Changing The Narrative

A photo elicitation study of LGBT+ secondary school teachers in England

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Abstract

This thesis presents a contemporary, exciting, and important insight into the lives of LGBT+ secondary school teachers. The existing literature positions LGBT+ teacher visibility as almost entirely problematic. This research provides an alternative, nuanced narrative, exploring the ways in which LGBT+ teachers are often made invisible or hyper-visible by their school environments. The thesis argues that this visibility can be experienced as a source of strength, offering important positives for both LGBT+ teachers and the schools in which they work.

The literature review examines the ways in which schools are experienced as heteronormative environments, where LGBT+ teacher visibility is often challenging or problematic.

The research engaged 12 LGBT+ teachers in a photo elicitation project where they took photos in their school to represent their lived experiences. Participants were asked to photograph spaces where they felt safe and unsafe, as well as the ways in which LGBT+ identities were formally presented. The significance of these photos was then later discussed in one-to-one interviews.

The thesis explores two key themes from the data. Firstly, the ways in which schools are produced as heteronormative spaces, and how this production can be interrupted. Secondly, the ways in which LGBT+ teachers are visible/invisible in contrast to these heteronormative spaces and the implications of this.

The thesis concludes that although LGBT+ teachers still face challenges due to the inherent heteronormativity of schools, there are many opportunities for teachers who are able or willing to be visible. Some of

the teachers in the study found that their LGBT+ identity gave them a form of cultural, or queer, capital that allowed them to progress the cultures of their school and develop more meaningful relationships with students and colleagues.

My hope is that this thesis contributes to a newly developing discourse; a discourse where LGBT+ teachers' identities are seen and experienced as sources of strength and opportunity.

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Introduction

In recent years there has been burgeoning public debate about the role of LGBT+ inclusion in education. Announcement of reforms to primary and secondary curricula to include teaching of LGBT+ families and relationships, and protests about the No Outsiders programme outside primary schools, illustrate the difficult relationship that continues to exist between schooling, gender, and sexualities. The emotive responses to these changes, on both sides, reveal that schools are still environments where heterosexuality and cis-normativity are silently expected and assumed, often rendering LGBT+ teachers invisible or hyper-visible. At a contentious time for LGBT+ education, with many voicing disquiet about its place in the classroom, my research investigated the ways in which schools are constructed as heteronormative spaces and the impact of these spaces on LGBT+ teachers.

There are an estimated 50,000 LGBT+ teachers in the UK (Lee 2020b). Although a broad range of research into their experiences exists, it predominately focuses on the lives of gay and lesbian teachers and largely focuses on the difficult aspects of their experiences. This thesis contributes a contemporary study of the experiences of LGBT+ teachers and argues that, although many challenges persist, LGBT+ identities can be a source of cultural capital for teachers and offer important positives for schools. In several instances in this research, participants explained how being open about their identities allowed them to create more meaningful relationships with students and colleagues, contributing to greater inclusivity in their schools.

The literature review uses the lens of heteronormativity to understand the historic expectations of heterosexuality, before going on to analyse its

contemporary uses and understandings. A contemporary understanding of heteronormativity also needs to include homonormativity, which provides a more focussed lens with which to analyse the specific aspects of heterosexual or cisgender lives that need to be enacted for LGBT+ teachers to gain acceptance within heteronormative institutions and to experience an equal form of citizenship.

My starting point for this research was considering how schools are often experienced as heteronormative environments where sexuality is not an appropriate topic for discussion (DePalma and Atkinson 2006), but where heterosexuality is still silently assumed of both staff and students. I use 'heteronormative' to describe the default expectation of cisgendered heterosexuality: that individuals identify with the gender they were assigned at birth and are attracted to the opposite sex. In this project I use the term LGBT+ when describing non-heterosexual and non-cisgender identities. While 'LGBT' covers lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, it does not name other gender and sexual identities. The purpose of my research is to consider the experiences of a range of non-heterosexual and non-cisgendered teachers, and therefore the umbrella term of 'LGBT' must also reflect this. The LGBT acronym is often extended to include 'Q' (queer/questioning), 'I' (intersex) and 'A' (asexual), and while these are equally important when considering inclusivity, by extending the initials, it could be read as an omission of other identities (e.g., non-binary and pansexual). I therefore use the term LGBT+ throughout this thesis to refer to all gender and sexual identities that do not conform to the heterosexual or cisgendered assumptions of heteronormativity.

My research involved 12 LGBT+ secondary school teachers engaging in a photo elicitation study. The participants were asked to take photos within

their schools that they felt represented their lived experiences. These photos were then discussed in one-to-one interviews where the participants explained what the images represented and their significance. Photo elicitation allowed detailed and rich insights into the individual lives of each participant and revealed compelling perspectives about not only the challenges, but also the huge potential rewards, of being an openly LGBT+ teacher. While this thesis supports much of the existing literature that has examined the experiences of LGBT+ teachers, I hope it also provides a new narrative. A narrative that highlights and celebrates the experiences of a broader range of LGBT+ identities and one that presents a more nuanced, and even positive, picture of what it is to be an LGBT+ teacher.

Chapter One: Literature Review

The literature review offers an overview of the historical context of the concepts of heteronormativity and homonormativity. I will then consider the current school context before focussing on the issue of visibility in the experiences of LGBT+ teachers. The literature review provides a theoretical framework from which to analyse the two key themes of this thesis: heteronormativity and visibility. Other relevant literature, relating to specific ideas that emerge from the interviews such as embodiment, surveillance and monosexism, is introduced in the substantive chapters.

Heteronormativity

> *Heteronormativity is defined as a system of valuing heterosexuality as the natural and normative sexual orientation, thereby devaluing all other expressions of sexuality, gender and ways of family life (Page and Peacock 2013 p640).*

The concept of heteronormativity has been the topic of significant analysis and debate over several decades. Contemporary definitions of heteronormativity have evolved significantly from their early uses. Initially considered in the second wave of feminist theory (Rubin 1975) to explain how hierarchies were created to exploit women for the betterment of men, contemporary understandings of heteronormativity have developed with reference to sexuality, civil rights and what it means to be a good sexual citizen (Seidman 2001). While my research focusses on heteronormativity in a contemporary context, specifically schools, it is helpful to briefly consider earlier understandings of heteronormativity and its driving forces, before framing current understandings of

heteronormativity and considering how these may continue to evolve in the future.

Rubin (1975 p88) discusses the early ideas of heteronormativity with the entwinement of feminist theory, arguing that gender inequality and heterosexuality were inseparable forces with "gender referring not only to systematic identification with one biological sex but also as routine enforcement of opposite sexual desire". Earlier discussion of heteronormativity as part of feminist theory (Wittig and Turcotte 1994, Rich 1980) has focussed on the maintenance of the gender hierarchy that subordinates women to men (Cameron and Kulick 2003). Jackson (1999) and Scott (2010) argue that feminist theory laid down the foundations to analyse heterosexuality and develop our understanding of heteronormativity. Rubin's explanation of the inequality of gender suggests that to achieve equality, this hierarchy must be dismantled, and heteronormativity is something that must be gotten rid of. Implicit to this is the removal of gender categorisation to provide equality.

More contemporary critique (Youdell 2004, Seidman 2001, Atkinson and DePalma 2009) has considered heteronormativity as a broader concept, not exclusively associated with gender inequality. This is mirrored through Rubin's later work (1997), arguing that the force of 'sexual normalcy' is not just a constraint on women but a force used to regulate all people.

> *At the most general level, the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality /…/ The suppression of the homosexual component of human sexuality, and by corollary, the oppression of homosexuals, is therefore a product of the same system (Rubin 1997 p40).*

Rubin's description of heteronormativity shares themes with Wittig's (1994) explanation of a social contract, suggesting that citizens are disciplined into a set of normative rules and behaviours, and those who choose to transgress these, or are not able to conform to these, are often hindered from any number of avenues of success. It is therefore possible to follow Rubin's line of reasoning that, from a feminist perspective, where men (and masculinity) were favoured and economically advantaged by the suppression of women (and femininity), that sexual identities or behaviours that did not conform to this rigid hierarchy would also be supressed.

Jackson (2006) suggests that a contemporary definition of heteronormativity needs to include Rich's consideration of 'compulsory heterosexuality', that institutionalised, normative heterosexuality regulates those kept within its boundaries as well as marginalising and sanctioning those outside them (Rich 1980). Jackson argues that recent uses of the concept of heterosexuality have not always captured this "double-sided social regulation". Jackson's (2006) consideration of heteronormativity also invites analysis of how individuals who do fit within the 'boundaries' of heteronormativity feel the need to regulate their behaviour and practices to continue to do so. This is an important point to consider when looking at heteronormativity in schools, as teachers who regulate their behaviour in these environments, both LGBT+ and heterosexual, contribute to the expectations and construction of heteronormativity.

Seidman (2001) argues that the construction of heteronormativity is so deeply entrenched that the codes, behaviours and expectations of what it is to be heterosexual are absolute. For homosexuals to fit within this framework, they must aspire to the same set of expectations. Jackson

(2018) explains how the practices, meanings and desires of everyday heterosexual existence continue to perpetuate heteronormativity and gender hierarchy, but also provide an opportunity to challenge it. Central to Seidman's (2001) argument was that heteronormativity was a system of policing homosexuality, and that any deviation from the strict codes and behaviours of what it is to be heterosexual would put an individual outside of this framework. With daily practices being a central component of heterosexuality, and with evolving legal and social attitudes towards both gender and heterosexuality as more fluid concepts, Jackson (2018) explains how these changes demonstrate a shift in the boundaries of what aspects of LGBT+ lives are considered acceptable. This also demonstrates that not only do boundaries still exist, but also that heteronormativity is fragile and is able to be challenged.

> *Many countries, mostly those of the "global North," have not deinstitutionalized heterosexuality but have merely shifted the boundaries of good sexual citizenship (Jackson 2018 p137).*

While the parameters of heteronormativity have continued to evolve, central to the idea remains a code of conduct and set of unspoken expectations of what it means to be a good citizen, e.g., to be in a monogamous relationship. To be good citizens and live within the framework of heteronorms, LGBT+ (and heterosexual) individuals should aspire to live these values, and in doing so, contribute to the maintenance of heteronormativity. It can be argued that in doing so, LGBT+ individuals aid the continued visibility of what it means to be a good citizen, often at the exclusion of individuals who are unable or choose not to conform. Ideas of how these LGBT+ individuals can live within the framework and expectations of heteronormativity have given rise to the concept of homonormativity.

Homonormativity

Robinson (2016) describes the concept of homonormativity as the belief that sexual minorities can and should conform to heteronormative institutions in order to achieve greater acceptance in dominant society. Seidman's (2002) description of a 'normal gay' as someone who is expected to be "gender conventional, link sex to love and a marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride" (p133), helps illustrate the expectations put upon LGBT+ individuals to meet heteronormative ideals, therefore contributing to homonormativity. Homonormativity creates a set of expectations for the way LGBT+ lives should be lived, to gain the acceptance and rights given to heterosexual citizens, all the while recentring heterosexuality as the norm from which all sexual identities are judged. Rosenfeld (2009) argues that the practices and policies of "passing as heterosexual" are firmly grounded in a few key shifts through the 21st century.

> *Post-war homonormativity centred on the construction of an acceptable homosexuality based on its adherence to heteronormativity, specifically, gender conformity and a public privileging of heterosexuality that demands that homosexuals pass as heterosexual (Rosenfeld 2009 p621).*

This understanding of homonormativity reflects a more tolerant society where legislation and attitudes appear supportive of LGBT+ individuals, as long as these individuals seek inclusion within, without challenging, the existing heterosexist institutions (Duggan 2003). Duggan argues that the focus on equal rights through marriage has brought about greater representation for LGBT+ individuals, but that these transformations are based upon the "public recognition of domesticated, depoliticized privacy"

(p65), and consequently with the focus for rights now family and privacy, the claiming of other rights has diminished creating a division around what 'type' of LGBT+ person it is acceptable to be. Robinson (2016) develops Duggan's argument, suggesting that the most sought-after rights for sexual minorities are those of consumption practices, monogamy, marriage, domesticity and reproduction, as these are the most valued within the dominant society. Robinson argues that these strategies limit the rights that sexual minorities can gain, since they are still framed through particular heteronormative institutions.

Duggan (2003) describes the concept of homonormativity as one of 'political strategy', with the seeking of rights being the primary consideration. Within my work I use the lens of homonormativity to analyse which of these rights LGBT+ teachers have access to and to understand how this affects the level of inclusion they experience. Robinson (2016) argues that sexual minorities that can or do assimilate into heteronormative structures and conform to the "congruent gender roles" (p1) receive more rights and privileges than those who do not or, as importantly for this project, those that cannot. Robinson's consideration of homonormativity, mirroring the definition of heternormativity used at the start of the literature review, requires individuals to conform to congruent gender roles. For trans or gender non-conforming individuals in school, this may push them to the periphery of what is considered inclusive, as explored later. Although the acronym 'LGBT+' is used throughout this thesis to describe non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities, it is not done so to try and conflate their experiences. Stryker (2008) critiques the umbrella term LGBT+ when considering homonormativity, arguing that homosexual identities often have more in common with heterosexual identities than with trans identities, and therefore LGB identities seeking inclusion within

heteronormative structures only further highlight the marginalisation of trans and gender non-conforming identities.

The lens of heternormativity, and relatedly homonormativity, offer at least three key insights. Firstly, that power is every day and often hidden; power structures are commonly only revealed when there is a challenge to their rules or expectations. Secondly, inclusion often comes as a compromise which excludes those that cannot or will not conform; this is particularly interesting when we later consider what schools consider to be inclusive practices. Thirdly, these disciplinary practices are not evenly distributed; they are contextually contingent and are asserted more strongly in some spaces than others. The literature considers this distinction, with a particular contrast between public and private spaces. This contrast is later considered from the perspective of different spaces and contexts within a school.

The homonormativity literature presented some key considerations in the planning of the research questions, including to what extent did the LGBT+ teachers that had positive experiences of inclusion conform to homonormative expectations, and what were the experiences of teachers that were unable or unwilling to conform. These considerations are later explored in the findings. In theorising the types of LGBT+ identities that may be considered homonormative, concepts of sexual citizenship are useful.

Sexual Citizenship

> *In recent years, however, the sexual citizenship literature has increasingly focused on analysing rights claims such as, for example, the right to equal marriage, prompted by legislative and social changes that have led to new forms of citizenship status for*

> *lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people in many parts of the world (Richardson 2017 p209).*

Richardson's analysis documents the evolution in discussion of sexual citizenship over the last 20 years. Early discussions of sexual citizenship considered in social and political theory, have evolved to consider the legislative progress that has provided changes in citizenship status and greater rights for some LGBT+ people. Richardson (2004) argues that much of the early 2000s rights-based campaigns for LGBT+ equality was premised on 'sameness', mirroring heterosexual lifestyles, rather than 'equality in difference'. As part of this, there was a move towards focusing on identity and relationship-based claims which Warner (2000) argues represented a decoupling of homosexuality and sex and was necessary for the process of gay normalisation. The outcome of presenting LGBT+ lives as comparable to the existing citizenship rights of heterosexuals was an establishment of a homonormative distinction. A distinction in the types of LGBT+ people that 'should' be entitled to rights and citizenship, particularly, as Seidman (2002) argued, when these became focused on relationships, domesticity and gender conventions.

Analysing the demographic of LGBT+ people that have benefitted, allows us to consider the concept of good and bad sexual citizenship within the framework of homonormativity, identifying the practices that create a moral hierarchy of good and bad sexual citizens (Seidman 2001). Sexual citizenship also provides a lens with which to analyse the types of LGBT+ identities that are visible in schools.

Richardson's (2017) consideration of the *underlying assumptions of citizenship*, offers a new perspective to consider sexual citizenship. Seidman's argument that good sexual citizenship involves monogamous,

loving, long term relationships is here considered from the perspective of childbearing. Turner (2008) defines the concept of 'reproductive citizenship', where the relationship between reproduction and citizenship is considered more important than the relationship between sexuality and citizenship. The defining factors of what makes a good citizen, such as 'with whom one may reproduce and under what social and legal conditions' and 'the rights and duties of parenting' was an interesting consideration for the LGBT+ teachers in this study who were parents, as later discussed. This conceptualisation of good sexual citizenship is a natural progression of the concept of the good citizen, where sexual monogamy and long-term relationships are the expectation. However, it does once again create a hierarchy of the type of non-heterosexual parents that are included.

> *The inclusion of homonormative families alongside heteronormative ones within mainstream civil society does little, of course, to alleviate or prevent the exclusion of those people who cannot easily fit into, or resist such structures: people who are trans, gender queer, living in polyamorous relationships, or even just single (Carlile and Paechter 2018 p19).*

Plummer (2001) also considers the issues of "who to live with, how to raise children, how to handle one's body, how to relate as a gendered being and how to be an erotic person" (p238). Plummer mirrors Richardson and Seidman's views of citizenship while acknowledging that discourses need to be malleable and keep including new and emerging types of citizens (such as 'the cyber citizen' 'new family citizens' 'the transgendered citizen'). Plummer suggests the term *intimate citizenship*, as one that is "less focussed on the sexual and less exclusively geared to gender" (p241) and presents an evolving understanding of citizenship,

focussing on new and emerging types of citizen. He argues that the acknowledgement of new types of citizens and citizenship allows an analysis of whose rights and responsibilities 'need looking at more closely'. Plummer presents a *square of intimate citizenship* highlighting four areas of analysis for the rights and responsibilities of these citizens: public spheres; culture wars and the need for dialogue; narrativisation and moral stories; and globalisation. The square of intimate citizenship provides a way to engage with the lens of homonormativity, looking at how LGBT+ identities are included in schools from these four perspectives and suggests a focus on the 'language of recognition, rights, responsibilities and care' needed going forward.

Plummer describes how 'public spheres' have devolved into smaller spheres, including race, sexuality and class and that intimate citizenship should mean a broad range of voices and positions should be heard. He cites that lesbian and gay spheres have developed their own visible and positive cultures, and these have leaked into wider spheres and cultures; an example might be RuPaul's Drag Race. This conceptualisation of public spheres also links with 'culture wars', referring to the views of the kind of lives that people should be living and how this is presented. This consideration was useful when analysing how some teachers had been treated by their leadership teams, or the caution they felt towards them. Plummer's *narrative and moral stories* underlines the importance of the local and the situational. He argues that real, diverse voices need to be shared.

> *The grounded day to day stories of new ways of living which reveal how people confront ethical dilemmas and deal with them practically. Stories are the vehicles of moral change and progress (p248).*

Plummer's discussion of the importance of stories being shared from different and emerging types of citizens demonstrates an important tool in challenging heteronormative institutions and presenting equal citizenship. Many LGBT+ teachers feel the need to separate their personal lives from work to ensure job security and personal safety (Griffin 1992). This means that there are frequently only opportunities to discuss LGBT+ issues theoretically and not with the real voices Plummer describes as necessary to present fully rounded lives. King (2004) further argues this point by describing schools as settings where sexuality does not seem to exist, where students are regarded as sexually inexperienced, and teachers as sexually inactive.

Plummer's (2001) *globalisation* describes a homogenising of intimacies - a sameness in sex, love, marriage and bodies; an expectation that there is a correct and standard way for something to be. This resonates when considering the ways in which schools enforce a very structured 'sameness', e.g., with gender through rules of school uniform, jewellery, make-up etc. and the teaching of sex through the Science curriculum. Paechter (2006) argues that schools strictly control the bodies of students and that "children's bodies, and children's sexualities, are both ubiquitous and denied within the school system" (p127). Plummer's concept of *globalisation* demonstrates a system of control that schools use to both manage and make invisible issues of gender and sexuality.

Plummer also suggests that intimate citizenship needs to consider *dialogues and pluralities*; that multiple public voices and positions are required. A recent example of this was in 2019, where parents protested outside schools about their children being taught about LGBT+ lives and families as part of the No Outsiders program, demonstrating some of the potential barriers in presenting students with more than one viewpoint.

Although the central argument from this debate was that teaching about LGBT+ lives and parenting conflicts with religious teachings, these headlines put the topic of LGBT+ families into the public sphere for scrutiny, which told us a great deal about the pace and scale of cultural transformation (Weeks 1998). The story highlighted the challenges in embedding LGBT+ inclusivity in schools, but also identified that great public and political support existed. This example also illustrates the extent to which schools can still be perceived as heteronormative environments and that Brown's (2012) critique of homonormativity, suggesting we need to examine the discourse in a broader range of settings, is particularly true of schools.

The School Context

> *In the UK, despite its importance in terms of pupil, teacher and community wellbeing, sexualities equality remains the one area of inclusion still largely unaddressed in schools (DePalma and Atkinson 2009a p838).*

There is no quantitative data about the experiences of LGBT+ teachers in the UK, and despite estimates of 50,000, it is unknown how many LGBT+ teachers there may be (Lee 2020a). While it is important to be critical of self-reporting quantitative data, such as the national surveys undertaken by the UK's Stonewall or America's GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), this data at least provides some headline understanding of the current school context by looking at the experiences of LGBT+ students. Both reports have shown incremental, yet small, improvements in general attitudes and decreasing uses of homophobic language, yet show large percentages of LGBT+ students still experience

discomfort due to their school environment. For example, Stonewall's report presented that from those individuals who completed the survey:

- 84% of trans young people who responded have self-harmed. For lesbian, gay and bi young people who are not trans, 61% have self-harmed

- 45% of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils who responded, (64% for trans pupils alone) are bullied for being LGBT+ at school

- 68% of LGBT+ pupils who responded report that teachers or school staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language when they hear it

In isolation these statistics do not tell us much about the environments they were experienced in, other than perhaps they were cultures lacking inclusivity. DePalma and Atkinson (2009, 2009, 2006, 2008, 2009b) have engaged in much research analysing the conditions that create heteronormativity in schools, critiquing how best to challenge this social order. DePalma and Atkinson identify one of the central tensions in challenging heteronormativity as the distinction between anti-homophobia and counter-heteronormative work. DePalma and Atkinson's critique appears to come from the position of schools only meeting their legal requirements rather than taking more proactive stances in developing inclusivity for students and teachers. Formby (2013) suggests that schools need a greater understanding of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying, as incidents of these are often dealt with as individual acts with little relationship to the processes or social structure created by the school. LGBT+ students in schools are often provided with support, counselling, or intervention from external agencies, which while

valuable, implicitly suggests the problem is the individual and not the environment. Formby argues that support is better appreciated without a 'fault' or 'victim' mentality and that schools need to go above their minimal legal obligations, e.g., to The Equality Act (2010) and Ofsted, to challenge the default position of heteronormativity.

