. *Journal of Moral Education* 26 (3), 257–271

Thomson, R. (1994) 'Moral Rhetoric and Public Health Pragmatism : The Recent Politics of Sex Education'. *Feminist Review* 48 (48), 40–60

Tileagă, C., Popoviciu, S., and Aldridge, J. (2021) 'Short-Term Ethnography and Women's Voices: Insights from Fieldwork with Roma Communities'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 1–18

Timmerman, G. (2009) 'Teaching Skills and Personal Characteristics of Sex Education Teachers'. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 25 (3), 500–506

Trenchard, L., and Warren, H. (1984) *Something to Tell You*. London: Trojan Press

Tsolidis, G. (2008) 'The (Im)Possibility of Poststructuralist Ethnography – Researching Identities in Borrowed Spaces'. *Ethnography and Education* 3 (3), 271–281

UK Government (2010) *Equality Act 2010* [online] available from <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

UK Government (1988) *Local Government Act 1988, Chapter 9*. London: UK Government

Uren, Z., Sheers, D., and Dattani, N. (2007) ‘Teenage Conceptions by Small Area Deprivation in England and Wales, 2001-2002.’ *Health Statistics Quarterly / Office for National Statistics* (33), 34–39

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., and Bondas, T. (2013) ‘Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis: Implications for Conducting a Qualitative Descriptive Study’. *Nursing and Health Sciences* 15 (3), 398–405

Vanderbeck, R., and Johnson, P. (2015) ‘Homosexuality, Religion and the Contested Legal Framework Governing Sex Education in England’. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 37 (2), 161–179

Vanover, C. (2017) ‘From Connection to Distance: Using the Practice of Arts-Based Research to Interpret Field Work’. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 46 (1), 51–80

Walker, A. (2011) *The Color Purple*. London: Orion

Walkerdine, V. (1990) *Schoolgirl Fictions*. London: Verso

Walton, E. (2021) 'The queer child cracks: queer feminist encounters with materiality and innocence in childhood studies'. *Childhood*, 28(3), 333-345

Warner, M. (1993) *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Warwick, I., Aggleton, P., and Chase, E. (2004) *Homophobia, Sexual Orientation and Schools: A Review and Implications for Action*. London

Weinberg, G. (1972) *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*. New York: St. Martin’s Press

West, C., and Zimmerman, D. (2009) ‘Accounting for Doing Gender’. *Gender and Society* 23 (1), 112–122

West, C., and Zimmerman, D. (1987) ‘Doing Gender’. *Gender & Society* 1 (2), 125–151

Westling, D. L. (2010) 'Teachers and challenging behavior: Knowledge, views, and practices'. *Remedial and Special Education*, 31(1), 48-63

Willig, C. (2008) *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Maidenhead: Open

University Press

Willig, C., and Stainton-Rogers, W. (1988) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage

Wiltse, L., and Boyko, T. (2015) '"'Cause It Has to Happen": Exploring Teachers' Resistance to LGBT Literature and Issues in a Teacher Inquiry Group'. *LEARNing Landscapes* 9 (1), 285–302

De Witte, K., Iterbeke, K., and Holz, O. (2019) 'Teachers' and Pupils' Perspectives on Homosexuality: A Comparative Analysis across European Countries'. *International Sociology* 34 (4), 471–519

Woodford, M., Howell, M., Silverschanz, P., and Yu, L. (2012) 'That's so Gay!: Examining the Covariates of Hearing This Expression among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual College Students'. *Journal of American College Health* 60 (6), 429–434

Wooten, D., and Reed, A. (2000) 'A Conceptual Overview of the Self-Presentational Concerns and Response Tendencies of Focus Group Participants'. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 9 (3), 141–153

Worthen, M. (2014) 'The Interactive Impacts of High School Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) on College Student Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals: An Investigation of High School Characteristics'. *Journal of Homosexuality* 61 (2), 217–250

Worrell, F. (2022) 'Who will teach the teachers? Examining implicit bias in the educator workforce'. *Learning and Instruction*, 78, 101518

Youdell, D. (2005) 'Sex-Gender-Sexuality: How Sex, Gender and Sexuality Constellations Are Constituted in Secondary Schools'. *Gender and Education* 17 (3), 249–270

Young, T., and Davies-Arai, S. (2019) *Transgender Children. A Discussion*. Civitas

Zilliacus, H., Paulsrud, B., and Holm, G. (2017) 'Essentializing vs. non-essentializing students' cultural identities: Curricular discourses in Finland and Sweden', *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 12(2), 166-180

Appendices

Appendix one – Introductory letter to the school

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
Department of Psychology,
Coventry University

LJ Potter potterL@coventry.ac.uk

Supervisor: Adam Jowett, Email: Adam.Jowett@Coventry.ac.uk Tel: 02476 888654

Date

Dear […],

Re: Personal social and health education (PSHE) teaching in high schools.

As part of my PhD, I am conducting a research project to explore the links between PSHE policies as written, and the teaching of PSHE in schools, with specific regard to lesbian gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) topics.

I am writing to ask if you would consider allowing me to use a sample of teachers, governors, and children from your school in order to explore these links. Firstly, I would like to observe a series of PSHE lessons (perhaps totalling a couple of days of lessons) across the PSHE curriculum and across the year groups. Whilst I would like to specifically focus on lessons around sex and relationships, I would also welcome the chance to observe more general PSHE lessons.

Then I would like to recruit a small sample of PSHE teachers (and perhaps also other teachers who have an interest in LGBT topics) to have an audio-recorded interview with me. If possible, I would like to interview any governors who might have an interest in the topic as well.

The last step would be to hold a series of audio-recorded focus groups with the students about their experiences of their PSHE classes. I would be happy for all of the above to take part at any time convenient to you.

I have produced a participant information sheet for the parents/care-givers (see attached), which outlines what their child will be required to do as a participant in my study. As the observation is similar to what children might usually do in class (i.e., the only difference will be my presence), you may feel that an 'opt out' procedure could be used with parents. This would involve informing parents about the study, in for example, the school newsletter and asking that they let us know if they don't want their child to take part.

For the focus group, the university's approach is to use an 'opt-in' approach, where the caregivers are sent a participant information sheet; informing them about the study and what their child would be required do to. If they are happy for their child to participate, they would return a signed consent form. With this method, only the children whose parents have returned the consent form would participate in the study.

Ideally I would be looking to conduct this research in the January term and would be using a sample of 3-5 focus groups with no more than 8-10 students in each group. It shouldn't disrupt their school day as long as there is a quiet room available that we can meet in. I would be very grateful if you could let me know if this proposal is feasible and meets with your approval. If you are happy to be involved in my research, please would you reply to confirm this.

Best wishes,

LJ Potter

Appendix two – Participant information sheet – staff

Study Title: Experiences of LGBT people in education

Name of the Researcher: LJ Potter, Coventry University

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like further information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to look at PSHE teaching and LGBT topics in schools in England. I am interested in seeing how PSHE classes are taught, with special interest paid to the sex and relationship (SRE) component. The aim is to examine how such education gets delivered in practice; NOT to assess your abilities as a teacher

Why have I been approached?

You have been approached because you teach a PSHE class in [Brockmount] secondary school and the head of PSHE identified you as a teacher teaching a relevant class to this study.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation within this study is completely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part for up to three months afterwards, you can contact me by email, letter or telephone with your reference number. If you do this within three months all of the data collected from your classes will be destroyed and will not be included within the study. If you contact me after three months and ask for this, I cannot guarantee I will be able to remove it, but I will work with you to try and find an acceptable compromise. There will be no consequences from deciding to withdraw your participation and I won't ask your reasons for withdrawing.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your class(es) will be observed, and notes taken on what happens within the class. General observations will be made about what is going on in the learning environment. The observations should be fairly passive in nature; I expect that my interactions with pupils will be fairly minimal in nature, although will of course answer their questions in a general manner and engage in an informal manner if the situation requires it, but I am

not coming as an expert on any topic and I recognise that I have no teaching experience at this level.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Although it may feel uncomfortable to be observed; the observer is not judging your expertise as a teacher, but observing the general atmosphere and class talk around gender and sexual diversity and how such material is delivered in practice.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is currently not much research on this topic. By taking part in the observations, you will help to create a body of research that will further understanding of LGBT topics in PSHE and help to identify ways to improve the student experience

What if something goes wrong?

If you decide to withdraw after having your classes observed, you can contact me within three months of this and withdraw your material. I will not then use it in the final report.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. Only LJ and LJ's supervisors will have access to the data you provide. Your observation data will be identified with a participant number that you have created; and neither your name nor your students' names will be presented on any documents. Within the final write up your name will not be used and identifying information (such as your school or the town you are in) will be removed.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information you provide will be analysed and then combined with information provided by other participants and will form part of LJ's PhD thesis

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by LJ Potter at Coventry University. LJ's supervisors are lecturers at the university and are responsible for supervising LJ who is the person who created the survey and who will run any interview you choose to take part in. The project is not externally funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

Coventry University ethics committee has reviewed and approved this study.

Contact for further information

Researcher	Supervisor
LJ Potter potterL@coventry.ac.uk 02477 658617 James Starley Building Coventry University Priory Street Coventry CV1 5FB	Dr. Adam Jowett adam.jowett@coventry.ac.uk 024 7688 8654 James Starley Building Coventry University Priory Street Coventry CV1 5FB

Appendix three – Staff informed consent form

Consent form: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) identities in Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE) education in the UK

Please tick the boxes that apply to you.