Lundin (2011) acknowledges this default position of heteronormativity and its oppressive power over LGBT+ identities in schools. Lundin therefore created a framework to identify heterosexual norms in schools to consider how to best challenge heterosexism and oppressive cultures for LGBT+ people. Lundin argues that oppressive behaviours such as heternormativity are by their very nature invisible. The framework offers a way to illuminate situations where heteronorms are present in order for them to be challenged, which is the focus of Chapter Three. Lundin identifies seven themes to address anti-oppressive behaviour relating to the heterosexual norm. These are: repetition of desirability; dichotomisation of sexes; differentiation of sexualities; hierarchy of positions; marginalisation; issue making; and personation.

Lundin's description of *repetition of desirability* considers the way in which heteronorms are upheld and maintained. In defining a norm, and therefore heteronorms, as an activity that is repeated, it helps define the daily practices and procedures that 'repeat the desirability' that heterosexuality is the expected position. Lundin also identifies that norms are often only revealed when situations that break the norm occur. This links to another of Lundin's themes, *personation*, and is another way of understanding Formby's critique that schools often deal with an individual, rather than the rooted issue. *Personation* refers to the focus on the marginalised individual, instead of the norms that have marginalised them. Lundin argues that when LGBT+ issues are addressed in schools, it

is often about a specific individual, and the person therefore becomes the focus of the discussion, rather than the situation being a consequence of structural or cultural heteronormativity. Finally of relevance and linked to the notion of personation, is Lundin's theme of *issue making*. Issue making refers to the representation and tone that LGBT+ issues are discussed with. The media often presents LGBT+ stories in relation to problems and issues that need to be dealt with, rather than a "resource and source of joy" (Lundin 2011 p304). This gives implicit, pejorative connotations to being LGBT+ and creates an environment where issues may not be discussed to avoid identifying issues that may need to be 'solved'.

Lundin's earlier description of repetition of desirability could also be understood through microaggression theory. In recent years there has been a growing literature (Nadal, et al. 2011, Vaccaro and Koob 2018, Platt and Lenzen 2013, Buchanan 2011, Sue, et al. 2007) looking at expressions of homophobia and the way heteronormativity is constructed, using the lens of microaggressions. Initially conceived in relation to forms of racism, microaggression theory has evolved to consider the types of exclusion that members of different marginalised groups may experience. Microaggressions are defined as "subtle forms of discrimination, often unconscious or unintentional, that communicate hostile or derogatory messages, particularly to and about members of historically marginalized social groups" (Nadal, et al. 2016 p489). Despite recent critique of both the term and the conceptual credibility of microaggressions due to the lack of empirical research (Lilienfeld 2017), many scholars have embraced its relevance in understanding the experiences and forms of discrimination faced by LGBT+ individuals and have called for further empirical support, including studies in a more diverse range of contexts (Nadal 2018a).

The forms of microaggressions are further subcategorised which allows a clearer idea of how to identify and name these:

- *Microassaults* refer to explicit or purposeful comments or actions meant to demean the recipient, e.g., homophobic language, these are easier to identify and manage as a school and an explicit legal expectation

- *Microinsults* refer to unconscious verbal or non-verbal communication that can demean a person's identity, e.g., explicit boys and girls changing rooms or toilets may make a trans or non-binary person feel unsure which to use, implicitly communicating that they do not belong in that environment

- *Microinvalidations* include communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the realities of individuals of oppressed groups (Sue, et al. 2007), e.g., instances in which LGBT+ people are told that their perceptions of discrimination are unfounded or nonsensical, negating the realities of heterosexism or transphobia in their lives (Nadal 2013)

In order to measure the types of heterosexist and transphobic microaggressions LGBT+ people encounter, Nadal (2018b) created microaggressions scales for both gender and sexuality, building upon the existing LGBT+ microaggressions taxonomy of eight key themes. The eight themes explore different subconscious biases or discriminative views towards LGBT+ people. While each categorisation demonstrates a disruption or inconsistency to existing heteronormative structures, the categories of *endorsement of heteronormative or gender-conforming culture/behaviours, exoticization, and assumption of sexual*

pathology/abnormality are of particular relevance later in the data analysis.

Ferfolja (2007) helps us to consider how microaggression theory and Lundin's framework could be used in practice, through her analysis of institutional processes that exist which "enable homophobia and heterosexism to flourish, while normalizing and constituting heterosexuality as the dominant and only valid sexuality" (p147). Ferfolja's research with lesbian teachers highlights a number of institutional factors that support heteronormativity and heterosexism and provides a useful set of categories to evaluate inclusivity and consider how to apply Lundin's framework. The factors include policies; professional development; curriculum exclusions; the school environment; vetting information; and abusive language.

Beginning with the school environment, Ferfolja's research in Australian secondary schools noted very little implementation of programmes to support LGBT+ individuals and develop inclusive cultures; however, she identified many schools that did display posters directed at young people with the aim of reducing anti-lesbian and gay violence. Ferfolja argues that without an appropriate context (e.g., in a classroom as a stimulus for discussion of LGBT+ issues), these posters and displays can often be tokenistic, lack visibility or only be put up for short-term display (a recurrent theme in my own interviews). She argues that posters and displays (like some policies) offer no deconstruction of the issue and do not adequately examine discrimination, nor do they impact on the marginalisation of non-heterosexual identities in the overt and hidden curriculum. The implementation of visibility in the form of posters and displays may fulfil some of a school's legal obligation to promote

inclusivity, without addressing it in any meaningful way. An approach to effectively tackle this problem is later discussed in Jack's story.

Ferfolja's research mirrors Stonewall's findings and identifies homophobic language as a continuing issue in schools and one that continues to police and enforce homonormative expectations. Although students may not be considering sexuality when using homophobic language or using it as a term of abuse, Ferfolja's description of "language constructing reality" (p158) demonstrates that no matter how homophobic language is intended to be used, it still others non-heterosexual identities. It also underlines the importance of students and staff being given the language and confidence to challenge homophobia, as well as a vocabulary to imagine and describe alternatives, as later discussed.

Another key area identified by Ferfolja (2007) was a lack of staff awareness of policies addressing HBT bullying. She cites reasons that include invisibility in school-based procedures and protocols; limited focus on policies through formal INSET and workplace training; and poor communication of the policy information to staff. Ferfolja did identify high levels of awareness of initiatives and policies relating to other marginalised groups including multiculturalism and gender equality. This strong focus on other marginalised groups is reflected by Robinson (2002) who theorises a 'hierarchy of differences' referring to the varying levels of discomfort individuals may feel about discussing the different areas of inclusivity and which were more 'comfortable and appropriate'. Robinson suggests multicultural issues are most significant when considering inclusivity in education, followed by special needs, gender, social-economic class and several other marginalised groups, with lesbian and gay issues being located most frequently at the bottom of the hierarchy.

> *The variation in comfort concerning diversity issues may also be related to a number of other factors, including an individual's own identity, their experiences or lack of experiences with difference, their knowledge about difference, their religious and cultural values, their positioning in sexist, heterosexist, homophobic and racist discourses, and so on (Robinson 2002 p425).*

Robinson's analysis of reasons that may put LGBT+ issues at the bottom of the hierarchy continues to identify the topic of sexuality as taboo in schools. When considering marginalised groups in the form of hierarchy, it is worth conceptualising which groups are most visible in schools and therefore less easy to ignore. LGBT+ identities are often invisible in a way that many of the marginalised groups preceding them are not. This contrast identifies the need for clearer LGBT+ visibility in schools, but also highlights the challenges in doing so.

Visibility

> *Like lesbian feminism and the gay liberation movement, the queer critique of heteronormativity is intensely and aggressively concerned with issues of visibility (Hennessy 1994 p36).*

Conceptualising visibility provides a useful framework from which to consider approaches to inclusivity. Firstly, through the lens of homonormativity, it provides a tool to analyse what is currently presented as acceptable. Secondly, it highlights the need for a more diverse range of LGBT+ visibility in schools, beyond those that fit homonormative ideals. Although visibility is vitally important in developing inclusivity, it is important to first consider the barriers that prevent or repress visibility.

> *One may be either invisible or exaggerated, but it is very difficult to simply be a gay or lesbian teacher (DePalma and Atkinson 2009 p878).*

DePalma and Atkinson's explanation of the two choices that face LGBT+ teachers provide insight to the unenviable decision teachers may face: whether to be open about their sexuality or to hide it. It also helps us to consider how LGBT+ people are represented in the public sphere and what types of visibility may perpetuate homonormative ideals.
Patai (1992) argues that minority groups – often powerless or marginalised – can either remain silent and invisible, contributing to the existing norms, or choose to attract surplus visibility. Surplus visibility refers to the attention, warranted or not, that a member of a minority group attracts. This visibility can then create a shift in public perception and the individual may be perceived to accurately represent the entire minority group, providing an unjustified level of responsibility. Some may wish to attract this visibility and use it as an opportunity to challenge the status quo, whereas others may wish to remain invisible, particularly when visibility may be detrimental or provide distraction to their education/career. When considering LGBT+ as the minority group, heteronormative expectations provide the backdrop that highlights the surplus visibility.

Patai (1992) identifies two potential problems for those that attract surplus visibility. The first problem is the shift that occurs in public perceptions as traditionally powerless and marginalised groups challenge the expectation that they should be invisible and silent. She further explains that for those that have been in positions of dominance, any challenge from minority or marginalised groups appears excessive and "the voices they raise sound loud and offensive" (p35).

> *Within the powerful silent force of the heterosexual matrix ... [the] whisper of another possibility is inevitably constructed as a scream (Atkinson and DePalma 2008 p33).*

In discussions with the LGBT+ teachers in this study, it is possible to see how views that challenged existing homonormative ideals appeared 'louder' and attracted additional attention. This attention allows us to understand Patai's second problem, that surplus visibility concerns the constant extrapolation from part to whole so that an individual is seen to represent an entire minority group. This may be less relevant with increasing visibility for homosexual identities, but visibility for trans and gender non-conforming identities remains limited (O'Flynn 2016). This conceptualisation links with Lundin's (2016) *personation* theme, where the individual themselves become the problem that stands in contrast to the norm, rather than spotlighting the structural inequalities that exist in the current system.

In considering the importance of visibility, Butler (1993) both acknowledges the frustration that comes from being 'extrapolated from part to whole' when adopting labels but also underlines the necessity of identity categories in affecting change and its 'democratising potential'. Butler describes the "necessary error of identity" (p20) as the need to lay claim to LGBT+ terms of categorisation and for one to present themselves as a representative of a marginalised group. Butler argues for the necessity of surplus visibility to challenge existing structures; this idea is now being seen through social media movements and grassroots organisations encouraging LGBT+ teachers to come out and be visible in their schools. LGBTed, a network to support and encourage LGBT+ teachers to come out, acknowledges the importance of clear visibility with their tagline "be the role models we needed when we were at school"

(Daniel Gray, one of the network's founders, nods to the 'extrapolation from part to whole' in using the Twitter handle @thatgayteacher). The impetus in mobilising LGBT+ teachers to be advocates of change and visibility, while potentially empowering, could be problematic. As Lundin (2016) describes, heterosexual teachers can talk about a partner without being held to account for talking about sexuality, whereas in the same situation, an LGBT+ teacher is at risk of being understood as talking inappropriately about sex. Patai flags this paradox. To challenge existing structures and systems attracts surplus visibility, but without this, there is an absence in which we fail to notice anything but the existing conditions.

> *It is the absence of surplus visibility - having power whose continuation seems assured by the fact that things simply are the way they are - that accounts for what we fail to notice (Patai 1992 p37).*

When considering the current provision in schools for addressing gender and sexuality, it is easy to see how this limited representation only furthers heteronormativity. For example, in 2017's National LGBT Survey (Government Equalities Office 2018), only 3% of the 38,320 respondents who were of school age said they had discussed sexual orientation and gender identity at school. This is reinforced when considering just how few positive bisexual and trans role models there are. This was repeatedly flagged by the bisexual and trans teachers in this study who described feeling the weight of their visibility.

Gray (2013) argues that identifying as an LGB teacher often encompasses a careful negotiation between private and professional worlds, where LGB staff are left with three options: to not speak with anyone regarding their private life; to come out to staff; to come out to both staff and students.

Regardless of a teacher's decision, they are either left with invisibility or surplus visibility, while being denied the 'powerful position' of simple visibility, a third option reserved only for the majority group (DePalma and Atkinson 2009). It could be argued that being out to staff presents a partial visibility, or as later described, a bordering visibility. Whatever form of visibility a teacher chooses, DePalma and Atkinson (2009) use Birden (2004) to argue that there are potential consequences.

> *The lesbian or gay outsider, then, can be an outsider in insider's clothing and herein lies the rub: to choose to be "out" opens one to potential harassment, discrimination, denigration, and violence; to choose to be closeted stunts the development of friendships, support networks, and emotional and mental development needed for healthy living. For the gay or lesbian student, teacher, or academician, life becomes a tight wire act: the illusion of safety on one side, the hope of authenticity on the other (Birden 2004 p21).*

For staff that choose to be open and possibly experience these challenges, it is understandable that they may wish to present the most acceptable, homonormative version of themselves, particularly in a professional environment. This quote also presents a view that is prevalent through most of the existing literature: that being an LGBT+ teacher is problematic. While some of the stories in this thesis support these views, others present a counterview, where being visible as an LGBT+ teacher can have significant cachet. However, the types of visibility available to the teachers varied significantly.

Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) develops the concept of visibility, considering the types of visibility available from three perspectives. Although derived from research into bisexual young people and "queerly

mixed"/polyamorous families, Pallotta-Chiarolli's metaphors of visibility both mirror and develop a contemporary understanding of Patai's (1992) visibility. The three types of visibility are passing (normalisation), bordering (negotiation), and polluting (noncompliance). *Passing* suggests hiding the unacceptable to fit in and be accepted within the status quo (largely in line with Patai's definition of invisibility). *Bordering* suggests presenting different social forms depending on the surroundings and context. Here, the presence of specific individuals and environments dictates the amount of visibility a person may be comfortable in demonstrating. This type of visibility is particularly relevant when considering both the structured and serendipitous configurations of students, teachers and spaces in school settings. *Polluting,* despite its toxic undertones, is used by Pallotta-Chiarolli as a metaphor for "strength, agency and empowerment" (p62) and is necessary in disrupting existing structures and ways of thinking to create 'emergent and empowering systems and structures'. Pallotta-Chiarolli's description of polluting visibility links with aspects of Patai's surplus visibility, while also mirroring Butler's (1993) view in the importance of embracing these types of visibility and representation.

Neary (2017) considers the impact of LGBT+ teachers' personal lives intersecting with their professional lives, analysing whether self or institutional policing affects their approaches to addressing LGBT+ issues in the classroom. Neary argues that with the introduction of civil partnerships, and later marriage, LGBT+ teachers were provided with a sense of 'legitimacy' (linking with earlier ideas of homonormativity and the connotations of sexual monogamy that marriage assumes), yet still having to negotiate a difficult relationship between professional legitimacy and being 'agents of change'.

> *In many professional contexts, LGBTQ people struggle with personal/professional boundaries and decisions about how to manage their visibility (Neary 2017 p58).*

Neary identifies several key factors that, despite greater legal and social recognition, still provide challenges for LGBT+ teachers. This affects the visibility they choose to present and how they conduct professional relationships. Firstly, the presumption of heterosexuality remains ubiquitous in schools (reflected through curriculum and education policy). This assumption ensures that non-heterosexual or cisgendered identities either remain silent or made visible as targets of policies and approaches that seek to include, protect and create safe spaces for wounded LGBT+ people (Youdell 2004). While legislation seeks to protect LGBT+ people in school, it still presents them as other and provides a barrier to inclusivity. Neary further identifies the impact of children, young people and parents in school environments as causes of potential anxiety for LGBT+ teachers. These anxieties include being perceived as 'recruiting', being reduced to negative stereotypes and the conflation of LGBT+ identities and paedophilia. Sadly, there are examples of these in this study. When LGBT+ identities are defined by their sexuality, simultaneously other aspects of their subjectivity are rendered invisible and irrelevant to social relations and are defaulted as sexualised subjects (Richardson and May 1999). In schools where sexuality is silenced (DePalma and Atkinson 2006), this can create an uncomfortable juxtaposition.

> *…they continued to work hard to be perceived as high-performing, legitimate professional teachers as a bulwark against employment and reputational risk (Neary 2017 p61).*

Neary argues that LGBT+ teachers that were 'out' worked harder to be seen as well respected, popular teachers to maintain professional legitimacy with both students and parents. Neary argues that this overcompensating approach diminishes the relevance of their LGBT+ identity and provides what Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) would consider 'passing' visibility, achieving a 'normalised queerness'.

> *Fore-fronting a high-performing professional subjectivity (whilst diminishing LGBTQ identification) (re)inscribed the teaching profession as heteronormative (Neary 2017 p69).*

As Gray (2013) and Neary (2017) suggest, while it is undeniable that LGBT+ students and teachers may need to carefully negotiate how they wish to exist in schools, it is also useful to consider the progress that has been made in this area since Birden's 2004 article. We need to consider whether attracting surplus visibility, or the decision of what type of visibility, applies to LGBT+ individuals in the same way as it did over 15 years ago. Neary presents the argument that marriage and civil partnership options have provided LGBT+ teachers with legitimacy and confidence to potentially interrupt and challenge homophobia and heteronormativity (although arguably still contributing to homonormativity).

White, Rory and Bryan (2018) suggest significant improvements in the experiences of LGB individuals since the 'particularly homophobic periods' of the 1980s and 1990s.

> *Recent research has evidenced a shift in the experiences of LGB young people, to somewhat more accepting and positive narratives (White, Rory and Bryan 2018 p480).*

Although there has been significant improvement and representation for LGBT+ rights, Worthen (2013) argues that the effect it has on specific sexual identities remains unclear. Much of the teacher specific LGBT+ literature has focussed on the experiences of gay and lesbian teachers (Newman 2010, Gray 2013, Sparkes 1994, Edwards, Brown and Smith 2016). The literature demonstrates limited insight into the experiences of bisexual teachers and suggests that trans identities remain problematic and "are subject to much trans-exclusionary practice in schools and there is little positive change in attitudes, despite statutory requirements and greater recognition" (O'Flynn 2016 p431). This mirrors Stryker's (2008) critique that putting marginalised sexual and gender identities under the same umbrella can be problematic when addressing issues of inclusivity.

While visibility is a key consideration in developing inclusivity, Olson and Worsham (2000) argue that the achievement of 'visibility and sayability' should not be the end point. Their analysis considers visibility from a political perspective arguing that when settling for visibility within existing structures, one may forget to question or challenge the structures that kept people invisible or unintelligible in the first place. Ruitenberg (2010) considers this critique within the context of schools, questioning if LGBT+ visibility is simply recognition within existing structures, or if there has been a change to the existing structure themselves. She argues that LGBT+ identities are only recognised by those already in a position to recognise. This underlines the importance of the education 'gatekeepers', including Ofsted, school governors and leadership teams, in being those that proactively create cultures that promote inclusivity and do not simply leave it up to those who are LGBT+ to present visibility.

The school structure and environment have been central to much of the visibility discussion so far and are key considerations in Chapter Four,

specifically with reference to Foucault's (1977) *panoptic schema* of surveillance. Foucault theorises how a panoptic schema of surveillance, initially considered in the construction of prisons, manages to create a culture where power is devolved to not be seen hierarchically, or even as embodied, but to be felt as 'all seeing', where self-policing becomes a necessity and "power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies" (Foucault 1977 p202). Foucault engages with Bentham's (1843) concept of a Panopticon, a circular building with cells around the circumference and a central observational tower in the middle. A structure designed so those in the cells can be observed, or more importantly, think they are being observed, at all times. The cells are designed in such a way that the observer from the centre cannot be seen, meaning self-policing begins to take place by those within the cells.

> *The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever one may wish to put it up to, produce homogenous effects of power (Foucault 1977 p202).*

Foucault's theory of surveillance helps us to conceptualise how pervasive heteronormativity is within school environments and how LGBT+ individuals can stand in visible contrast to the silent expectations of cisgendered heterosexuality. Although schools vary significantly in their architecture and environments, they are all spaces of surveillance, whether it is the corridor, assembly hall or classroom. Foucault analyses the efficiency and multiple uses of the Panopticon, explaining it can be used as a machine to alter behaviour, train and correct. Describing schools as spaces that are designed to alter or correct behaviour can sound rather extreme but could be examined in the context of a school's function to produce students that are good citizens, and that any

correcting would be of 'bad' or 'unacceptable' behaviour. However, contextualised with the existing literature about the experiences of LGBT+ teachers, this altering of behaviour takes on a more insidious understanding. Here, the Panopticon is operating in a way where the silent expectations of heternormativity can lead to instances of self-policing, or individuals 'correcting their behaviour', to exhibit the expectations of heternormativity. Being under a constant 'panoptic gaze' (Kjaran and Kristinsdóttir 2015) may lead to changing of behaviours, or code-switching, where individuals feel the need to change their performance of masculinity or femininity for fear of being read as LGBT+ (even if they are not), and therefore unsafe or uncomfortable.

The way in which people may change their behaviours, or 'performativity of gender', leads to another key concept relevant to this study. Butler's (2006) seminal work is the bedrock of gender discussions and frames discussion later in the thesis about how gender is constructed, and therefore, can be deconstructed. Central to this argument is Butler's notion that gender is not something that is biologically assigned, nor something static, inherent, or essential, but something that is constructed through performativity. Butler identifies gender at something that one 'does' rather than what one 'is', and this 'doing' is influenced by myriad factors. Butler also acknowledges that expectations of gender and sexuality are built upon the binary categories of sex.

> *The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist" - that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not "follow" from either sex or gender (Butler 2006 p24).*

This quote helps capture the cultural expectations that people are not only cisgender and heterosexual, but that they are expected to 'perform' masculinity or femininity in 'traditional' ways. The cultural messaging received in schools, whether formally through aspects such as dress codes or gendered lessons, or through the hidden curriculum, mean expectations of gender and sexuality are pervasive but seemingly invisible in schools, which may lead to self-policing by individuals who feel they do not fit within these binary expectations. West and Zimmerman (1987) discuss the 'resources for doing gender' and use Goffman (1977) to consider the ways in which gender is learned and created through social interactions and the physical features of social settings.

> *Doing gender means creating differences between boys and girls and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the "essentialness" of gender (West and Zimmerman 1987 p137).*

Goffman (1977) is used to illustrate the many ways in which gender is seen as essential and natural but is in fact socially constructed. One example of this, and relevant to the later findings, is the ubiquity of gendered toilets. West and Zimmerman use Goffman to examine the ways in which segregated toilets are seen as natural and biologically necessary, when in fact, gendered toilets are a cultural matter, as both sexes can "achieve the same ends through the same means" (p137). Goffman explains that "toilet segregation is presented as a natural consequence of the difference between the sex classes when in fact it is a means of honouring, if not producing, this difference" (Goffman 1977 p316). Goffman's description of producing this difference speaks to the ways in which gender is continually constructed and therefore, as Butler

argues, can be disrupted or deconstructed. The ways in which heteronormativity can be challenged and disrupted in schools are explored later.

The visibility literature is wide ranging and presents many important ideas for consideration within this study. Firstly, LGBT+ can be an invisible difference, and thus for most LGBT+ teachers, a conscious decision must be made of whether to be visible and to what extent. Secondly, visibility is contextually relevant, and influenced by many factors, and therefore visibility can be a point of constant navigation and thought for LGBT+ teachers. Thirdly, visibility is a form of performativity, and therefore visibility can contribute to or disrupt the production of heteronormative expectations; this could be unconsciously or actively through a form of polluting visibility. Whichever forms of visibility LGBT+ teachers choose to present, the literature and discussion has shown that visibility is something that is continually navigated and measured. Visibility has the power to be both an emancipatory tool, but also an oppressive and exhausting one.

Summary

This thesis presents a contemporary view of how LGBT+ teachers experience their school environments. The research not only aims to identify which aspects of LGBT+ identities remain problematic in schools, but to also consider positive examples of how heteronorms have been successfully challenged. The concepts of heteronormativity and homonormativity provided the overarching themes for my theoretical framework, allowing me to engage with the current school context, as well as consider issues of sexual citizenship and visibility. The concept of heteronormativity provided a lens to examine to what extent traditional

ideas of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich 1980) are still expected and enforced in schools. Many scholars have identified the problematic nature and silence surrounding sexuality in schools and how this often leads to a default position of heteronormativity (Allan, et al. 2008, DePalma and Atkinson 2009, Epstein 1998, Formby 2015, Page and Peacock 2013). The literature highlights the challenges faced in addressing LGBT+ inclusivity and point to schools as institutions where cultural change has been relatively slow. The literature also demonstrates an absence of positive experiences for LGBT+ teachers: something this thesis aims to address.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In this section, I will engage with the methodological literature to map out the research design that was used for this project. I will engage with issues of methods, ethics, reflexivity and insider/outsider status in order provide a detailed understanding of the approaches to data collection, explaining how this data was then used to answer the research questions.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this research was "How do LGBT+ secondary school teachers experience their school environments?". The literature review helped me to develop a series of secondary questions to explore with each teacher to address this main theme. These questions included:

- Do LGBT+ teachers experience schools as heteronormative?
- What makes schools heteronormative?
- What are the implications for visibility and inclusion?
- How are trans and gender non-conforming identities included in schools?
- How can schools become more LGBT+ inclusive?

Methodology and Methods

To plan my methodology, two key questions needed to be considered: what type of data was required and what was the most feasible way to collect it. To answer these questions, a consideration of ontology was useful.

> *Ontology is concerned with the nature or essence of things so ontological assumptions about social reality will focus on whether a person sees social reality – or aspects of the social world – as external, independent, given and objectively real, or, instead, as socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought as expressed through language (Opie 2004).*

Opie's description of ontology captures the difficulty in defining a 'social reality' for a topic such as heteronormativity. Identifying that I was researching social reality rather than 'material reality' (Keaton and Bodie 2011) and positioning myself as a social constructivist helped me to consider the most appropriate methods for data collection. Keaton and Bodie describe social constructivism as an approach that examines observable phenomena and identifies the use of language and people's individual experiences as the key approaches to understand social reality. It was also important to consider that with socially constructed ideas such as heteronormativity, even descriptions of social reality could be misleading, as individuals all experience their own reality based upon a set of epistemological and ontological factors unique to them. It was therefore important not to frame this study as a search for truth or for an accepted, uniformed experience of LGBT+ teachers, but as a project that sought to understand and present the experiences of a range of LGBT+ secondary school teachers.

Although research is about presenting a set of findings, or a form of 'truth', from the position of social constructivism, Anderson and Baym (2004) suggest that what is considered 'truth' or 'real' needs to be recontextualised "not as pre-existent, but as socially constructed… contingent upon communicative contexts" (p602). Unlike matters of science that may be quantifiably proven as right or wrong, individual experiences of social phenomena are each unique and influenced by myriad factors. This is not to discredit an individual's experience as real or genuine, but identifies that environments are experienced and perceived in different ways by different people. As such, individuals need the opportunity to reflect upon and articulate their personal, unique experiences. With this in mind, to understand LGBT+ teachers' experiences of a socially constructed idea such as heteronormativity, qualitative research provided the best opportunity to gain detailed, insightful understandings.

Interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) suggest that the most effective way to collect qualitative data from marginalised or 'hidden' groups is through the use of interviews. Interviews provide respondents with the opportunity to tell their story without the restrictions or limitations that other methods may bring.

> *Interviews enable participants - be they interviewers or interviewees - to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses, the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself; its*

> *human embeddedness is inescapable (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2013 p409).*

This quote explains the value of using interviews as part of the method of data collection for this project. As issues of ethics and power are discussed elsewhere in this thesis, this section will reflect on some of the other considerations of using interviews. Interviews can range in approach, from structured and formal (that might be seen in a job interview where standardisation is key) to a non-directive interview, where the interviewee dictates the conversation. The approaches to interviews vary from source to source, and just a handful of sources suggest over a dozen approaches (LeCompte and Preissle 1993, Bogdan 86, Guba and Lincoln 1994, Patton 2002). Without becoming entangled in the semantics of the different types of interviews, it is the approaches themselves that needed to be considered. Patton (2002) summarises the characteristics of semi-structured types of interviews as ones where topics and issues to be discussed are specified in advance in outline form, and the sequence and working of questions emerges throughout the interview. Additional questions may also emerge from the immediate context of the discussion.

The interviews I completed drew upon elements of each these different approaches. At the start of this section, I outlined the overarching and subsidiary questions, but it was also important, given the focus on teachers' lived experiences, to provide space to allow for new questions and themes to emerge organically through the process. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe, the unstructured interview is useful when the researcher is not yet aware of what they do not know.

Location was another key consideration. As the topics being discussed were personal, and as the participants led large portions of the interview through the discussion of their photos, it was important they were in an environment where they could feel relaxed, avoid external noise and distraction, and find a state of flow (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Where possible, the interviews took place face-to-face. This not only helped with rapport and making the respondent feel at ease, but it also allowed for observation of non-verbal cues. To ensure the environment was one where the participant felt relaxed, they were the ones to choose it. There were practical aspects to consider including privacy, external noise, potential for interruptions and the physical layout of the room, but these were managed as best as possible to provide the most comfortable environment for the participant. Where Covid restrictions made face-to-face interviews not possible, Zoom was used as this allowed a reliable connection and the freedom for the participant to choose a location in which they felt comfortable. All the interviews were recorded with an audio app before being fully transcribed.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) also reflect on the impact of interviewing minority and marginalised people. They emphasise the need for informal, open-ended interviews, which follow the train of thought and response of the participant, allowing for self-disclosure, where participants can tell their story in their own words. Context appropriate language was also important which, given the subject matter, included pronouns and different understandings of gender and sexuality. It was also important for me to use the participants' language where possible and to avoid being needlessly esoteric. Although a sensitive topic, the interview process was emancipatory for many of the participants, giving them a voice and a sense of confidence they had not had before (Swain, Heyman and Gillman 1998). One of the key elements of my research was

adopting a visual methodologies approach to the interviews that provided both structure and a sense of empowerment for my participants.

Visual Methodologies

When LGBT+ topics in education are spotlighted, they are often met with discomfort or a feeling that schools are not appropriate environments for discussion of sexuality (DePalma and Atkinson 2006). This not only impacts on pupils, but it also places LGBT+ teachers in a position where they may feel silenced or unable to fully explore and articulate their experiences. As Wright (2010) describes, "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) educators often experience challenging school environments as employees" (p394). It was for these reasons that I chose a visual methodologies approach. It was crucial to understand participants' experiences in as rich detail as possible. A visual aspect helped to stimulate and structure discussion while providing a powerful focus for interviews. Visual methods such as the photos taken by participants also provided an opportunity to see through the eyes of the individual, helping me to understand how they experienced their specific environments. This also gave the participants the basis from which to later discuss their experiences, ensuring the conversations were rooted in insights drawn from their everyday worlds (Barbour 2013). Prosser (2007) also argues that one of the strengths of visual research is the implicit encouragement of participants to slow down and engage in greater reflection of perception and meaning.

> *Visual acuity questions the connotation, denotation and significance of observations that are too often taken for granted (Prosser 2007 p13).*

Rose (2016) further argues that participants discussing photographs may be prompted to talk about things they may not have in a normal interview, particularly personal issues; something I found to be especially true. Visual methods also helped create a relationship between me as the researcher and the participants (Pain 2012), which was important when discussing personal subject matters such as gender and sexuality, to receive as honest and candid information as possible.

Visual methods help capture the varied ways that everyday life is experienced. Glaw, et al. (2017) describe how visual methodologies have been a common method of data collection in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology for some time but have recently become popular in other disciplines as effective ways to collect qualitative data. Glaw, et al. argue that data from visual methods provide 'validity, depth, richness, and new insights' that verbal and written methods alone may not. Lived, every day experiences cannot be purely captured by written or oral methods, as this is not how they are experienced. As Allen (2011) describes, visual methodologies have the potential to capture the embodied and material manifestations of sexuality which can be difficult to articulate and uncover through written or talk-based methods. Therefore, the method I used was respondent-generated photo elicitation. Not only was this the most effective method to generate data to address my research questions, but it is also an underused method in researching issues of gender and sexuality in schools.

> *If employing photo-methods in educational research is unconventional, then utilising them in school-based research about sexuality is even more unorthodox (Allen 2011 p488).*

Respondent-generated photo elicitation comprised two aspects: the participant taking photos (described by Glaw, et al. (2017) as auto-photography) and the discussion of the images in interviews (photo elicitation):

- *Auto-photography is asking participants to take photographs of their environment and then using the photographs as actual data. Auto-photography captures the world through the participant's eyes with subsequent knowledge production.*

- *Photo elicitation is using photographs or other visual mediums in an interview to generate verbal discussion to create data and knowledge. Different layers of meaning can be discovered as this method evokes deep emotions, memories, and ideas. Photo elicitation interviews contribute to trustworthiness and rigor of the findings through member checking (Glaw, et al. 2017 p1).*

These two stages are often subsumed under the heading of photo elicitation, but for the benefit of this methodology, I will discuss their uses separately.

Auto-photography

Using auto-photography provided depth and detail that participants may not have been able to capture or articulate through words alone (Guest, Namey and Mitchell 2012). This was important given the intangible nature of the concept being explored. Participants may have found it difficult to simply define or describe their school-based experiences.

Moreover, auto-photography is an effective way to work with marginalised groups. As Noland (2006) suggests, it allows marginalised groups, the

opportunity to 'think about who they are' and to 'speak for themselves', particularly as they may not have done so in this way before. This opportunity helped facilitate an authenticity that may not have been achieved through simple interviews alone and is an important tool in identity research (Noland 2006). Allen (2011) further argues "these methods can reveal embodied and spatial dimensions of sexuality which inhere in the unofficial minutiae of everyday schooling experiences" (p487).

Noland (2006) explains how this method of data collection asks participants to take and choose photos of themselves or their environment. This then allows the researcher to identify and articulate the 'ways identity guides human action and thought' in ways that other data collection would not make possible. This was particularly relevant as the very nature of my research was looking at how a core aspect of teachers' identities were included/excluded and presented within schools. Therefore, understanding how participants constructed their sense of self was a key factor in understanding how they experienced and positioned themselves within their school environment. Auto-photography also provided participants the freedom to display and express their own notions of self and identity, rather than being constrained by a pre-described set of categories that may have arisen from methods such as a questionnaire.

> *Auto-photography allows participants the freedom to use their actual surroundings, to pick and choose the people who are important to their self-concepts, and to decide what issues and what objects are the most salient to their construction of self. It is this freedom which the camera gives to participants that*

> *distinguishes it from traditional paper and pencil tests (Noland 2006 p3).*

Noland's description of the benefits auto-photography can play in collecting rich, high-quality data, demonstrates what a useful approach this can be. As there are many factors that can influence a school's environment, allowing the participants to interact with and present their own experience of the environment was an extremely powerful and insightful way for them to engage with the subject matter.

There were some practicalities to consider in using this method. The ubiquity of cameras and camera phones made this an easier exercise than it would have even 10 years ago, but school environments remain spaces in which photography is tightly policed. I discuss these issues further in in the ethics section. Richard and Lahman (2015) suggest other considerations should include the skill of the photographer, inherent costs, and time issues. As mentioned, cost was not an issue in respect to camera phones being used, and I took responsibility for printing the images in preparation for the interviews (these could also be viewed digitally). Time was a valid concern as not only were respondents giving their time for interviews, but they also needed time to take the photos in preparation for the interviews and reflect on their significance. Concerns over the skill of the photographer were in reference to capturing photos that demonstrate significance to the participant, rather than concerns of aesthetic or composition. Therefore, it was important participants were clear on the purpose and role of the photos before they began to take them.

Given the research questions outlined earlier in this document, I asked participants to take between 5-10 photos. I chose this small number of

photos to encourage the participants to really think about the photos they would take, what they represented, and to ensure they were of significance. I also kept the guidance broad as I wanted the participants to have the space to interpret the theme as they wished. With that in mind, the participants were asked to consider the following when taking their photos:

- The spaces within school they felt the most and least safe, comfortable or visible as an LGBT+ member of staff

- How LGBT+ inclusivity was presented in their school (this could have been formally e.g., through displays and the curriculum or informally e.g., through discussion, graffiti, badges, etc.)

As this was a qualitative research study, the participants then described these photos in semi-structured interviews. This part of the method is called photo elicitation, where the photos and the participants' descriptions of these photos become the data.

Photo Elicitation

Photo elicitation is an underused method in educational research but has been used to successfully research areas including bullying and the experiences of LGBT+ students (Mandleco 2013, Walton and Niblett 2013, Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart 2010, Allen 2009, Allen 2011, Joy and Numer 2017). Collier and Collier (1986) are regularly cited as some of the earliest adopters of photo elicitation, describing the method as an interview in which the informants and the interviewer discuss the photographs together. This not only allows the participant to articulate the reasons why they took each photograph; it also provides a springboard from which to explore issues in greater depth. This method

helped remove some of the stress and uncertainty that participants may have felt if they were subject of an interview alone, "instead their role can be one of expert guides leading the fieldworker through the content of the pictures" (Collier and Collier 1986 p106). Collier and Collier also argue, akin to Noland (2006), that photo elicitation allows the participants to somewhat detach from potentially sensitive topics. They argue that this method gives participants the maximum free association that would be possible within a structured interview, helping to ease any tension participants may feel in discussing their identity. It also helps to reduce power, class, and knowledge differentials between researcher and participant (Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart 2010). As well as the benefits photo elicitation provided in structuring the interviews and reducing the anxiety of participants, Harper (2002) argues that participants' discussions of feelings and experiences are more vivid and visceral. Harper describes the difference between this method and traditional interviews, by the way participants respond to the 'symbolic representations' in the photographs.

> *The parts of the brain that process visual information are in evolutionary terms older than the parts of the brain that process verbal information; therefore, visual images evoke deeper parts of human consciousness than words do (Harper 2002 p13).*

In using photo elicitation, different layers of understanding are gained and help us to connect 'core definitions of the self' to society, culture, and history (Harper 2002). It allows us to see spaces we would not otherwise have access to and calls attention to that which we cannot observe (Patton 2002). For LGBT+ teachers, 'definitions of self' may be affected by historical acts such as Section 28 and the legalisation of gay marriage. A school's culture and position in the community may also strongly

influence LGBT+ teachers' sense of identity. As argued by Neary (2017), many LGBT+ teachers construct their professional identity as people who work harder to maintain professional legitimacy and be seen as well respected.

Suchar's (1989) identification of 3 main uses of photo elicitation interviews help to summarise the points discussed so far:

- To reveal participants' cultural understandings
- To reveal aspects of participants' 'social psychology'
- To examine participants' understandings of their thoughts and actions in social situations

Due to the sensitivity of this type of research, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) suggest conducting interviews face-to-face where possible, or through a method in which emotions and responses can be easily recorded for later analysis when face-to-face interviews are impractical. The intention was to conduct all my interviews face-to-face, but for the later interviews, this was not possible due to Covid restrictions.

The literature regarding visual methodologies made it clear that combining the methods of auto-photography and photo elicitation would provide the most effective way to collect valuable data. Much of what I wished to discuss with participants was not visual – It was invisible heteronormative assumptions. The importance of the photos, therefore, were less about what they displayed, but what the image triggered to then offer discussion of emotions and feelings. Because these feelings dissipate quite quickly, unprompted interviews are not always best at

capturing them. Photo elicitation acknowledged participants as the experts of their own lives, consequently giving them a sense of empowerment that provided rich insights into their lived experiences as LGBT+ teachers in school. Coupled with the fact that teachers are reflective practitioners, this method provided opportunities for them to examine their lived experiences in ways that many of them had not before. It also made participants both creators and interpreters in the research.

Asking LGBT+ teachers to volunteer and reflect on their lived experiences had the potential to be a tough sell. As Neary (2017) argues, LGBT+ teachers' professional identities are entwined, and often at odds with, their personal identity and past experiences as an LGBT+ person. These considerations initially caused me concern and I thought it would be difficult to find willing participants, but the opposite proved to be true. It turned out that many LGBT+ teachers were keen to share their stories and contribute to discussion on this topic, which made selecting a broad variety of participants a real strength of the project.

Selection of Participants

As previously discussed, this research was not in search of 'truth' or results that could quantifiably make claims to new knowledge. The purpose of the research was to contribute findings to existing debate and discussion surrounding the experiences of LGBT+ teachers. I chose to do this through the lens of heteronormativity and LGBT+ secondary school teachers, each of whom had a unique story to tell. Therefore, considerations of sampling were not to present a set of results that could be extrapolated to represent the experiences of all LGBT+ teachers. The

word ‘sample’ was also problematic as suggested part of a whole and therefore generalisability.

During the introduction to the literature review, I justified my use of the acronym ‘LGBT+’ throughout this project, but for the purpose of the sampling methods, it is useful to explore what this encompasses once again. With this being a study of LGBT+ teachers, it was obviously important to interview lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers, but through engaging with the homonormativity literature, I also wished to interview other marginalised sexual and gender identities, while being aware that the selection of participants did not become tokenistic at the expense of quality research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2013). Access to a sample was an area I initially thought would be a challenge, but thanks to social media and the insider benefits (discussed later) of being part of the LGBT+ community, selecting participants was done with relative ease. I sent out an initial tweet asking for LGBT+ secondary school teachers who would be interested in being interviewed as part of my research. This tweet resulted in good range of LGBT+ teachers contacting me, asking to know more about the research. As described, the project required a sizeable commitment from participants and so naturally not all these inquiries led to active participants, but it did provide an excellent starting point.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) suggest that in using a volunteer sampling method, it is important to be cautious in claims of generalisability or representativeness. Although that was not an intention of this research, it did raise the question of what the volunteers’ motivation may be. All the volunteers showed great enthusiasm for being involved in the project, often citing the importance of such research, and wanting to contribute to an area they felt passionately about. These

enthusiastic and positive volunteers were a huge asset to this project, but volunteer sampling alone did not provide the full range of experiences and identities I wished to portray, particularly trans and bisexual teachers. In this instance, a snowball sampling was useful.

> *In snowball sampling researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2013 p158).*

One of the biggest benefits of using snowball sampling is that it provides access to marginalised groups that may otherwise be hidden. For me as a teacher who worked in a Trust of schools and had many friends who were teachers, there were some excellent opportunities for snowball sampling. Browne (2005) mirrors the benefits of snowball sampling in accessing 'hidden' populations. "Snowball sampling is often used because the population under investigation is 'hidden' either due to low numbers of potential participants or the sensitivity of the topic" (Browne 2005 p47).