- ☐ I have read the participant information sheet for the study described above.
- ☐ I understand what the researcher is asking me to do.
- ☐ I consent to take part in observations with the Coventry University researcher
- ☐ I consent to written notes being made within the class
- ☐ I consent for my words to be quoted, on the understanding that I will not be named or identified.
- ☐ I also understand that I can change my mind about taking part, even after I have signed this form.

Signed: _____ (Participant)

Signed: _____ (Researcher)

Date: _____

One copy of this form to be kept by the research participant.

One copy to be kept by the researcher.

Contact for further information

LJ Potter

JS162 James Starley Building

Coventry University

Priory Street

Coventry

CV1 5FB

Appendix four – Gatekeeper Informed consent form for pupils

Dear Parent/Guardian

LJ is a PhD student at Coventry University and looking at Personal social and health education (PSHE) teaching in schools across Warwickshire and the West Midlands. As part of this project, LJ would like to ask your permission for your student to participate in a focus group about their PSHE experience.

The focus group will be audio-recorded, and information will be securely stored. All data gathered will be anonymised and will not be linked to either the school or the pupil individually. The audio files will not be available to anyone apart from LJ's supervisory team and will be destroyed after the PhD has been awarded (or in seven years, whichever comes first).

Please indicate your permission by ticking the relevant box below and choosing your agreed option:

☐ I do/do not give permission for the named student to participate in a focus group

Pupil's name……

Signature……

(parent/guardian)

Appendix five - Staff debrief form

After the research

Thank you for taking part in my research. This sheet tells you more about the study and how your data will be used.

After your interview, your data are used anonymously. You will not be named at all and it will not be possible to identify you from the quotes used. Quotes will be used from the interview in my thesis and other academic papers and related talks. If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw up to three weeks after your interview.

The aim of this research is to find out more about the links between personal social and health education (PSHE) policies and the teaching of PSHE with specific regard to lesbian gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) identities. The research also aims to uncover links between school experience and what factors about school make LGBT people choose either their particular university, or not to go to university.

If you would like to see the final study, please email me and I will be happy to send you a copy of my finished thesis potterL@coventry.ac.uk. If you have any queries or concerns, you are welcome to email me, or my supervisor, Dr. Adam Jowett (adam.jowett@coventry.ac.uk). It is hoped that as well as the thesis, that other academic papers will be published.

Appendix six – Pupil debrief form

After the research

Thank you for taking part in my research. This sheet tells you more about the study and how your focus group will be used.

After the focus group, I write down everything that was recorded. Quotes will be used from the interview in my thesis and other academic papers and related talked. If you change your mind about participating, you do so as long as you tell me up to three weeks after your focus group.

The aim of my research is to find out more about the links between personal social and health education (PSHE) policies and the teaching of PSHE looking specifically at issues around inclusivity.

If you would like to see the final study (or to withdraw), please email me and I can send you a copy of my finished thesis potterL@coventry.ac.uk. If you have any worries about your part in the focus group, you are welcome to email me, or my supervisor, Dr. Adam Jowett (adam.jowett@coventry.ac.uk).

If taking part in this research study has raised any issues for you, and you would like some support with them, you can find more information and support from your school's MIND service, or if you wish to look at online information, you can contact

Stonewall: http://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/coming-out/coming-out-young-person

Teen issues: http://www.teenissues.co.uk/

Sex:pression: http://sexpression.org.uk/general/

FPA: http://www.fpa.org.uk/

Appendix seven - Staff Interview schedule

(Pre-interview demographics: Length of time as a teacher. Length of time as a PSHE teacher. If PSHE lead. Time in this school, any LGBT identity that teachers wish to give)

Tell me about your position in the school and your experience as a teacher?

Can you tell me a bit about the school?

Tell me about your school's PSHE policy – topics covered etc.

In what ways, if any, do you think your curriculum is inclusive of LGBT people?

What is your contact with PSHE classes?

What do you think are the difficulties of including LGBT topics into the PSHE curriculum in this school?

What (if any) difference do PSHE lessons and their LGBT content make to pupils?

If you become aware of any students who are (or you think might be) LGBT, do you take any special considerations into account?

What is the policy about LGBT-related adverse events in schools?

Language: that's so gay

Comments in general about 'gays'

Gender policing etc.

What do you think might be improved for LGBT students?

What do you think your school does well around LGBT student inclusion?

Is there anything else you wish to add?

Appendix eight – Pupil interview schedule

Tell me a bit about your class group

what year you're in

What sorts of things do you get taught in PSHE classes?

Thinking about what you get taught in SRE classes, can you tell me what a standard lesson might talk about?

Tell me what's interesting in your PHSE classes

What things would you like to see taught in PSHE?

What do you know about lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people?

What do you learn about LGBT people in PSHE?

Any lessons on homophobia etc.?

What do you think the differences might be between high school and university, for you? What things might be the same?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about PSHE or LGBT things?