Noy (2008) also describes how a fortunate by-product of using a snowball sampling method is the equalisation of power between the researcher and participant. Relationships with participants are likely to be built upon friendships, peer group membership or personal contacts, meaning a more equal power dynamic, especially as they can become gatekeepers for future contacts. The benefits of snowball sampling, therefore, included greater access and a stronger relationship with the participants which helped build rapport, lower defences, and led to more honest, insightful information. This method, however, can be prone to bias (Biernacki and

Waldorf 1981, Faugier and Sargeant 1997) and create something of an echo-chamber effect. This could be true when the initial points of contact for the sampling are friends or colleagues with whom you share similar backgrounds or world views. However, these concerns were reduced as of the four participants who came from snowball sampling, three stemmed from Twitter, and as such, there was not a personal connection.

Timeframe and Feasibility

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) suggest that for qualitative research, sample sizes must be large enough to generate rich data and deep descriptions, but not too large to prevent data overload or moves to generalisability. With this in mind, it was important that I chose a sample size that was big enough to provide a broad range of diversity and experience, as well as be achievable within the timeframe. I initially aimed to complete 8-10 interviews, but as the project progressed, I was able to extend it to 12. This was an ideal number of respondents to generate rich insights without reaching the point of data saturation. Sadly, due to the lockdown restrictions, two participants were unable to take photos and so the discussion was framed around the spaces they *would* have taken photos in their school.

Thematic Analysis

My research generated two types of data, firstly the photographs from the auto-photography, and secondly the transcripts of the photo elicitation interviews.

> *Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data (Clarke and Braun 2017 p297).*

Thematic analysis provides the opportunity to analyse data individually, and then to explore commonalities in themes. It also allows researchers to preserve units of data that identify meaning (Saldaña 2015). Boyatzis (1998) summarises the four main stages of data analysis as:

1. Sensing themes
2. Doing it reliably
3. Developing code
4. Interpreting the information and themes

Although I could have predicted what some of the themes were likely to be, there were still many 'unknown unknowns' (Allen 2011), as the photos provided insights into areas that would have usually been inaccessible. Therefore, careful analysis of the photos and interviews was required to ensure key themes and ideas were being accurately identified. Smith, et al. (2017) discuss their application of Boyatzis' stages for thematic analysis, in their own LGBT+ photo elicitation research. The initial stage of 'sensing themes', or preliminary data analysis, begins in the data collection and transcribing phase. During this time, the researcher should be identifying and making note of initial themes. These emerging themes can then be examined and discussed to build a tentative and flexible inductive codebook (Smith, et al. 2017). For example, the themes from Allen's (2011) early findings included teachers' own sexual identity and attitudes towards student sexuality, student bodily adornment, talk about relationships and issues related to sexual

diversity.

The second stage requires the researcher to refine the initial codebook so they can reliably and consistently code themes within the data. My interviews produced 229 pages of transcript to analyse, and so this system of coding was important to identify common themes and to keep track of emerging ideas. Smith, et al. (2017) suggest the third stage is likely the most important, and equally likely, the most time consuming. During this process, all the data should have been collected, transcribed, and discussed, allowing for a finalised codebook. This finalised codebook can then be used to recode all the data with the final set of themes. Once this stage is complete and all the data has been revisited and recoded, the themes can then be analysed and interpreted. This stage then allowed me to begin addressing my overarching question and see which themes helped address my subsidiary questions. It is worth remembering that although I had an idea of what I wanted my research to identify, the key themes only became clear after the analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2012) argue that positionality is a key consideration when approaching thematic analysis and this affected whether I should use an inductive or deductive approach. An inductive approach to data coding and analysis is a 'bottom-up' approach and is driven by what is in the data (Clarke and Braun 2017). This approach allows identification of the previously discussed 'unknown unknowns' (Allen 2011) and does not carry with it an agenda of trying to identify data that supports an existing hypothesis. However, a deductive approach is 'top-down', where the researcher brings to the data a series of concepts, ideas, or topics that they use to code and interpret the data (Clarke and Braun 2017). A deductive approach allowed me to consider how the data fitted in with the key themes drawn from the literature review, as it was unlikely that

participants would use this language or even be familiar with certain theoretical concepts such as homonormativity. A criticism of this approach is that the researcher may not be focussing on the semantic content as they are looking for predetermined themes. It became unrealistic to strictly use just an inductive or deductive approach, and as Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) suggest, coding and analysis is often used with a hybrid approach. It was this hybrid approach that became most useful given the subject of my research.

Thematic analysis is a "form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006 p82). Given the nature of my study, it was important that any idiosyncratic or one-off themes that emerged were not dismissed or considered irrelevant, just because they were not mirrored through others' experiences. My study used a small sample and did not make claims of generalisability; therefore, one person's experience needed to be regarded as just as valid as an experience that may have been common among the sample.

Ethics

> *All research undertaken in situations which involve people interacting with each other will have an ethical dimension; educational research is no exception, and the ethical issues are often complex. They are likely to emerge and may change as the research proceeds (Stutchbury and Fox 2009 p489).*

Some of the ethical considerations for this project have already been discussed. As well as ensuring that my research satisfied the requirements of the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (British Educational

Research Association 2018), I used Stutchbury and Fox's adaptation of Seedhouse's (2008) ethical pyramidal grid. This grid was a useful way to consider the different layers of ethics for the project.

The four layers of consideration, working from outside inwards are: *external, consequential, deontological,* and *individual*. The *external* layer considers the context and codes of practice. As my research required participants to take photos, permission needed to be sought from each individual in case the photos were to be used in future publications or sharing of information. Apart from two, the photos did not contain people, which helped to reduce some of the ethical concerns. I gained informed consent from all participants as well as giving them the right to withdraw. Joy and Numer (2017) suggest the best method is to ask participants to provide informed consent not only to the overall project, but also for each individual photograph and for the consent forms to list the multiple ways in which each photograph could be used. I used this approach in the consent form and gained permission for the data to be included in academic and non-academic publications, conferences, and educational presentations. Photos, interview audio and transcripts were all stored, as advised by the university, on their secured network.

The *consequential* and *deontological* layers consider some of the moral issues of conducting research, which are particularly important when researching marginalised groups. There was a risk that in probing teachers and asking them to relive potentially traumatic experience that they may require follow up care and attention after the interviews. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) suggest that the risk needs to be weighed up against the potential to do good and benefit others, in deciding whether it is worth the potential harm. As Stutchbury and Fox (2009) argue, the risk is also countered as it provides the teachers concerned an opportunity to

reflect in detail, develop professionally and lead to further learning. Although some of the interviews were emotional, all the teachers described the experience as enjoyable and saw it as an opportunity for reflection.

The *individual* layer focuses on respect for the individual and autonomy. The methodology I chose gave a large amount of autonomy to the participants to not only feel at ease and somewhat in charge of the process, but to tell their story in their own way, revealing only what they felt comfortable in doing so. Although questions (both planned and unplanned) were asked in the interviews, they all began with an explanation of their right to not answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with and to withdraw at any time. It was also my job to use emotional intelligence to realise when it was and was not appropriate to probe further. I used this approach from Sikes to consider what was ethical.

> *A useful acid test is for researchers to ask themselves how they would feel if they or their children, family, friends or acquaintances were 'researched' by them (Sikes 2006 p112).*

Most of my participants were chosen using volunteer sampling and did so with great enthusiasm. This 'buy in' provided significant advantages, compared to respondents who may have needed to be cajoled, encouraged, or worst, selected, to be involved, which can happen in educational research (Opie 2004). Therefore, some of the ethical issues Griffith, et al. (2017) recognise in researching LGBT+ populations were minimised; however, it did carry with it a level of responsibility. Not only had the respondents volunteered to be involved in the research from a sense of duty and desire to affect change, but many also commented that

they were keen to read the findings and final thesis. This was flattering and motivating but brought with it a great responsibility to ensure that individual views had been accurately represented. To resolve this, participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts and request changes if they felt they had been misheard or misrepresented. Troyna (1994) also argues that any research that claims to be empowering or emancipatory needs to carefully consider how they position both themselves and their informants, as claims of such research are frequently 'grandiose and at best naïve'. Therefore, the informants needed to be aware that their responses were only being used to provide a current view of inclusivity from the perspective of LGBT+ teachers, and any recommendations or suggestions of best practice that came from the research were fortunate by-products.

Reflexivity

> *A conscious use of reflection to examine one's own personal biases, views, and motivations to develop self-awareness in interaction with others (Powell 2012 p36).*

Reflexivity and its approaches are discussed in varying degrees of importance and necessity in existing literature. For example, Lather (2004) highlights the need for reflexivity in establishing rigour for qualitative research, calling for researchers to acknowledge their biases and subjectivity. Conversely, others have described the process of reflexivity as "at best self-indulgent, narcissistic, and tiresome and at worst, undermining the conditions necessary for emancipatory research" (Pillow 2003 p176). While both critiques have merit, I think the value of reflexivity depends to a large degree on the field in which it is being discussed. For my own studies, and considering my perspective from

insider status, it was important to remain reflexive throughout the process and consider the best approaches.

Pillow (2003) critiques four popular metaphors which cast reflexivity as a methodological tool: recognition of self; recognition of other; truth; and transcendence. These tools offered key considerations for reflexive focus at different stages of the research, data collection, analysis and write up. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) suggest that while research is being conducted, there may be a limit to how reflexive we can be and how much we understand what shapes our research. These factors may only become deeply explicit once a study is 'done and dusted and researchers move on with their lives'. In being reflexive, researchers consider their own role in the research process and one way this is done is by considering their insider/outsider status (Couture, Xaidi and Maticka-Tyndale 2012).

Insider/Outsider Status

> *The multiple identities a researcher possesses can cause him/her to be perceived as an insider and outsider simultaneously, which can play a significant role in shaping the interactions between the interviewer and interviewee (Couture, Xaidi and Maticka-Tyndale 2012 p87).*

This quote from Couture et al. neatly summarises the considerations a researcher must undertake in positioning themselves with relation to insider/outsider status. It also identifies that these two positions are not static binaries, nor mutually exclusive. Both needed analysing in reference to the planned research, methods and respondents of this project, and as Couture et al. describe, there should not be a 'dichotomous static division' between the two positions, as they should be considered from a position

of intersectionality. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) describe the insider as someone who shares similar characteristics, roles, and/or experiences with those being studied. Therefore, my positionality as a potential insider needed analysing from two perspectives: as a teacher and as a cisgender gay man.

From my position as a teacher, but not a teacher in the participants' schools, I possessed elements of both insider and outsider status. Being a teacher of 10+ years helped create a mutual respect between myself and the participants. Even though I did not have a direct understanding of how their school operated, I could empathise and understand the pressures and expectations they faced as a teacher. This helped to build rapport, provide legitimacy and a greater understanding of their experiences (Adler and Adler 1987). With some participants there was the benefit of a shared identity, language, and experiential base (Asselin 2003), but there was also the risk of conflating experiences of a broad range of sexual and gender identities. While my experience as a marginalised sexual identity provided opportunities for empathetic understanding, as Stryker (2008) argues, these experiences would be very different from those of a trans person (or even lesbian or bisexual person). She argues the importance of empathy not being used as understanding of participants' lived experiences, where interpretability and presumptions are made in place of asking for further clarifications or justification of a viewpoint. Hayfield and Huxley (2015) further this point by suggesting a disadvantage of insider status is that participants may have high expectations of insider researchers due to their shared positions (or perceived shared positions), placing a responsibility on the researcher to accurately portray the participant's views. There may also be an issue where participants do not share information that they think is a 'given' if the interviewer is an insider. It was therefore up to me as the

researcher to ensure that appropriate questions were asked in the photo elicitation interviews to ensure participants fully verbalised these views. LaSala (2003) also suggests researchers may overlook 'taken-for-granted' key information during the data analysis stage. Regular discussion of findings with my supervisors was an important reflexive step in ensuring oversight of key themes or insights did not occur.

LaSala (2003) argues that participants are more likely to be willing to share their experiences with someone who they feel wants to improve perceptions and understandings of their group. I found this to be true from both my insider perspective as a teacher and as a member of their marginalised group.

> *By maintaining awareness of their insider and outsider roles, and by balancing etic and emic perspectives, lesbian and gay male researchers can ensure that the inherent benefits of the insider position are maximized (LaSala 2003 p27).*

By remaining reflexively aware of my insider/outsider status throughout the process of data collection and analysis, particularly when it changed depending on the participant, I was able to reap the benefits of insider status while reflexively minimising any potential limitations it may have caused.

Data Collected

In total, 12 interviews were completed, 10 of which used photo elicitation. seven of the interviews were face-to-face and five using Zoom (one due to their location, and four due to the Coronavirus lockdown). I was fortunate that all but two participants were able to take photos in their school before the lockdown, so I was able to effectively use my photo-

elicitation research method. For those that were unable to take photos, we used the photo elicitation approach to structure the interview, but instead I asked the teachers to describe specific places they would have taken photos of and their significance. This still worked effectively as a way of structuring the interviews.

In terms of the LGBT+ 'representation' in the sample, there were four gay, two lesbian, two bisexual, two trans and one non-binary teacher. There was also a teacher who did not label her sexuality, but commented if she were to, she would identify as pansexual. In total, there were 11 hours and 17 minutes of interviews, all of which were fully transcribed. The average interview lasted 56 minutes and participants took a total of 68 photos. The scope of the research is shown in table 1.

Pseudonym	Age	LGBT+	Interview length	Photos taken
Amy	61	Trans female	75.41	2
Lucy	54	Did not identity	69.42	10
Nadine	41	Lesbian	64.48	12
Tim	37	Gay	40.53	7
Max	35	Bisexual male	55.3	Unable to
Jenny	33	Non-binary	23.42	5
Raj	33	Gay	59.4	7
Kate	31	Lesbian	44.43	4
James	26	Trans male	57.33	6
Toby	24	Gay	78.94	9
Jack	23	Bisexual male	58.3	6
Alfie	23	Gay	43.56	Unable to
			670.52	**68**

Table 1

Analysis of Data

The data collected took two forms: the interviews and the photographs. Although the photo elicitation was used as a tool to facilitate and enhance the depth of insight in the interviews, it was also important to think about the themes that emerged both implicitly and explicitly from the photos. As discussed, the participants were given a brief of the types of photos to take and then given the freedom to interpret the brief to present their lived experiences. The photos are available in Appendix 1, with specific photos discussed later. However, the photos that were then discussed in the interviews could be broadly categorised with these themes:

- Artefacts promoting LGBT+ inclusivity
- Spaces, situations, or artefacts that made them visible as an LGBT teacher
- Safe spaces (spaces they felt most comfortable as an LGBT+ teacher)
- Unsafe spaces (spaces they felt least comfortable as an LGBT+ teacher)

I then began analysing the themes from the interviews. With 12 interviews, each averaging nearly 20 pages of transcript data, it was important I used a coding system, as earlier discussed. To do this, I used NVivo and initially read through each interview while creating 'nodes' that represented different ideas and themes as they emerged. My literature review had identified a number of key themes that I was looking to evidence, but I also wished to identify the 'unknown unknowns' (Allen 2011). This was particularly true when interviewing participants with

different gender and sexual identities to my own, where my insider status afforded me fewer insights.

After an initial round of analysing and coding each interview to "build a tentative and flexible inductive codebook" (Smith, et al. 2017), I then read through the interviews a second and third time to recode the interviews and refine the themes. The initial codebook can be found in Appendix 2. As discussed, the two most prominent themes were *heteronormativity and visibility*. A second round of coding (Appendix 3) then focussed on the specific discourses within these themes.

Methodology Summary

Collecting the data for this research was a fascinating and humbling experience. Having the opportunity to sit with LGBT+ teachers who were so generous in sharing their time and personal experiences helped me to understand the importance of this research. After the interviews, many participants commented how much they had enjoyed discussing their experiences and how validating they had found the opportunity. To be able to facilitate that was, as Nelson (2020b) describes, a real privilege.

> *This euphoria of connection, of being in on a 'secret', of understanding someone's troubles, and of – in many ways – being invited to help someone feel at ease with their identities was a privilege of this research (Nelson 2020 p7).*

Although the experiences and themes varied significantly, what became clear was just how empowering it was for each LGBT+ teacher to be able to discuss and take ownership of their identity. The subtext to the emancipatory feelings the participants described, was the fact that many schools remain heavily heteronormative spaces and LGBT+ teachers often

do not get to put a voice to their identity. The level of detail and insight each teacher was able to provide demonstrated the considerable time they had spent internalising and intellectualising the challenges and opportunities that presented them as an LGBT+ teacher. The next two chapters will explore this duality of ideas, while discussing the two most prominent discourses to emerge from the research: heteronormativity and visibility.

Chapter Three: Revealing and Disrupting

"It's just another bloody closet to put us in" (Kate)

Heteronormativity is a social construct that despite its discursive power, operates invisibly, often without regard from those complicit in its construction. The literature review positions schools as stubbornly heteronormative environments, where LGBT+ inclusion remains problematic. Through engaging with the participants' lived experiences and analysing the systems and structures that maintain heteronormativity as the dominant discourse within schools, this chapter aims to make the implicit explicit and the invisible visible.

There is great power in naming things. In naming something, we make it real and valid, therefore, open it up to critique. Through language, we can describe, expose and change social reality. This chapter seeks to name and analyse the specific factors that participants felt marginalised them, allowing us to build up a picture of what heteronorms look like, and how these can be challenged to create more inclusive environments. As DePalma and Atkinson (2006) argue, it is important to help "recognise and challenge the heteronormativity implicit in school environments and educational practices" (p334). Although the data reveals many examples of heteronorms and cis-norms, it also reveals examples of more progressive and inclusive practices within schools. Through these examples, we can identify the ways in which norms can be disrupted. We can also analyse whether it is possible for schools to be inclusive spaces for all, or whether LGBT+ individuals are simply accommodated within existing heteronormative structures. This chapter will explore the factors that aid the construction of heteronormativity - I have described these factors as 'forces', allowing us to critique them as tangible entities that

enact a certain force in the production of heteronormative spaces. These are presented under the headings of 'social forces' and 'environmental forces'.

Social Forces

Repetition of Desirability

I begin by examining the ways in which assumptions and beliefs about gender and sexual variance are communicated, as well as what they are communicating. While few of the participants described instances of overt discrimination, they were all able to give examples of times they had felt othered. Analysing the subtext of these examples reveals a great deal about the views that can still exist towards LGBT+ people, particularly as teachers. The repetition of this type of messaging can leave individuals feeling marginalised, as well as contributing to heteronormativity as the dominant discourse.

Lundin (2011) acknowledges the default position of heteronormativity in schools and created a framework to identify the norms that contribute to this. His description of *repetition of desirability* can be employed here to analyse the ways in which cis/heteronorms are verbally (and non-verbally) communicated. Lundin describes norms as activities that are repeated, providing an approach to identify the practices that 'repeat the desirability' of cisgendered heterosexuality, where any deviation is seen as less valid, or even invalid.

'Oh, you'll find the right man, the right man will come along for you' (Kate)

'Oh, you don't look gay, I didn't realise, you don't look gay' (Nadine)

They don't say 'so that person you went on a date with on Saturday… was that a man or a woman?', they just go 'what was he like?' (Max)

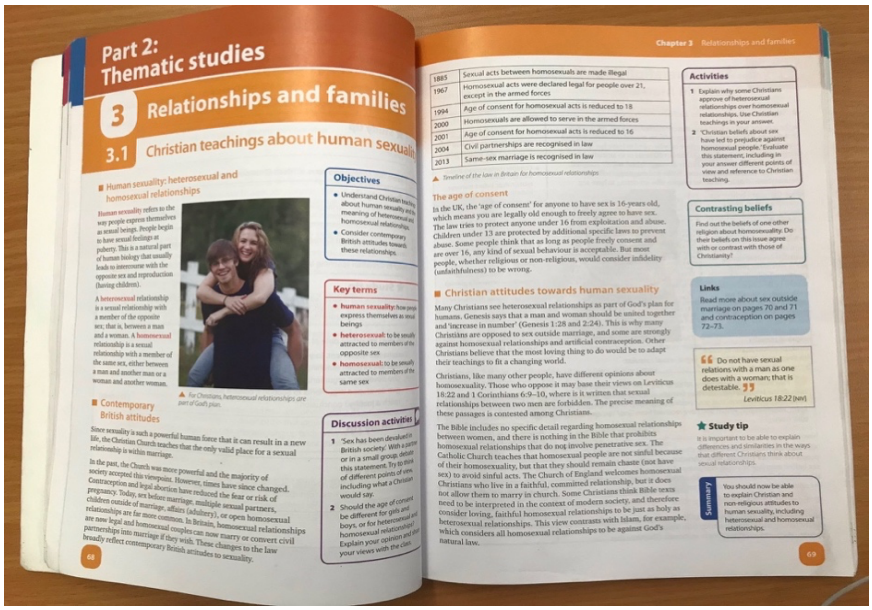
These three quotes demonstrate ways in which comments can reveal attitudes that belittle or diminish. The inference from Kate's quote is that she simply needed the right man to make her heterosexual, and that in some way her sexual identity would be fixed by this. Nadine being told she did not 'look gay' suggests expectations of unhelpful stereotypes, that you should behave in a certain way. Max gave lots of examples in which his bisexuality was invalidated by assumptions that he was either gay, straight, or simply lying.

Taking Lundin's concept of 'repetition of desirability' and framing these 'repeated activities' as microaggressions, helps to conceptualise the ways in which norms are maintained through often well-intended actions and comments, that through repetition, help to sustain a moral hierarchy of good and bad sexual citizen (Seidman 2001). Analysing the participant stories using the microaggression themes discussed in the literature, reveals the attitudes and beliefs that still need to be tackled by schools to create more LGBT+ inclusive environments. It also helps us to develop a contemporary understanding of homonormativity, for example Max was assumed to be gay, which was not met with issue, whereas his actual bisexual identity, was. It could be argued that the term 'microaggression'

does not quite capture the damaging effects of the following incidents, but for the purposes of this analysis, it helps build up a picture of the ways in which LGBT+ identities can be diminished to maintain the dominance of heteronormative narratives.

Toby was a gay RE teacher who spoke with great articulacy about his wish to present greater visibility for LGBT+ identities in his school, yet the difficulty he found in separating the personal and the professional. He had only been at his school for three years and in that time had inadvertently become responsible for the Stonewall School Award and felt a lot of pressure to be the 'ambassador' for LGBT+ inclusion in his school. He had clearly become known for this role, illustrated by a story he shared of a Sixth Former showing round a group of potential students. After seeing him, the student had said to the group "that's Mr so and so, he's in charge of the gays and the lesbians". Toby generally did not mind the surplus visibility the role brought him, but at times felt compromised when having to teach LGBT+ topics in RE.

Toby shared a photo of the GCSE RE textbook to explain how he simultaneously looked forward to, and worried about, covering the topic of 'Christian teachings about human sexuality' with his rowdy year 10 groups. These lessons were an opportunity to


Part 2:
Thematic studies
3 Relationships and families
3.1 Christian teachings about human sexuality
Objectives
Key terms
Discussion activities
Activities
Contrasting beliefs
Links
Study tip
Summary
The age of consent
Christian attitudes towards human sexuality

challenge the views of his students, but he found it personally difficult when students made comments that were not LGBT+ inclusive. As he explained, "it's hard standing there, listening to some viewpoint as if trying to be professional… and not like, take it personally".

> *I remember, it was probably one of the worst lessons I've done, I did it with year 10 last year, and I remember the whole lesson got massively derailed because they were talking about…do you know the Birmingham No Outsiders protests… so one of the kids was like 'Oh yeah, I don't mind gay people, just why do they keep shoving it down our throats… they try and teach kids about gay sex in primary schools' and all of that. I kept on telling them 'no, that's wrong, that's not what they're teaching'.*

This example illustrates both the persistent problematic views that still exist about LGBT+ people, but also the invisible expectations of heterosexuality, placing Toby in a situation he then felt unequipped to deal with. Many participants spoke of similar struggles in navigating situations where the boundaries between personal and professional began to blur, often citing a lack of training in how to deal with the issue. Toby's responsibility as a teacher was to address the topic of homosexual relationships, but he also felt a personal responsibility to address and strongly challenge the beliefs of his students. However, the comments made by students not only managed to reinscribe the heteronorms of the school, but they also positioned Toby as other, making it problematic when students later asked if he were gay.

Two further themes are evident in Toby's experience. First, homosexuality is acceptable ("I don't mind gay people"), so long as it is not included within mainstream or public spheres, or suitability marginal within them

("just why do they keep shoving it down our throats"). Second, that teaching children about LGBT+ lives is inappropriate in school settings because it is deemed 'adult content' ("they try and teach kids about gay sex in primary schools"). Toby's disruption to the heteronorm not only revealed the previously hidden views of some of his students, but it also bled into the wider public sphere as a parent complained the next day.

> *And so, the next day, apparently a parent came… and like was saying that I… that their child's RS teacher was like teaching about gay stuff.*

The irate parent complaining about the teaching of "gay stuff" was addressed by a member of the leadership team who had shown the parent the textbook and lesson content, explaining the aggressive way the parent had behaved when entering the school was not appropriate. After having a clearer understanding about what had happened in the lesson, the parent apologised for how they had behaved. The parent's initial frenzied response to their child being taught about homosexuality demonstrates a hysteria that there are aspects of LGBT+ lives the parent did not want their child to know about. It also supports the view expressed by the student, that in some way students were being indoctrinated through this teaching. Lundin (2011) argues that norms often only become apparent when challenged. Although Toby felt supported by his leadership team in how they handled the parent, as Formby (2013) argues, there needs to be a greater focus on the heteronormative structures that act as catalysts for these types of response, rather than dealing with individual acts, with little relationship to the processes or social structures that created them. The school considered itself progressive and inclusive, including prominent Stonewall campaigns and LGBT+ history month, but examples like this demonstrate

Lundin's (2011) personation theme, which refers to the focus on the marginalised individual instead of the norms that have marginalised them. Toby's examples demonstrate both the overt and covert ways through which heteronormativity is constructed and maintained. Using Sue's (2010) taxonomy of microaggressions, it also reveals some of the attitudes that still exist towards LGBT+ people.

Lucy shared a story that illustrates Sue's (2010) *assumptions of sexual pathology*. Lucy was a teacher and SENCo (special educational needs coordinator) at an all-girls' private school. Lucy did not define her sexuality, although said if she were to, she would identify as pansexual; she lived with her female partner and had been previously married to a man and had two children. She was very open about her identity in school and was highly respected and effective in the ways she challenged norms (discussed later). I asked Lucy if she felt there were any limits to the acceptance of LGBT+ identities in her school, to which she shared a story of taking a student home one day. Lucy had been given permission to take home a child with whom she worked closely in her SENCo role, and even explained how when she had dropped the child off, she had been invited in for a cup of tea. However, the grandmother who the child lived with, later made a complaint to the school.

> *That instance was blown up into my part in grooming this young person and everything that I'd done to that point was all about my taking her home, going into her house… and that was massively distressing for me, and so I was then told… and this is what I'm saying, that it's okay to be yourself until it's not…*
> *And I just thought you know what, if I wasn't gay, would that ever have been levelled at me?*

The accusation of grooming speaks to cultural narratives that conflate LGBT+ identities with perversion and paedophilia (Weeks 1998), a concern Tim and Raj discuss in Chapter Four. Lucy's consideration of whether this claim would have been levelled against her if she were not gay (Lucy refers to herself as gay in discussing this incident) reveals a potential conflation of homosexuality and inappropriate behaviour. Although the complaint was about appropriate behaviour and not sexuality, Lucy believed that sexuality was the subtext. It could be argued that the grandmother (in her 80s) was likely reflecting generational views, but Lucy's bigger frustration was how it had been dealt with by the school. She felt it was done "brutally" and Lucy was told not to have any further contact with the child; it was then not spoken of again. She explained how distressing this was "because I didn't feel like I was understood in that situation, or even believed in a way, and it's all because I was gay". Even though the school did not believe the accusations, Lucy explained that their way of dealing with it had created an admission of guilt. By not addressing it more effectively, they had added credibility to the complaint. Lucy's description, "that it's okay to be yourself, until it's not", gives insight to the limits of homonormative acceptability within the school. Of all the participants, Lucy described her school as the most inclusive, through curriculum, ethos and values. It was a key feature of their reputation, especially as a fee-paying school. However, as soon as Lucy's non-heterosexual identity became a source of tension, the school shut down discussion of the issue, rather than engaging with the implications of such an accusation and considering the impact on Lucy and the wider school culture. Both the incident and the school's refusal to effectively address the issue highlight Sue's (2010) theme of assumptions of sexual pathology or abnormality.

These examples have demonstrated the ways in which sexualities can be subtly othered, maintaining heteronormativity as the natural order. The next example considers the way in which expectations of binary gender roles can be enforced. Nadine's story is explored in more detail in Chapter Four, but of relevance here is a photo she shared of a PE classroom. The photo represents a conversation she had with a colleague with whom she was sharing cover duties for a member of staff who had been off having a knee operation.

She said that she had been telling all of his students that he was off work because he was transitioning, and when he returned, he was no longer going to be called Mister Steve-[surname], but he was now going to be called Mrs Stevie-[surname]. It was a great big joke, telling all of his students that he was transitioning, and he wasn't having the knee surgery at all, and she just thought it was hilarious and perfectly acceptable thing to joke about in a school… and I felt paralysed by that. I was furious, I was shocked, I was angry.

Nadine said, "I desperately want to scream at her that for goodness' sake you can't say that, it's not even a joke", but Nadine was so upset that she had to walk away from the situation. Nadine's emotional response to these transphobic remarks demonstrates the lasting, damaging effects

microaggressions can have; effects often unknown to the person expressing them. It also demonstrates a level of critical awareness that is required to identify and call out acts of oppression, especially when they are framed as jokes. Nadine's critical awareness came from her lived experience as an LGBT+ person, but others may require formal training and a vocabulary in which to identify and challenge these issues. As Turner-Zwinkels, Postmes and van Zomeren (2016) argue, a critical awareness allows us to pinpoint what needs changing (p144).

Not only had the colleague's comments reinscribed cisgender norms, more troublingly, a role model had given permission to a class of students to make fun of gender variance. Teachers are seen by students as an extension or proxy for the school itself, and so in making a joke of the issue of transition, the teacher had contributed to a school culture where transitioning was not to be taken seriously and laughter was the appropriate response. Much like Toby's earlier example, this comment demonstrates a limit to tolerance and acceptance, therefore invalidating those who exist outside of the strict binaries of male/female or gay/straight. The UK's National LGBT Survey (2018) reported that 9% of negative or LGBT-phobic incidents in schools were committed by teaching staff. Nadine's example provides context to what these incidents may look like. In an environment with greater visibility for trans and gender non-conformity, a comment like this may have been less impactful, or in contrast, highlighted it for its inappropriateness. However, with no visibility, comments like this become the dominant discourse and without a counterview, become accepted as the norm. Nadine's school appeared to be one of the least inclusive from the study, highlighted by how many stories of this nature she was able to share. She shared another picture of the Head Teacher's office. Nadine took this photo to demonstrate her unease around leadership; she explained an incident with the former

Head Teacher who had hastily bought a card for her on the last day of term before she got married.

And on the front of that card, that we received in that staff end of term gathering, the front of the card said, 'congratulations on your wedding' and the graphic at the back said 'Mr and Mrs'… it's just so unbelievably thoughtless and insensitive, and just downright stupid. That's just someone who just didn't give a flying monkey… and because of those experiences I had with my previous Head Teacher, I am just now cautious, all the time, in any conversation with senior leadership, I'm just always cautious… and that's not a healthy thing to be.

Constant caution is explored in Chapter Four, but of relevance here is the example of repetition of desirability, reminding Nadine of the expectation for marriage to be between a man and a woman. The incident was no doubt a careless mistake, but from the perspective of Nadine, was another incident that made her feel marginalised and had lasting effects on her relationships with future leadership teams. Nadine's description of caution has links with the theme of *perceived threats* which is also explored in Chapter Four.

The examples that have been explored here provide a small insight into the repeated daily messages that are subtly communicated within schools that maintain cisgender and heterosexual norms. The subtext to many of

these messages reveal attitudes that still exist towards LGBT+ people, that are clearly not being tackled through the schools' basic commitments to the Equality Act (2010). These examples demonstrate the need for a critical awareness to be developed among all staff in order to identify and challenge the unhelpful or dangerous views that keep normative expectations in place.

Language

The language available to both staff and students has the ability to either maintain or disrupt existing conditions. Language that is either discriminatory or not overtly inclusive can continue the othering of LGBT+ identities, ensuring the dominance of heteronormative narratives. As Pellegrini (1992) argues, language determines thought. Thus, it is not possible to think outside of existing norms without the language and understanding to imagine an alternative. Ferfolja (2007) uses Kumashiro (2002) to suggest that schools' privilege certain groups and identities in society while marginalising others, arguing the social order is legitimised through being couched in the language of 'normalcy' and 'common sense' (p149).

Through analysing the language used in schools, a great deal can be revealed about what is implicitly held as 'normal' and 'common sense'. It can reveal how heteronormativity is quietly held in place, without attracting claims of discrimination, using language that is implicitly considered 'normal'. By identifying and naming this language and its implicit meanings, norms can be challenged, making way for a culture and vocabulary that allows norms to be questioned and alternatives to be imagined. The following section identifies some of the uses of language that both upheld and successfully challenged the norms within participants' schools.

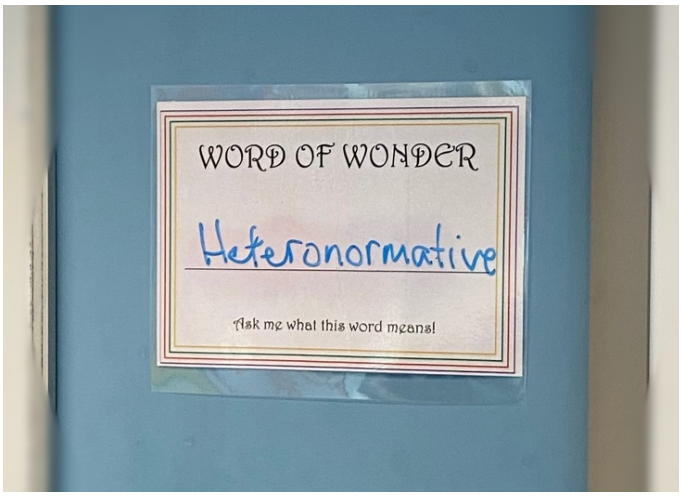
Kate discussed the impact of gendered language, and her dislike of collective terms, such as 'guys' and 'ladies and gentlemen' when teachers address their groups.

> *it just doesn't need much for every member of staff to change or tweak slightly phrases they use. I don't like people addressing entire classes… 'guys', 'let's go guys', 'Ladies and Gentlemen', because… it's gendered, it's a gendered term, it's unnecessary and it's not useful and it's not helpful and it alienates.*
> *So, just awareness of actually what that can mean from the perspective of other people, I think is needed. I think that's how you go about changing it [challenging heteronormativity].*

Much like the earlier microaggressions, the use of 'guys' may seem innocuous to the teacher using it, and a term used without thinking. However, Kate's critical awareness, like Nadine's earlier, saw the potential for this gendered term to alienate students, and as Kate explains, to enforce harmful gender norms. Similarly, Kate identified the impact small changes like gender neutral terms could have in creating more inclusive environments for all. Kate described a conversation she had with students in which they talked about what heteronormativity meant, and the power this had in both naming and discussing it as a concept. In naming it, Kate identified the social expectation of heterosexuality as a 'thing' that is open to interpretation and criticism, and consequently not something that was invisible and to be assumed as the norm. Through this conversation, Kate was developing her students' critical awareness and introducing the concept of a socially constructed reality, one in which they were all agents with the ability to enact change. In discussing the concept and implications of heteronormativity, as Pellegrini (1992) argues, the students were then able to think outside of their previous understandings,

restricted by language. Jack also described the power in naming and discussing socially constructed ideas. His school had a weekly 'Word of Wonder' which was displayed in all classrooms as a focus for discussion.

> *I think discussing heteronormativity is really interesting, because it's such kind of almost a factual thing that everyone is assumed to be straight and the world is kind of heteronormative…*
> *I think it really forces the kids to kind of self-reflect and reflect on their environments, and kids are so kind of malleable and easily impressionable.*
> *I think this, you know, let's discuss this word and discuss what heteronormativity is and how, you know, presumably, how it can be combatted, I think is really, really good.*



The 'Word of Wonder' display literally invited students to ask the teacher what this word meant. This facilitated a way for all members of the school to reflect on and discuss this concept, rather than just leaving it up to LGBT+ teachers. It also provided an opportunity for staff to consider how they contribute to heteronorms, in turn, beginning to develop their own critical awareness. Jack reflected on the effectiveness of this handwritten sign, compared to posters from Stonewall's well known 'Some people are gay, get over it!' campaign. Jack suggested that posters have limited impact after a while, as they stop being seen and do not encourage discussion of the topic, supporting Ferfolja's (2007) view that without

appropriate context, these posters and displays can often be tokenistic. With the teacher being the one to not only write the word, but encourage conversation of it, students got to see their role models engage with the topic and provide the 'real voices' required to challenge heteronormative institutions and present equal citizenship (Plummer 2001). This approach also appears to be a good way to address Ferfolja's critique, that posters often offer no discussion or deconstruction of an issue.

Lucy also spoke of the importance of allowing students to hear the stories and 'real voices' of LGBT+ role models. Lucy explained how she and a colleague led an annual "big gay talk" in PSE with year 9 and 10, where they spoke openly about their relationships, and her colleague showed pictures of her and her wife's wedding. Lucy explained how fascinating students had found this in the first few years and felt it contributed to the inclusive school culture, explaining "I truly believe there isn't shame about young gender and sexuality in our school". Lucy further explained that she felt in recent years, this presentation had started to feel 'passé' and that students were starting to develop a sophistication in talking about sexuality and gender that she had not seen before. She described how students had become fixated with the identity labels of their favourite pop bands and how new terminology such as pansexual and gender-fluid had become important to them in understanding and expressing their identities. Lucy's description of her and her colleague's lesson about their own relationships now seeming passé can be examined through the lens of homonormativity, where these monogamous lesbian relationships were accepted as normal to the point where they seemed uninteresting. This acceptance, bordering upon apathy, could also be analysed through Turner's (2008) concept of reproductive citizenship where the relationship between reproduction and citizenship is considered more important than the relationship between sexuality and citizenship.

For Lucy who had two children, she may have been seen as a homonormatively acceptable citizen in the eyes of the students.

The students' desire to learn a new vocabulary to express a broader range of sexual and gender identities suggests progress in the acceptance of 'traditional' LGBT+ identities. It also suggests that a more sophisticated curriculum and vocabulary may be required to challenge normativity and develop greater inclusion. Max shared a funny story that reflects this passé view. Max had attended the LGBT+ student club for the first time to help, where a student asked him about his sexuality. When Max explained that he was bisexual, the student replied, "fair enough… that's boring".

The individuals in these examples had access to a vocabulary to explore new identities that both disrupted and provided alternatives to the norms available to them in their schools. The challenge moving forward is ensuring this sophistication of thought and language is available to everyone in schools, as most of the positive examples shared in this research were in 'safe' environments such as LGBT+ clubs or classrooms with LGBT+ teachers. This chapter has so far analysed the role of language and its ability to either maintain or disrupt norms. The next section will consider how silence and apathy can keep schools in heteronormative stasis.

Silence and Apathy

Henderson (2019) presents several factors that contribute to the silence surrounding schools and sexualities. Henderson argues that teachers' beliefs of what are and are not appropriate topics for discussion are established as children from their own experiences of school. Henderson uses Britzman (2012) to argue that "teaching is one of the few professions where newcomers feel the force of their own history" (p1).

While there are a generation of teachers beginning to come through that have not known significant LGBT+ adversity, many teachers went to school during eras where LGBT+ topics were surrounded by moral panic and simply not discussed, whether this was the particularly homophobic periods of the 1980s (White, Rory and Bryan 2018) or through the legacy of Section 28. Henderson (2019) argues there is an absence of discussion in professional discourse regarding embodiment of sexual and gender identities. This theme is explored later in Chapter Four, but here helps to build a picture of some of the reasons why schools may intentionally or unintentionally fail to address LGBT+ inclusion in a meaningful way. Many of the participants identified silence as a contributing factor to the heternormativity of their school. Most participants thought the lack of LGBT+ inclusion stemmed from ambivalent or apathetic attitudes from leadership teams, however, two of the participants, Kate and James, worked in Catholic schools where their silence was expected and enforced. Their stories are explored in more detail in Chapter Four, but in this example, James is talking about his experience of starting at a new school after having recently transitioned.

> *Yes, so I went from working in a school in London where I was Miss Smith and then I was coming to this school as Mr Smith, so they said it's not, it's not an issue for us to have you here at all, that's not what they're saying, but it's not something that you will be speaking about to pupils. So, I brought it up, but they had already prepared an answer which was 'you won't talk about'.*
> *the staff were told as well, to shut down any conversations about transgender issues. Again, I think out of protection, but also perhaps they are worried about a parent backlash or something.*

The mixed messaging that James received created a cognitive dissonance. On one hand, the school was reassuring James that being a transgender teacher was "not an issue", and he was a member of staff like any other. Simultaneously, he and other colleagues were forbidden from discussing the topic. In addressing the staff and telling them "you won't talk about it", the school leadership team had made James a taboo topic, where his acceptance was conditioned upon silence. This silence othered James and positioned him as a source of constant tension, where his embodiment contradicted and challenged the beliefs of the school that he represented. The necessity for James' school to shut down discussion of transgender topics (or in Kate's later example, where she was forced to sign an NDA about her sexuality) demonstrates a level of control required to maintain these fragile 'norms' and to prevent a challenge to the status quo. These examples highlight the ways in which schools carefully control narratives that sustain heteronormative and cisnormative ideals. The earlier section discussed the importance and potential transformational power of language. Conversely, through forbidding the use of LGBT+ language and discussion, the school was preventing exploration of alternatives to the existing norms. This example also reveals the gatekeepers of power within a school. In James' example, he suggested the school's motivation for shutting down discussion of the topic was the fear of potential parent backlash. This was a theme shared in an example by Alfie.

Alfie was a teacher who, in his words, thought it was 'obvious' he was gay. Alfie had been praised by leadership for being an openly and vocal gay member of staff that acted as a role model for students.
Despite this praise, Alfie's visibility was simultaneously problematised. Alfie's school had a large percentage of Muslim students, and he described the "fear" of some SLT and members of staff who thought his

visibility as a gay teacher may cause problems with parents. In this example, a colleague is talking to him about an upcoming parents' evening.

> *She was like 'are you concerned about parents saying anything about it?', and they said, in their opinion, that I should have almost like a rebuttal planned, or something like, so I can say something about it. It then led to another member of my department being involved in talking about it, and they were like 'I would just say that you wouldn't speak about it', and stuff like that, which isn't very me, like if they asked me if I was gay or anything like that, I would be very honest with them.*

Alfie is being reminded that there are limits to the acceptance of his sexuality, and that he should in some way be ready to defend or shut down discussion of it. This example illustrates the powerful invisibility of heteronormativity, where heterosexual sexuality remains assumed, yet "the whisper of another possibility is inevitably constructed as a scream" (Atkinson and DePalma 2008 p33). The leadership team in Alfie's school were happy to have him as a gay role model within the sphere of the school, but once this sphere widened to include parents, it was then deemed appropriate to silence the topic. Alfie seemed to be experiencing a limited level of acceptance within the school's existing heteronormative structure, rather than true inclusivity, which speaks to a school's multiple audiences and spaces. Heterosexuality provides frictionless movement between spaces in a school. In this example, the inclusion and acceptance of homosexuality was place, time, and audience specific, reminding Alfie that his visibility as a gay teacher had to be context appropriate. This also implies that LGBT+ identities can be switched on and off in some way. A future research question might be, not are schools' inclusive of LGBT+

staff, but rather, when and where are they inclusive of LGBT+ staff. It is telling how quickly the support of the leadership team waned when the interests of their LGBT+ staff came into conflict with their 'stakeholders'. Alfie said that in reality the concerns were for nothing as there were no problems at the parents' evening, but the *perceived threat* (discussed shortly), much like in James' example, was the motivation enough for the school to silence the topic.

These examples have demonstrated the ways in which silence can be actively enforced within schools. In contrast, many participants felt it was passivity that created the culture of silence within their schools, as demonstrated by these quotes.

> *And I just don't think many teachers see that as a priority, ever. And to be fair, teachers have so much on their plates (Jack).*
>
> *There is no plan and structure in place for diversity… there just isn't one. There is just nothing (Nadine).*
>
> *I didn't know of any [LGBT+ teachers]; it was just something you didn't hear about (Amy).*
>
> *I just think it's not represented at all, not at all (Tim).*
>
> *I don't know maybe it's just because, obviously some people, like, they also do have really busy roles (Toby).*

These quotes help build a picture of the difficulties of making LGBT+ inclusion a central aspect of a school's culture, where it is often simply not a priority. Even though schools may claim cultures of inclusivity, the fear of LGBT+ moral panic combined with the fact that LGBT+ identities

can often be invisible compared to other protected characteristics, often leads to LGBT+ inclusion becoming an afterthought. Nadine reflected upon the importance of having diversity in leadership teams to tackle this.

> *I think amongst certain members of staff, I'm thinking about the senior leadership team and the pastoral heads of years and things like that, many of them are white, middle class males, who just think 'well it's 2020, we've got equality, why do we have to make a big deal of it anymore?'.*

Nadine's description of a leadership team who assumed their school was already LGBT+ inclusive, suggests a lack of critical awareness surrounding the topic and reflects many of the leadership teams discussed in this research. Leadership teams that assume their schools are inclusive and therefore do not need to actively address LGBT+ inclusion create cultures of silence. Nadine further reflected on how this silence and absence continued heteronormative expectations.

> *Well, we need to make a big deal out of it because people are lost and helpless and isolated, and they don't see anyone around them like them, it's the invisible minority, and it's invisible because management made no attempt to make it less than invisible. So yes, it's reinforced by the absence of anything other than [heteronormativity].*

Making a characteristic such as sexuality visible, compared to others such as race, can be difficult, and therefore easier to ignore. All the participants recognised the importance of this, as was overwhelmingly reflected through their photo elicitation. In response to being asked to take photos of the spaces and aspects of school that made them feel safe,

the participants took dozens of photos featuring rainbows and inclusive messages.

The participants talked at length about the significance of these artefacts and their importance in making them feel seen and included within their schools. Toby talked about a colleague that had given him a pride badge (top right photo).

> *It was actually a member of staff who is gay who gave me that badge and it's something I wore around my lanyard, and it just reminded me that in those moments when… so for example, if I was in class and a pupil said something that I did maybe find I did take a bit too personally, looking at that, that all the staff are super supportive… like we are all working together with pride.*

The significance of the badge to Toby was great. Not only was it a way of making himself visible as an LGBT+ teacher to be a role model to others, but it also gave him the confidence to address LGBT+ issues in the classroom. The badge reminded Toby that when met with challenging views in the classroom, he would be supported by his colleagues. This badge, as well as the other examples in these photos, are important emblems in creating LGBT+ visibility. Each of these examples can interrupt and challenge heteronormativity and create moments of 'degrounding' (discussed later). These moments create opportunities in which alternatives to the norm can be presented and discussed, where the invisible can be made visible, and students and staff can explore a language in which to think outside of the existing conditions. When considering the potential impact this visibility can have, it needs to be framed within the wider culture of the school. The badge was of particular significance to Toby as it represented a culture of support and inclusion that he received within the school. Other examples such as the Stonewall posters could have limited impact, as discussed by Jack, if presented in isolation to the rest of a school's heteronormative culture. In these instances, the status quo threatens to minimise and undermine the effectiveness of visibility such as posters, rendering them tokenistic.

The first half of this chapter has explored the social and often invisible forces that sustain heteronormativity, as well as identifying ways in which these can be named and challenged to develop greater inclusivity. The next section will explore how a school's physical environment can augment the view that heteronormativity is the normal and natural order.

Environmental Forces

Toilets

Analysing the aspects of schools that are predicated upon gender helps to identify some of the structural factors that help maintain the norms and expectations of cisgendered bodies. It also highlights the necessity for students and teachers to have a static, binary gender to fully participate within school life. As Butler (2004) theorises, those that do not fit into fixed gender binaries are unintelligible and thus can be dehumanised. The most common example of where this can occur is gendered toilets. Almost all the teachers in this study discussed toilets, whether from their own discomfort in using them, or through discussing the impact they had upon students. Although there were many examples of progressive practices throughout the interviews, toilets remained one of the most problematic issues in all schools. Toby explained the problematic nature of toilets in reference to a trans student; he also identified the ease with which the issue could be resolved.

> *I was talking to one teacher about it, we were talking about the toilet thing, because we have male toilets and female toilets, and they're two separate corridors, and they were saying 'oh yeah, they could just go to the disabled one'… I don't think that's inclusive; I think that's just us being 'oh, just use this one then'.*
> *It wouldn't be hard to change, we have single occupancy toilets for the sixth form, you could just take the signs off and put 'toilet'.*

This is another example of a norm being made visible, highlighting the subliminal conditioning gendered spaces produce. Slater, Jones and Procter (2018) argue that toilets act as 'civilising sites' in which children learn that disabled and queer bodies are out of place (p951). Toby's

conversation with a colleague offers insight into how easily non-cisgendered bodies can be othered ("just go to the disabled one"); a reminder that certain bodies do not belong. In encouraging LGBT+ students to use the disabled toilets, it may also out them, or make them more visible than they are comfortable with. Slater, Jones and Procter further argue that these 'civilising processes' then lead to fear, shame and embarrassment that these children learn to feel about their bodies.

> *For all bodies, the permanent structure of the public washroom represents a very potent and living practice of gender regulation and punishment (Ingrey 2012 p799).*

The message received from 'permanent structures' such as toilets is that the individual is the problem, not the environment that maintains the cisgender, binary norms. Ingrey describes the effect of gendered toilets as one of regulation and punishment and speaks to Formby's (2013) critique, that schools often deal with the individual as a problem that needs to be solved, rather than considering the relationship between the processes or social structure that created the issue.

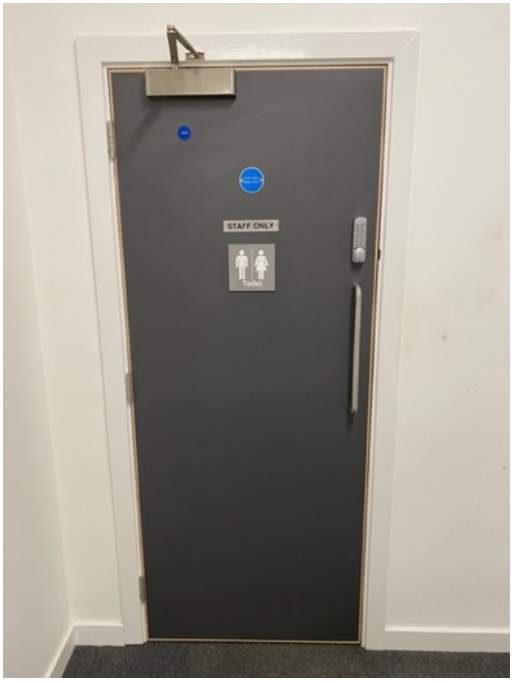
The data not only produced several examples of gendered toilets being a source of tension for LGBT+ students, many of the teachers themselves took photos to represent their experiences. Nadine took a photo of the staff toilet to represent a space she felt uncomfortable within school.

> *I absolutely hate it, I absolutely hate. It's, I just don't feel like I have any privacy there, and it's somewhere I feel I need privacy; I feel very vulnerable there, and I avoid it at all costs…*
> *I wouldn't say I was entirely cisgendered and I feel much safer, much happier, much less vulnerable, when in an isolated toilet…*

Nadine's description of not feeling entirely cisgendered, highlights the discomfort gendered spaces can produce. Nadine explained how she avoided this toilet at all costs, and depending on where she was in the school, would seek out a single occupancy toilet. Nadine's daily experience was one of discomfort and vulnerability when using the toilets; a daily reminder that her own experience of gender was not one that was recognised by the school. Nadine's discomfort also speaks to Robinson's (2016) argument, that sexual minorities that cannot or will not conform to "congruent gender roles" (p1) receive fewer rights and privileges than those who do, in this case, spaces to feel safe and included.

Davies, Vipond and King (2019) argue that gendered toilets create an atmosphere of gender policing and regulation where individuals analyse and regulate the gender performances of others (p868). While this may not be an issue for cisgender teachers whose gender is validated in these spaces (discussed by transgender teacher James later), it is invalidating for teachers who do not conform to rigid expectations of gender. Jack

shared a photo of a unisex staff toilet at his school and the significance of this to him.



> *When I saw it, I was… I feel so much more comfortable, as a kind of, a queer teacher, I feel so much more comfortable knowing that they've acknowledged that… you know, it's important to some people.*

Jack was cisgender and said he had no problem using the men's toilets, but recognised the significance of this space, and the message that it conveyed. Jack considered the discomfort trans or gender non-conforming staff may experience in spaces such as the toilets. He explained how something as simple as this promotes inclusion and, despite the gendered symbols used, diminishes the need for a binary gendered body to access basic facilities, something that would be important for a non-binary teacher such as Jenny. Some of the participants that taught in newer buildings had explained that, although toilets were still often gendered, they were now designed to be more open plan with cubicles and less of a sense of segregation. This is an important step in creating more inclusive environments, where permanent structures can be positively used as 'civilising sites' to promote inclusivity.

Uniform and Staff Dress Code

Examining uniform through the lens of Butler's (2006) theory that gender is performative and therefore socially constructed, allows us to apply a critical perspective to the role uniform plays in maintaining fixed ideas of gender within schools.

> *Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gender (Butler 2006 p162).*

Although Butler identifies bodily gestures, movements and styles as key factors contributing to an individual's performativity of gender, clothing must also be considered within this presentation. This is especially true when enforced gendered clothing may be at odds with an individual's gender identity, as explored shortly. Uniform is, therefore, a contributing factor in the performativity of gender, and using uniform policies, schools can dictate the ways in which gender roles are expected to be presented. The fragility of norms was discussed earlier, illustrated with the example of James' school forbidding discussion of his transition. Here, uniform presents another example, where policy is required to ensure staff exhibit and uphold the gender norms of the school. Nadine earlier described her discomfort as someone who did not feel "entirely cisgendered'" in using the women's toilets. She also reflected upon the messaging of the school's uniform policy.

> *I even find that the staff uniform policy, the staff dress code policy, I find that offensive, I find it so… so white middle class 1950s, I just*

find it so repulsive that our staff dress code says that gentleman should wear ties and ladies' knitwear should be smart… and it's like…ladies' knitwear! Aren't gentlemen allowed to wear knitwear? Can't ladies wear ties?

Nadine's frustration at the prescriptive nature of the school uniform policy reveals how limiting and controlling such policies are. In being so specific in the expectations of both male and female uniform, the school was providing no opportunities for these norms to be challenged or explored. Unlike staff, students do not have to interpret a dress code in quite the same way as they have a prescribed set of clothing. The ways in which schools minimise the importance of bodies, particularly children's bodies, is explored later. However, of relevance here is how a uniform that is designed to create equality among students and minimise the importance of the body, can actually draw attention to a student with incongruent gender presentation. Lucy described the damaging impact that her school's PE uniform had on one female student at her all-girls' school. She shared a photo of the school hall, explain how exposing it was for students, like being on stage for all to see.

…and the kinds of things that you have to wear, these ridiculously short skirts for netball and these really tight-fitting vest tops…it is not inclusive in any shape or form. I've got a girl…and she is

> *really androgynous…she has to get dressed into this ridiculous outfit, just to play netball, and you see she's finding ways to make it okay so she'll have like a long sleeved under layer on and a pair of jogging bottoms and then will put this ridiculous dress on top, because she wants to play but she can't unless she wears this stupid garment.*

In this example, the school's netball uniform has communicated a clear norm, that the school expected a particular form of cisgendered femininity from all their students. The student's need to wear jogging bottoms and a long-sleeved layer exposed her as an exception to the norm, which was only magnified in the space of the sports hall. Like the panoptic spaces discussed later, the student's difference was visible for all to see, communicating that her performativity of gender was in some way wrong. Although this experience was no doubt humiliating for the student, it does highlight how easily expectations of gender can be destabilised, when the repeated acts required to constitute a particular form of gender are challenged. Butler describes how the occasional 'discontinuity of acts' can reveal how fragile and socially constructed understandings of gender are, allowing for possibilities of 'gender transformation'.

> *The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional discontinuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this "ground." The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic repetition (Butler 2006 p162).*

Jack explained a situation where a 'discontinuity of acts' allowed for a positive conversation to be facilitated about gender in the classroom. Jack explained how on a non-uniform day, a male student had taken the opportunity to dress in a "gender-fluid" way, interrupting the repeated gendered acts his school uniform usually presented. Jack explained how when a classmate had asked the student "why do you wear those kinds of clothes?", it had opened a conversation to the class that the teacher facilitated, where they explored their understandings of gender and gendered expectations. Atkinson and DePalma (2009) explore the importance of "unintelligible genders and sexualities creating crucial moments of degrounding" (p21), explaining that these opportunities are crucial in disrupting the continuations of norms and 'disorganising the consent' that is required to keep them as the dominant narrative. Atkinson and DePalma also argue that these opportunities are fleeting, where 'sedimented meaning' i.e., existing beliefs and understanding, threaten to reorganise the consent required for norms to continue. By facilitating this conversation that had been allowed to emerge due to a non-uniform day, the teacher has created a moment of degrounding in which concepts of gender could be explored. However, the 'sedimented meaning' may have quickly reinstated the status quo once the students had left the room or were back in regular school uniform the next day, highlighting the importance of a whole school approach.

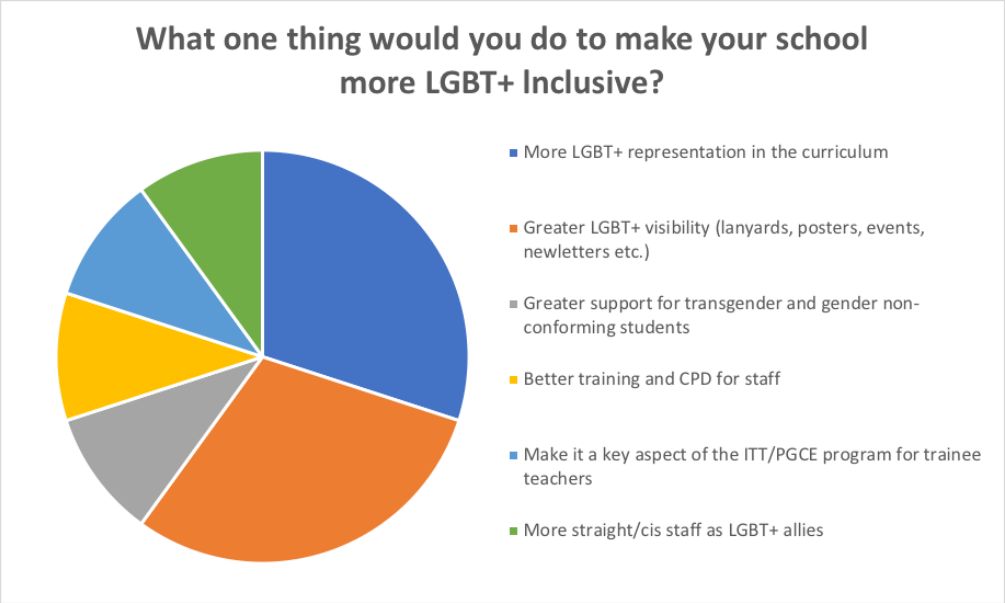
Kate described how as part of a project to develop LGBT+ inclusivity in her school, she had visited a local school with a strong reputation for LGBT+ inclusion. Although the school proclaimed a huge number of LGBT+ inclusive practices and proudly celebrated its Stonewall gold award, they refused to advertise their gender-neutral uniform on the website (a requirement for the gold award). The schools' uniform policy was highly gendered, referring to blouses and headbands for girls, and

garments that were only to be worn by boys. The school did offer a gender-neutral uniform which met the requirement of the gold award but chose not to advertise it on the school website as they felt it 'not appropriate for their school' and feared it may create a backlash from parents. Only a handful of schools in the country had Stonewall gold status, marking them as among the most inclusive. Yet their refusal to advertise a gender-neutral uniform demonstrated a limit to acceptance, contributing a further example of tolerance for LGBT+ individuals within existing structures, rather than true inclusivity and integration.

Like toilets, uniform is another physical, tangible aspect of school that enforces binary ideas of gender and communicates that these are not to be mixed or transgressed. Uniform policies force both teachers and students to enact a form of gender that they be uncomfortable with, while simultaneously upholding the binary norms that may constrain them. Butler (2006) and Atkinson and DePalma (2009) help us to identify ways in which more inclusive practices can be developed, and as Atkinson and DePalma argue, teachers should be constantly searching for these moments of degrounding (p23).

Curriculum

At the end of each interview, I asked each participant this question.



The biggest response was to have more LGBT+ representation within the curriculum. The Department for Education (2019) recently announced that schools should have a greater focus on gender and sexual identities within their sex and relationships education (SRE) curriculum, but schools were free to determine how they implemented this. This vague instruction meant that a school's interpretation of the guidance would be influenced by the leadership teams within schools which, as discussed, could lead to a maintenance of the status quo if these reforms were implemented tokenistically. The lack of clarity surrounding the SRE reforms may also lead to staff being unsure of their rights and responsibilities in addressing LGBT+ inclusion in the classroom. In the absence of LGBT+ inclusivity being woven through the curriculum, students are more likely to learn from experience or from their peers within the 'hidden curriculum' (Formby and Donovan 2020). As Smith (2015) argues, the hidden curriculum does not just include what students learn outside of the

classroom, it is also what is learned in the classroom, whether through inference or absence.

The number of participants that identified curriculum as one of the biggest barriers to greater LGBT+ inclusivity, highlights the role curriculum plays in maintaining and disrupting norms. Jack shared an example that simultaneously highlights the ease with which heterosexuality can be addressed in the formal curriculum, and the difficulty in addressing alternative sexualities, relegating them to the hidden curriculum. Jack described his teacher training year when he was team teaching Shakespeare to a group and they were discussing Shakespeare's biography, as part of which, the teacher explained that Shakespeare was married and had a wife. After the lesson, Jack had asked the teacher why they had not mentioned that Shakespeare was rumoured to be bisexual and his relationship with the Earl of Southampton was understood to inspire some of his works.

> *When I asked the teachers, a couple of them were just like, 'I'd literally never thought of that'… my mentor was actively like 'why would we do that? It's not relevant for like GCSE and that's why we're teaching the module'.*

This quote exemplifies Snapp, et al.'s (2015) view that teachers often miss opportunities to teach an inclusive curriculum. Jack realised this was a missed opportunity, arguing that context was vital in English, and through exploring Shakespeare's identity, deeper meaning could be drawn from his texts. The response from the teachers and Jack's mentor underscores the challenges of promoting greater inclusivity; that for many, it is simply not a priority or something they think about on a day-to-day basis. So entrenched is heteronormativity that Jack's mentor saw

addressing his wife as relevant and appropriate, but discussion of his sexuality as irrelevant and inappropriate.

Max discussed the importance of normalising LGBT+ content in lessons, but also ensuring that it is not just up to the LGBT+ staff.

> *I think probably like I seem to get away with mentioning gay stuff in my lesson, I think it would be nice to see it done in every lesson, as every lesson has a different perspective and has its part to play in acceptance. I think it can be done more subtly. Like with Alan Turing, rather than saying 'this guy was gay!', we don't need to do that, it's a part of him. I don't think the kids needs that; they know what they think. They just want the facts and to be asked what they think and have a discussion. Often when it comes to subjects like this, they just want to talk, rather than be talked at. I'd say probably some of the best conversations I've had with students are like that, where you just let them speak. They come up with the questions, you don't need to ask kids questions.*

Max is identifying the importance of creating opportunities to bring LGBT+ content into lessons but also identifies that this has a greater impact when it is introduced through the informal curriculum (akin to Shakespeare's wife). This approach allows students to infer that it is normal and every day, and not an issue that should only be addressed as a formal 'topic' in an SRE curriculum. Embedding LGBT+ content within curriculum, rather than as a topic that needs to be taught as a stand-alone 'issue', is important. As Snapp, et al. (2015) suggest, teaching stand-alone LGBT+ lessons can alienate LGBT+ students, or create a visibility they may not be comfortable with. This is especially true when LGBT+ inclusion is not supported holistically in the school. Many

participants identified the absence of LGBT+ content in the curriculum as a barrier to inclusivity. Participants also reflected upon the messaging that was communicated when the curriculum did address issues of sex and sexuality.

> *You're preparing these kids for having sex, but you're not preparing queer kids for it (Jack).*

> *When we do SRE there is zero reference within the schemes of work on how to maintain healthy sexual lives as LGBT people (Nadine).*

> *I've sat in the kind of 'straight' SRE lessons, and God they are tedious, the old condom on the phallus (Lucy).*

> *There was nothing in the PSHE, nothing in the sex and relationships stuff, there was just absolutely nothing, nothing at all, no visibility (Kate).*

Drawing upon the sexual and reproductive citizenship literature, we can analyse how the absence of teaching about sex outside of heterosexual, penetrative sex, communicates the message that sex is only for heterosexual, cisgender people, with the aim of procreation. The informal curriculum is once again teaching students that non-heterosexual sex is not an appropriate topic for discussion in the public sphere of school (Plummer 2001), and thus, respectable citizens are to be ones that have heterosexual sex with the intention of reproduction. Even when the focus of sex education is birth control, the narrative of sex is still centred around the reproductive citizen (Turner 2008). It could also be inferred that thorough only teaching about safe sex in the context of heterosexual or reproductive sex, students are beginning to learn that in society, there

is a hierarchy of citizen based upon their sexual and reproductive practices.

The new changes to the SRE curriculum have the potential to disrupt the heteronorms that the current curriculum enforces, allowing a space to present different and equal forms of citizenship. However, as identified by almost all the participants, these changes need to be accompanied by broader inclusion of LGBT+ identities within both the formal and hidden curriculum to be effective.

Summary

This chapter has revealed systems and structures that both construct and maintain the cis/heteronormativity inherent within schools. It has also identified the ways in which the production of these spaces can be disrupted to challenge dominant discourse and provide new, alternative ways of thinking. The findings from this research support the existing literature that presents schools as stubbornly heteronormative environments. However, the findings also identify the ways in which some schools are starting to challenge norms and present greater inclusivity for LGBT+ identities. The examples of good practice in this work have largely been led by LGBT+ teachers and demonstrate a need for leadership teams to see the importance of this work for it to have significant impact. The fragility with which norms are held in place has also been considered, highlighting just how easily the production of cis/heteronormative spaces can be interrupted within schools. Crucial to this is identifying the motivations or causes for these norms being held in place to begin with, whether apathy, fear, time, or lack of expertise. Once this is understood, it may then be possible to identify and challenge the practices that limit

the full inclusion of non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities within school.

Although there are some examples of good practice within these stories, the overall message is that LGBT+ teachers are still being accepted within the existing heteronormative structures of their schools, rather than experiencing true inclusivity and integration. With many schools still being experienced as heteronormative environments, LGBT+ teachers are presented with a difficult decision. Whether to be highly visible in contrast to the norms of their school or remain invisible and contribute to the culture that renders them invisible. The weight of this decision is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Under the Spotlight

"Sir, can you be a transgender RE teacher?" (James)

The literature review identified the difficult relationship that has always existed between schools and sexuality (Ferfolja 2007, Epstein 1998, DePalma and Atkinson 2006) and while the findings from my research support this, they also provide a message of hope and progress. The data from this study tells two key stories. One is just how powerful an LGBT+ teacher identity can be, while in parallel, the other considers the challenges of bringing embodied discussions of gender and sexuality into the classroom. The interplay of these two ideas ran through many of the interviews and speaks to a number of discourses of LGBT+ inclusion in education. The data demonstrates limited evidence of explicit LGBT-phobia; the context to most of the discussion was how teachers positioned their identities in relation to the inherent heteronormativity of their schools.

The 12 participants demonstrated the entire gamut of visibility as explored in the literature review, from teachers that preferred to, or in one case were forced to, keep their LGBT+ identity hidden, to teachers for whom being LGBT+ was a core aspect of their professional identity. There was a real variety of views and experiences, but the one commonality was the dilemma of deciding whether to be out with students and the lack of guidance, support and education in how to go about this. All the participants had clearly spent a long time considering this through their career, thinking about the best ways to navigate this decision. Connell's (2015) research with LGBT+ teachers mirror the shift in perceptions that can happen when a teacher comes out.

> *Coming out brings a new dimension into teachers' relationships with students, where they suddenly become "the gay teacher." "What used to be seen as strengths," she explained, "are suddenly interpreted as 'dyke-ness.'" She complained that students are distracted by this new information and that they focus on asking personal (and invasive) questions about her sexuality, rather than on their work (Connell 2015 p132).*

Connell's quote suggests an immediate vulnerability that comes from being "the gay teacher" and helps illustrate the fear some teachers may feel in being visible. While the data suggests some evidence of this, this quote offers a useful counterview to what some teachers in this study also observed: coming out enhanced, rather than eroded, their strengths as a teacher. The initial 'distraction of new information' can quickly become a learning opportunity and a chance for LGBT+ teachers to form stronger, more meaningful relationships with their students.

The literature review looked at two key concepts of visibility. Patai (1992) theorised the binary visibility that minority groups can hold, either invisible or hyper-visible, what she described as 'surplus visibility'. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) extended this metaphor, describing different types of visibility: passing, bordering, and polluting. Many of the teachers in this study spoke of how during their teaching career, their desire to be more visible had changed and evolved. Therefore, conceptualising Patai and Pallotta-Chiarolli's concepts of visibility as an evolving continuum would be a good way to consider how visible each teacher felt they were able to be in different contexts. It could be argued that being 'just' visible should be on this continuum, but as DePalma and Atkinson argue, when in heteronormative school environments, this is difficult to do. This view is explored further in the conclusion.

> *LGBT teachers are denied the powerful position of simple visibility, a third option reserved only for the majority group (DePalma and Atkinson 2009 p887).*

Patai (1992) and Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2010) conceptualisations of visibility will help frame discussion of the factors that affected how visible teachers felt they were able to be in different situations and environments. In this study, there were teachers that were at binary ends of the visibility spectrum who had to consciously present or conceal their identity daily, but even for them, to 'assign' a specific type of visibility would be reductive and remove nuance from the lived experiences their photos and interviews provided. As such, discussion of the forms of visibility participants were able to present should be read as context specific moments in time, highlighting the continual social navigation that being LGBT+ can require. The photo elicitation interviews were all a presentation of how each of these LGBT+ teachers storied their own lives, and as such, they only shared specific insights. While these insights cannot reveal the full lived experience of each teacher, what they can do is reveal what each teacher considered important in terms of how visible they were able to be. The literature helps us to conceptualise the range of visibility the teachers in this study were able to present. For some, being visible was a very purposeful decision where they wanted to be a role model and to help change and improve their school. Others felt the need to address a situation that was evident e.g., a camp gay teacher, or a trans teacher recently transitioning; Connell refers to this as the "glass closet" (Connell 2015 p99). For some, the decision to 'conceal' their LGBT+ identity was simply easier, or in one case, decided for them. The richness of these stories will be explored in this chapter, as I provide an analysis of four key factors that teachers felt affected their ability to be visible, while also trying to capture how powerful an LGBT+ identity can

be. These sections are titled: The Embodied LGBT+ Teacher; Gay Male Teachers and Masculinity; Perceived Threats and Panoptic Spaces; and Relationships and Monosexism.

The Embodied LGBT+ Teacher

> *Standing in front of a class of 30 students is being highly visible. The first thing on display and noticed by students and staff when entering a school or a classroom as a student teacher is not the trainee's subject knowledge, dedication to teaching or caring attitude towards young people, it is their body and appearance (Braun 2011 p275).*

Braun's study with new teachers and their concern of what an embodied teacher should look like helps illustrate a key theme to emerge from the interviews. The bodies of teachers tend to be fairly invisible in education (O'Loughlin 2006), yet were a prominent theme in the discussion of LGBT+ visibility. Not just the body; voice, behaviour, mannerisms, and dress were all key considerations in the performativity of a teacher. For some it was important their bodies and behaviour were congruent with heteronormative expectations, for others, their difference was a source of empowerment. Other than perhaps a dress code policy, there is limited concern for the presence of teachers' bodies in school. As Paechter (2004) and Wolkowitz (2006) theorise, these types of occupation are often concerned with the mind rather than the body, and as such, the importance of the body is minimised.

As described in the literature review, sexuality, and to a lesser extent, gender, can be an invisible difference; one that can often be made visible by choice. The consideration of how the participants embodied the role of a teacher speaks to a series of discourses around expected gender roles,

hegemonic masculinity and the challenging of social norms. The teachers that 'passed' as straight or cisgender, had a real difference in experience and perception to those who were 'visibly' LGBT+ and felt the need to address their difference. The teachers for whom it was, to some extent, necessary to address their LGBT+ identity, present views that challenge Connell's (2015) description of LGBT+ identity being a source of weakness or vulnerability.

James was a 26-year-old RE teacher who had recently transitioned. He had returned to work at the Catholic school he attended as a child, after recently having had surgery. James' body was initially a source of tension within his school, and he was told not to address his gender identity with students, as this would be at odds with Catholic teachings. James' recent surgery and ongoing testosterone treatment had placed his gender presentation in a state of flux. Despite presenting as male in dress and name, it was still visibly obvious to many that James was transitioning. This put James in a difficult position as he had been clearly instructed not to discuss his identity, yet he felt it necessary to address his body that induced questions about gender (Reimers 2020). He shared a photo to explain how he had addressed this.

When I first got into school this year, because I'd had surgeries, I think it was the first four weeks, to get to know my classes, they could just ask anything. So, they would put their questions

> *folded up in a box, and one of the first questions that came out with my new year 9 class was 'can you be a transgender RE teacher?'. Because they knew, and so I kind of explained it. 'yes, yes you can'.*

James felt not addressing the situation would undermine his ability to form strong relationships with his groups. James took it upon himself to address the issue in a proactive and positive way. It allowed students to ask personal questions, whilst he controlled the conversation by vetting them as they were selected. He felt this was an important way of being visible, addressing misconceptions, and building relationships with groups. By sharing personal information with his groups, he was able to gain trust and a sense of credibility very quickly, that if left unaddressed would have continued to place his body as a source of tension against the cisgender expectations of a Catholic School. James' self-imposed necessity to address his gender with his group was a potentially risky decision, especially to go against the wishes of the school, but for him, allowed him to challenge his students' expectations of what an embodied teacher, especially an RE teacher, should look like. Braun (2011) also theorises that 'traditional' embodiments of teachers are ultimately superficial and could potentially "be ignored if authority and identity in school is available through other channels, such as respect given because of knowledge" (p284). James' visibility as a trans teacher provided an opportunity to achieve "authority and identity" in a way unavailable to others, and for him, was a platform in which to challenge the existing structures, using polluting visibility.

Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) defines polluting visibility as a metaphor for "strength, agency and empowerment" (p62). Pallotta-Chiarolli identifies the necessity for this type of visibility in disrupting existing structures and ways of thinking to create emergent and empowering systems and

structures, similar to how Butler (1993) describes the necessity of embracing surplus visibility to become representatives of marginalised groups in order to enact change. While these descriptions of visibility may sound combative and potentially hostile, James described how he had been able to use his visible identity as a trans teacher to very gently, but very radically, pollute and progress the culture of his school. James was able to present a duality of ideas in which he could teach Catholic beliefs, yet still present his own identity as a trans male, enabling him to develop his "authority and identity". The success of his approach was evidenced by an example of the students empathising with him as a trans male, when asking if he could be a Catholic Priest.

> *And they were like 'what if you identified as a man or what if you're transgender?' and I was like 'you wouldn't be allowed to be a priest because the church says that you're technically still a woman, and they're like 'no, that's not fair' and I'm like 'I know, I totally agree'.*

James' ability to be visible had radical transformational abilities and illustrates Plummer's (2001) argument of the need for "real stories and voices" to be heard to challenge existing heteronormative structures. This was one of many examples James gave where he was providing students with a Catholic education, while simultaneously presenting an embodied, lived example of what it means to be transgender and at odds with these beliefs. Due to the relationships James had with his students, he had powerfully made them question their own views and beliefs, as demonstrated by their response that it would not be fair for him to not be allowed to become a priest. He further demonstrated his acceptance from both staff and students by sharing a photo of the boys' toilets in school, explaining the significance of him being visible and validated in this gendered space.

Male pupils have called me in if there's an issue, and they haven't had an issue with the fact that I'm going into there, whereas of course, I wouldn't have ever walked into the female ones, and if, even if I was close enough, pupils would be like 'why are you here?', so it's just it kind of, I suppose it's like a solidarity thing really, that picture, that I've been into the male toilets before and the children or in fact other members of staff if they're in there, it's not been an issue at all.

James spoke almost entirely positively of his experience as a trans teacher. His surplus visibility (Patai 1992) provided him with a position of power, where he was able to have honest and candid conversations with students and colleagues and radically progress the culture of the school. James' ability to be visible and present a male gendered body that did not fit cisgender expectations, required a confidence and vocabulary to challenge norms and achieve acceptance. Without this, his gendered body may have remained problematic.

Alfie is a similar example of a teacher whose LGBT+ identity was 'visibly' obvious and another example that illustrates both the problematic and empowering nature of being an embodied teacher that challenges the heteronorm. Alfie was a gay, cisgendered male who described himself as "traditionally camp" in both his voice and mannerisms and thought it was

"obvious" he was gay. Consequently, like James, he felt the need to address this with his groups. He shared a story that resonates with the earlier quote about the importance of the first impression of the embodied teacher.

> *So, on my first day there, a student came in and it was quite a rowdy year group and they're making a lot of noise, and I asked them all to sit down and be quiet, and one of these girls just went "Oh my God, he sounds so gay!".*

The girl's aggressive outburst demonstrates a knee jerk reaction to an exception and challenge to the heteronorm and, in turn, a policing of gender role expectations. This is a near perfect example of Connell's description of how the performativity of gender is created and maintained. "If a man fails to do masculinity appropriately for any given social situation, he may be socially sanctioned with hostile stares, laughter, or aggression" (Connell 2015 p10). The student's response demonstrates a deeply ingrained set of beliefs and expectations that male teachers should demonstrate congruent masculinity (theorised later). Encouragingly, this was the only example Alfie could share relating to difficulties of being visible with his students yet demonstrates the imperative to address a visible difference. Alfie explained how he handled the situation.

> *So, I obviously sent her out, but after, when I came back in, I had a discussion with them; that's when I told them. I was like "I am gay, you know if someone has an issue with this, feel free to come talk to me or talk to my head of department, talk to your head of year, that's absolutely fine, because we can work around that if this is an issue, you don't have to be, like, in this room".*

Alfie's immediate response to send the student out sent a powerful message that discrimination was not going to be tolerated. He was then able to be simultaneously vulnerable in addressing his sexual identity with the group, yet authoritative by explaining how it could and should be appropriately addressed if students had an issue with it. Much like James, Alfie's identity was immediately visible, and while he saw addressing this as a necessity, it also provided an opportunity for Alfie to quickly build trust and rapport with his group, diminishing the initial reactions. It is also worth addressing that Alfie appeared to give the student the option of being in another room to not be taught by him; this could be read as in some way validating the students' prejudice and subtly reinforcing homophobia. It also furthers the argument that teachers may need better training and support to confidently challenge these types of homophobic behaviour in the classroom.

Alfie talked of other ways in which he addressed his sexuality with other groups. In this case, coming out while making a joke.

> *So, we were talking about Romeo and Juliet and we were watching the Leonardo DiCaprio film. I think I made a joke about "oh it would be so difficult to be.." like obviously in the film she has to choose between Paul Rudd and Leonardo DiCaprio and I was like, "Oh my God, what a hardship she must be going through" and the kids were…the ones that didn't know, I mean by that age that kind of already sussing that out, but those that didn't know were like, "ohh", got it.*

What was unique about this example was Alfie's explicit description of sexual desire with his group, to confirm what they had perhaps already assumed. None of the other teachers in this study had given any

examples of this nature; they had mostly presented themselves as homonormative, acceptable LGBT+ professionals, where sexuality was implicit or hidden. As earlier argued (Richardson 2004, Warner 2000), to be seen as acceptable sexual citizens, a decoupling of sexual orientation and sex is often required. Alfie described how little reaction he received for comments like these, and perhaps speaks to an acceptance or expectation of this type of comment being congruent with that of a camp, gay man (theorised later by Max), which stands in counterpoint to the student who immediately assumed that a male teacher should exhibit masculine behaviour.

Amy was the second trans teacher to take part in this study, but unlike James who was early in his transition, Amy had had extensive surgery to present fully as female. For Amy, her gender identity had been a lifelong challenge, one that she had struggled to put a voice and vocabulary to until her 50s. Amy spoke of the trauma this had caused her, to the point of having a breakdown.

> *It's like trying to keep a beach ball under the water… sure you can push it under, but you can't keep it there. it keeps slipping and bobbing up to the surface, and that's what was happening to me. When I started teaching, of course I no longer was able to work from home, and when I'd been working at home, I would cross-dress; I couldn't do that anymore. And during school holidays, my now teenage daughters were at home… so I no longer had the outlet. I'm sure that was partly why I had the breakdown… um, so it was building, but I couldn't at that stage put voice to it.*

For Amy, the process of finally being able to come out was a “great relief” and meant she was able to present as the female she had always felt herself to be. She had taken the decision to come out to her colleagues as

a trans female during her transition, but to be visible only as female with students, often referred to as stealth *(Budge, Tebbe and Howard 2010)*. Amy's decision to remain 'invisible' as a trans woman in the eyes of students did not appear to be one that caused her anguish or anxiety, but one that validated her as female. Amy described initially transitioning, "I mean it's scary, really scary just walking in, going out, walking into school", so for Amy to be in a position where she was accepted as a female teacher was a great relief. Amy shared a photograph of herself in her lab coat, running a science experiment with students, explaining just how validated she felt at that time to be seen as a "typical science teacher" after her first term as Amy (a symbol of acceptance later shared by Raj). In many ways, Amy was simultaneously visible and invisible. Amy's stealth was the ultimate visibility in her eyes, yet simultaneously rendered her invisible as a trans woman. Amy's decision not to be visible as a trans teacher in the classroom was quite deliberate even to the extent of allowing students to believe she was in a heterosexual relationship, with a husband:

> *And the girls would ask me, they'd say, because I have a wedding ring, they asked me about my husband… um, I'd tell them about things, like 'I was cutting the front hedge yesterday' and they'd say 'why doesn't your husband do that?'. And they'd say things like 'Amy, do you colour your hair?' [laughs], and I'm thinking 'I can take it off and put it in the sink!' [laughs].*

> *Interviewer: So, when they ask you those questions, would you ever correct them, or would you just, sort of you know, just let them pass?*
>
> *Amy: I just let them pass, I mean sometimes, I mean my wife's name is Georgie [pseudonym], and I'd just say, 'oh no, George doesn't mind'. So, I was actually concealing it.*

For Amy, not being suspected to be transgender by students appeared to be a validating experience for her as a female, and not something she wanted to address or be visible for. It also speaks to the pressure trans teachers feel to control and manage their gender expression due to the marked visibility of trans and gender-diverse bodies within highly socially policed, cisnormative schooling environments (Ullman 2020). James had commented in his interview that if it were not visibly obvious that he was a trans male, he would not have been sure if he would address it with his students, either. Amy explained that due to the nature of the school, she thought that addressing her gender identity could draw undue attention to the students and school, once again bringing the theme of perceived threats to the forefront.

> *The last thing I wanted was the local press deciding this was an issue. I didn't want to draw attention to it… um, so things like that were at the back of my mind.*

Amy was acutely aware of the need for LGBT+ visibility in schools (she now runs a trans awareness organisation that provides training for schools), and through stealth was able to challenge and disrupt heteronormative expectations to provide an environment where students felt safe and comfortable to explore their sexual and gender identities.

Amy talked about playing the board game 'The Game of Life' with students at the end of term and jokingly describing it as "The most heteronormative game the world has ever seen!".

> *When it's time to get married… I would shake up the little bag, full of little pink and blue people, and say 'who's your person? are you going to be a pink or blue person? who's your spouse going to be? Pink or blue?'. And they loved going against the rules.*

For Amy, presenting inclusivity and a removal of assumptions was important, despite choosing not to be a visible LGBT+ role model herself. She explained "we didn't want to force a standard on them" and through her position as a stealth female, was still able to pollute the heteronormative expectations within the school. Amy spoke of how well she had been accepted as a trans woman by staff and the wider community when she had come out and reflected on the potential reasons for that.

> *I'm fairly acceptable, I'm not non-binary, I'm very much binary. I'm as much of a respectable middle-aged woman that you could find, I fit in… I'm not wrong in the society I keep.*

Amy's description of being acceptable and a 'binary' reflects our understanding of the homonormative and the sexual citizen, considering which aspects of LGBT+ identities do and do not fit neatly within society. She felt she embodied all the things a respectable woman and teacher of her age should. She presented feminine, was involved in the wider community of the village in which she lived and was married with children; as Turner (2008) argues in her definition of 'reproductive citizenship', having children is often seen as a deciding factor in what ultimately makes a 'good citizen'. Amy felt this, along with her age, made

her acceptable. Amy described how being "very much binary" allowed her to be fully accepted as a trans woman.

Jenny was the only teacher in the study to identify as non-binary. Jenny's gender presentation did not fit the strict male/female binary, and their example demonstrates some of the assumptions that can be made about gendered bodies that do not fit within this binary. The availability of literature exploring the non-binary gender experience is limited (Losty and O'Connor 2018), and the literature that does exist with reference to schools, focusses on the student experience (Losty and O'Connor 2018, Vijlbrief, Saharso and Ghorashi 2020, Haley, et al. 2020, Lewis 2017, Finger 2010). This limited insight is indicative of the challenges facing teachers who identify as non-binary and helps us to understand Jenny's reluctance to be visible at school, and the subsequent assumptions this caused.

Butler's (2011) description of gender as a socially created and enforced idea is of relevance here. The discourses and institutional practices that create and uphold gender are distinctly visible in schools, as discussed in the previous chapter. Almost all teachers in English secondary schools are addressed as either 'Sir' or 'Miss', usually 100s of times a day; so entrenched is the nomenclature, it is not uncommon for students to not know a member of staff's name. Uniform policies and gendered duties such as toilets, changing rooms or school trips, are further examples of aspects of school life that require a static gender. These examples help illustrate Robinson's (2016) argument that those that do conform to congruent gender roles receive more rights and privileges.

Jenny had recently begun to identify as non-binary and explained that until then, they had always considered themself a tomboy and felt a

sense of relief when they discovered the vocabulary for being non-binary. Jenny used the metaphor of reading about symptoms when unwell and the relief in realising that "this is the thing". For Jenny, their non-binary identity was fairly new, and they explained how they had not discussed it with colleagues or students and therefore, not explored different uses of pronouns. Jenny felt their gender identity had never 'fit' and explained how they sometimes got referred to as 'he' and 'Sir'.

> *The only pronoun I feel uncomfortable with is 'he' and I do occasionally get that. I do occasionally get 'Sir' as well… like I suppose I present fairly, like, erm, people tend to assume I'm a lesbian kind of thing, you know. Kids often ask me about my wife or something.*

Jenny's description of sometimes being assumed by students to be either male or a lesbian illustrates the binary expectations of heteronormativity. For Jenny, they would rather have been assumed as a lesbian than to address their non-binary identity. Non-binary identities are difficult to make visible in the same way other LGBT+ participants had described, particularly at a stage where Jenny did not wish to use gender neutral language or pronouns to describe themself at school. For non-binary visibility, a new set of understandings and vocabulary is required that likely already exist for homonormative LGBT+ identities. Jenny acknowledged this by saying they always considered themself a tomboy before starting to read around the topic, and so for them to try and alter the existing structures at school by educating students and colleagues into different understandings of gender and pronouns would be enormously challenging without support. Jenny described their school as inclusive and shared a photo to illustrate some of the ways they approach

this. Jenny explained how the school had clear policies for tackling homophobia and for students that are transitioning, but the LGBT+ support available in the school still demonstrated a need for a binary, as demonstrated in the posters; whether gay, lesbian or transitioning from one gender to another. As Wells (2018) argues "there can be no space for genderqueer teachers who want to subvert the forces of heteronormativity by directly calling into question the very grounds by which gender is constructed" (p1574).

Some of the participants discussed so far embodied their gender or sexuality in a way that made them, in some way, visible. Other participants embodied the role of a teacher in a way that often meant they were assumed as heterosexual or cisgender, and so for them, *how* to be visible required a different set of considerations. While embodiment remained a key theme, discourses of hegemonic masculinity were key to these discussions.

Expectations of Masculinity

> *In my old school everything was enforced, everything was man and woman, very gender norm, everything, even the way that SLT were dressed… you know there was a man in charge of behaviour and… everyone embodied the heteronormativity (Kate).*
>
> *But it's easier in our school to be out as a lesbian than it is as a gay man (Lucy).*
>
> *Interviewer: So, you think it's easier to be an out woman, than an out man, in this school?*
> *Tim: Yeah 100% (Tim).*
>
> *The role of a male person is probably a lot more hegemonic than a female's role is, so I feel like there's a lot more manoeuvrability that a female teacher might have within their personality, whereas like, I feel like a male teacher has less so (Raj).*

These quotes all reflect a view that male teachers are expected to embody 'traditional' masculinity and any deviation from this could be problematic (as evidenced by the initial reaction by one of Alfie's students). There is also an implicit suggestion that masculinity and male gender roles are a strong driving force in the creation and maintenance of heteronormativity.

Raj worked in a boys' school and acutely felt the normalised expectations of masculinity. Raj was able to simultaneously uphold yet subvert many of these views within his classroom, providing an example of 'bordering' visibility. Raj's school was all boys for ages 11-16 (the Sixth Form was mixed), and he described the pressure on students to fit the stereotype of

a ‘tough guy’. He felt the expectation of being a ‘tough guy’ affected the respect male teachers were able to receive. Raj moved to his current school with the clear intention of being a visible role model (he described the ‘three pillars’ he felt the need to act as a strong role model for: gay, Indian, and a science teacher). He recognised the importance of adhering to existing social norms to gain acceptance; this then put him in a position of authority in which to challenge these. Raj explained that he thought it was ‘easier’ to be a male teacher and that male teachers had immediate access to respect that female teachers did not. He also explained the immediate credibility he thought you gained as a male teacher was likely to be eroded by the more ‘stereotypically gay’ you were. This supports Connell’s (2015) view that it is the embodiment and performance of masculinity that provides the immediate access to acceptance.

> *So, I think in general, male teachers probably have an easier time, simply because of the male privilege that we get, but I think that it does go away the more stereotypical you are, I think whether… the more you fall into the stereotype… stereotypical behaviour and presentation, the harder it is for you, I think.*

The heterosexual norm that permeates most educational spaces makes all teachers appear heterosexual, unless there are obvious clues indicating that this is not the case (Reimers 2020). Raj was quite traditional in his gender performativity, and as such, there were not any 'clues' that he was not heterosexual. Raj was therefore able to use the acceptance of his students to make visible an embodied gay role model that challenged their stereotypical expectations; one that aligned with a body that students assumed as heterosexual. Raj shared a picture of his classroom, explaining it is where he felt most comfortable to be visible as a gay teacher with students. It was a space he was fully in control of due to the clear structure provided by seating plans, knowledge of the students and school systems (in strong contrast to the unregulated spaces discussed later). I asked Raj what reactions he gets when he comes out to groups in this classroom.

> *Well I think what usually will happen is they… initially when whenever they find out, I think they have a bit of a shock and obviously all the stereotypes that are in their head at that time they're kind of thinking about those, but I think the longer I teach them, the more they realise it's just such a non-part of my overall persona, um, as in like it's just such a non, non-issue when it*

> *comes to me being a teacher, that they then… you know, I feel like initially they might have reservations, because obviously if they have never met somebody or haven't had somebody in their family who's gay etc., then they are not going to, they're not necessarily going to want to… well they just have no kind of concept of what a gay person's like, they just have an idea, what they've heard and constructed through media and through other people, so when they are actually confronted with that, I think initially they might, they might have a sense of weirdness, but I think the longer I teach them, they're just like 'alright, this is just literally just a teacher'.*

Raj's detailed description of the process of coming out to students and gaining their acceptance presents the radical shift in perception and understanding of students in the classroom as, like Amy, Raj got to what he considered the ultimate acceptance: "this is just literally a teacher". During this time, Raj is embodying what it is to be all three of the pillars he described: gay, Indian and a science teacher. The initial revelation of Raj's sexuality to his students made him hyper visible, creating, as he described "weirdness" with his students. Raj coming out brings the topic of sexuality and therefore sex into the classroom. This created an uneasiness between the personal and professional, where he the person had become the focus, rather than the learning that would normally be taking place. Raj described coming out in ways such as discussing his partner which, if he were heterosexual, would not be considered discussion of sexuality or sex. Patai's (1992) description of surplus visibility is of value in understanding Raj's experience. It suggests a marginalised person's identity is often extrapolated from 'part to whole', and as other teachers have described, there is a of fear becoming 'the gay teacher'. Raj appeared to have reduced the size of this metaphorical spotlight by not only discussing his sexuality and challenging students'

misconceptions, but ensuring it was presented as only one part of his identity, something Max (discussed later) thought it was also important to emphasise. Much like James and Alfie, Raj's decision to discuss his sexuality openly in the classroom not only helped 'normalise' the topic, but he also felt he had made it a "non-issue when it comes to me being a teacher". If polluting visibility refers to the pre-existing being wrong and a need for it to be polluted with an alternative, then it would appear Raj had been able to successfully do this in his classroom and present what he thought were two rarely seen role models.

> *I'm a science teacher, so again, not a lot of people would necessarily combine science and people being gay at the same time, and so, so that's so that was important to me that somebody who is gay can also do science, and then also that somebody who was gay can also be brown.*

This study contained two BAME teachers, the second was Tim, who much like Raj, felt the need to be a role model as an ethnic minority; he also felt the need to embody the expected role of a teacher.

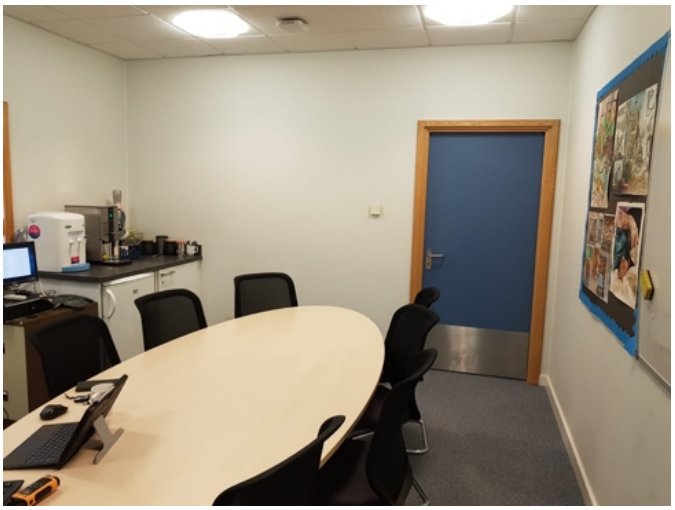
Tim was a 37-year-old, gay, black teacher who had taken up the position of Deputy Head at a new school, only 6 months previously. He understood the need for LGBT+ role models, but due to the stage of his career, felt he needed to keep his sexuality invisible and embody what he considered to be the role of a Deputy Head. Tim described the need to accentuate the features that made him seem respectable, including masculinity and maturity, for example, he felt wearing a suit, something he had never done up to that point, added to this perception. Tim was extremely conscious of his perception among staff and students and considered

being openly gay with his students as an additional challenge to an already demanding position.

> *I think to isolate myself that much and especially at such an early day and I'm still trying to find my feet, you know, and prove myself, I think, you know, I would literally be adding an extra hurdle for myself.*

The subtext to a lot of Tim's concerns were the perceived threat of discrimination, whether that was from being black, gay or because of his age. This illustrates a common theme woven through many of the interviews: widespread concerns of potential threats (explored in the next section). Tim's description of coming out as "isolating myself", demonstrates the dilemma of how visible to be for an LGBT+ teacher. Tim said that coming into the school as a black, young Deputy Head, meant he had enough to prove and therefore coming out would have been an additional challenge. Tim's description of isolating himself speaks to a school environment where LGBT+ identities were not included or accepted, and with him already having a lot of visibility due to his age and ethnicity, he felt this would be too much. Tim spoke about how he had felt it necessary to come out during his interview for the position and did so by addressing his partner as 'him'.

> *And I use the word 'him' and for me, because I'm not like super out and proud in school, that was quite a big thing at that moment.*



Tim took a photo to demonstrate the significance of this moment to him and described it as "empowering" and spoke of how happy he felt for the leadership team to see him as "truthful and honest", and for that to be part of the decision in him getting the job. Despite the importance of coming out during the interview, Tim still felt it necessary to keep his identity as a gay teacher invisible to students and most staff. This speaks to Pallotta-Chiarolli's definition of passing (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010) visibility, by "hiding the unacceptable to fit in and be accepted within the status quo". This could be read as a willingness to conform, as there was an acknowledgment of self in the interview room, which was then absent in the everyday, potentially reflecting what he perceived as the desire of the school. It also raises a question about which spaces in school could be considered 'public' and 'private', and therefore more or less appropriate spaces for LGBT+ discussion, much like Alfie's experience of the parents' evening. Tim explained how it was a conscious decision for him to come out during his interview, as he had not been out at his previous school, but that it was a similarly conscious decision not to come out to students. He believed it would undermine his masculinity and therefore credibility. Tim explained how, when he started at the school, he introduced himself through a series of assemblies.

> *For my first assembly I kind of talked about where I'm from, and you know, that I'm black and you know, everything that brings to*

me, and I feel like that's something that the school needs more if that makes sense, than kind of the LGBT…

Tim shared a photo of the hall where the assemblies took place. This photo stands in stark contrast to the previous photo. In the interview room, Tim had felt empowered in being open with his sexuality, in this space he thought sharing his sexuality could be problematic (the significance of this type of space is explored in the next section). In the assemblies, Tim recognised the importance of addressing his minority status as a black man, because it was visibly obvious, particularly among a largely white student and staff body. This speaks to Robinson's (2002) 'hierarchy of differences', referring to the varying levels of discomfort individuals may feel in discussing the different areas of inclusivity and which were more 'comfortable and appropriate'. Tim's decision to address his identity as a black man, but not a gay man (Tim even reflected on how sexuality can be hidden, unlike ethnicity) reflects Robinson's view that issues of race and ethnicity are considered top of the hierarchy, with gay and lesbian issues at the bottom. When I asked Tim if at any point, he would feel comfortable coming out to students, he was clearly conflicted.

Um… I think it would probably be fine…yeah, like I said I don't know… um I'm a little bit… like in terms of talking about my

> *personal life, I'm not big with students, about that… um I don't know, I feel there is kind of a fine line… like I'm a person where, even after a school I've stopped teaching in, when people have grown up, like I still won't add them on Facebook or Instagram. When I was talking about the weekend and stuff, like, I'm just very strict… so I don't know if I… how much I actually want to share with students, I think it would probably be received OK, and I think it would actually help…*

Tim held a conflicting view, understanding the importance of being a gay role model to students, but also worrying about the impact it would have on him as a teacher and a leader. I asked why he felt this way and he said, "I always feel like, especially with like gay male teachers, there's always this weird connotation". I asked him to explain this point further.

> *Yeah, so in terms of like being creepy, or you know there's definitely that connotation, versus like women gay teachers it's more 'oh like, that's accepted, and they won't do anything, like you know to other female students' so it's a weird one, yeah.*

Tim's view that gay men are often perceived as "creepy", or even paedophiles, speaks to post-war views of homophobia, where gay men were seen to be, as Seidman (2001) describes, 'socially deviant'. Tim was one of many male teachers who raised this concern, demonstrating the shadow of cultural narratives connecting gay male identity to paedophilia (Weeks 2011, Foucault 1978), and the perceived fear of being visible as a gay male when working with children. As demonstrated by many of the stories discussed so far, a perceived threat or fear of being visible as an LGBT+ teacher was a commonly shared concern among the participants.

Perceived Threats and Panoptic Spaces

> *With disciplinary power various segments of living are permeated, and because many of these sources go undetected, the individual is unaware of being under surveillance. This is an especially significant component of surveillance structures of schools (Piro 2008 p41).*

Piro develops Foucault's thinking surrounding panoptic surveillance and considers its role in creating regimes of power in schools. Piro argues that disciplinary power is much more diffuse and difficult to locate, resulting in self-policing for fear of being 'seen' as breaking the rules. When considering this in context to LGBT+ teachers being seen as other in heteronormative spaces, it is understandable why some teachers in this study described feelings of discomfort in open or panoptic spaces. Many participants referred to the former impact of Section 28 on their experiences as LGBT+ teachers. While the restrictions Section 28 enforced were widely misunderstood, the fear created by the legislation augmented the view that heterosexuality was the only appropriate sexuality that could be visible in schools. Over time, this transformed behaviour towards an expected social norm (Edwards, Brown and Smith 2016), and even though Section 28 was repealed in 2003, self-policing exists even if surveillance is discontinuous in its actions (Foucault 1977 p201). While Section 28 is not solely responsible for the heteronormativity of schools, it helps exemplify the intangible fear many of the teachers described in being visible in their school.

Earlier, Tim had shared a picture of the theatre where assemblies took place and explained how he had felt unable to discuss his sexuality in this panoptic space, as opposed to the interview room. Similar experiences were shared by several other participants. Raj shared photos of the

school hall, the playground, and the path he walked across to the Sixth Form centre, explaining that, despite never having any problems being visible as a gay member of staff, he still felt a degree of discomfort in these spaces, as was fearful of comments that could be made towards him.

He described how he felt when giving assembles in the hall (top right photo).

> *So that's, that's where I give my assemblies, um, so that's one of the places where I feel a bit uncomfortable because, um, because… because there's so many of them at the same time that I'm talking to… and you know, I give my assemblies quite often, and I don't hide my sexuality from anybody, so the student body knows that*

> *I'm gay… but when I'm doing my assemblies I feel, I feel scared and I don't know if it's because I know that they know that I'm gay and therefore, I'm like afraid of them… I don't know hurling a slur or something.*

I asked Raj if this had ever happened, to which he laughed and said "no, no, never"; his dismissal demonstrating how unlikely this would be. Even though it had never happened, Raj's discomfort in front of this many students illustrates the 'perception versus reality' or 'emotion versus reason' that many teachers felt in being visible within the surveillance of large, open spaces. This space illustrates the power held by a "certain concerted distribution of bodies" Foucault spoke of. I asked Raj why he felt unsafe in these spaces opposed to his classroom, and as described earlier, it was an issue of control and accountability. All the participants that spoke of spaces they felt unsafe, described environments where they could not account for the actions of those around them or challenge and escalate a situation if necessary; in contrast, most teachers described their classroom as a safe space. It is important to acknowledge that classrooms are also panoptic spaces, but the distinction is that in this space, the students are the ones being observed and the teacher the one with the power. Raj further described his discomfort in walking across the path to the Sixth Form block (the left photo) and said, "if somebody was to say something, I wouldn't be able to identify who it is, and therefore I wouldn't be able to deal with it, so that I think is the main part of the scariness of it all". It is difficult to ascribe a specific reason for the perceived threat the teachers felt for being visible as LGBT+, as in most of the discussed examples, the perception was nothing more than that. The shadow of cultural narratives surrounding LGBT+ teachers appeared to be enough to make them feel in a position of surveillance and vulnerability in panoptic spaces, where their identity could make them a

target for abuse. Even though the perceived threats may have only been imagined, this fear demonstrates a greater need for inclusion to be emphasised and embedded in school cultures for these staff to feel at ease and included.

Nadine spoke of a few isolated incidents that put her in constant fear of threat from others. Nadine was extremely emotional during her interview as these incidents had clearly put her in a position of heightened anxiety. Nadine was a 41-year-old music teacher who had recently felt more comfortable sharing her sexuality with certain students and groups. Nadine had begun using her relationship to reveal her sexuality; this was challenging, however, as her wife also worked at the same school and did not wish to be outed. Nadine spoke of the anxiety she felt when staff discussed her wife in front of other students and shared a photo of the 'Student Services' area, a very public space at the centre of the school, where this sometimes happened. Nadine's anxiety came from being potentially outed to students she may not want to be, as well as the anxiety of her wife being outed. Nadine had not had any negative experiences in this space, but the perception that something may happen was enough to make her feel uncomfortable and in a state of heightened awareness.

Nadine shared a further photo of the school bike compound, a highly panoptic space, and described an incident of transphobia her wife had experienced.

> *I know that while she's been on break duty by here, groups of kids who've been in the bike compound, not that they should be at break time… have hurled abuse at her, verbal abuse, and because she doesn't teach uniformed pupils, she only teaches Sixth Form, she didn't know who these students were so there was nothing she could ever do about it and, and it left her feeling very vulnerable, very, very nervous and very powerless.*

Nadine's wife's inability to identify students and ensure the issue was properly dealt with brings to reality the fears of Raj and Tim in these types of spaces. Nadine also explained that her wife would not be comfortable speaking to members of leadership about the incident as she would likely then be in a position to out herself. Nadine had described a school environment where LGBT+ issues were all but silent; she also felt she and her wife did not embody traditional cisgender femininity. She, therefore, felt a sense of displacement within her surroundings, bringing to life the significance of this photo; a true panopticon where their difference was visible from a 360° perspective, including from the

windows of the school's tower. Nadine and her wife's experience of surveillance reflects Ullman's conclusions in researching gender diverse teachers.

> *The individual experiences of the participating gender diverse teachers point to experiences of surveillance and punishment linked to schools' hetero/cisnormative expectations and the subsequent undermining of equitable workplace experiences and individuals' sense of personal and workplace wellbeing (Ullman 2020 p78).*

Nadine was highly conflicted as she was acutely aware of the need for LGBT+ role models within her school but was equally aware of the spaces within the school that could make this uncomfortable for her or her wife. The few incidents that she had experienced were enough to make her feel she was under constant surveillance and, as such, had to present bordering visibility depending on the surroundings and context, for fear of being more visible than she or her wife were comfortable with.

Kate was a lesbian Science teacher who had left the Catholic School she had worked at for seven years in 2018. At this school, discussion or promotion of LGBT+ topics were considered against the Catholic ethos and were, therefore, strictly prohibited. Kate described how one day she was given a note, summoning her to the Head Teacher's office at the end of the day, along with 3 other colleagues.

> *We had all been outed at the same time. Now we were asked to sign this non-disclosure; we weren't allowed to talk about the fact [that we were gay], and it was clear… they brought it back to the contract and said 'you are meant to be upholding the catholic ethos, you signed this document' which is fair enough… but yeah, we weren't allowed to say anything, but what I felt put extra pressure*

> *on us, that because we were a couple outside of school… I then was always very conscious of not going anywhere where we could potentially be seen by kids, and worrying if we were, and worried what the implications would be if we were found out.*

Aside from being illegal, Kate and the three other members of staff having to sign a non-disclosure agreement immediately marginalised them and clearly signified them as other. While threats to the other teachers in this study were often perceived or implicit, this threat was explicit, forcing Kate to make her sexuality invisible. Kate felt this surveillance extend beyond school into personal life where she was in constant fear of being seen with her partner. I asked Kate how this made her feel and she explained how much she struggled with it as she had always been open about her sexuality. She feared that if students found out then she could lose her job, and so she was forced to not only hide her sexuality, but if she was ever discussing her partner in school, she had to do so in a way that did not reveal her gender, therefore making her pass as heterosexual.

> *It was always on the back of my mind on holidays and outside of school. I felt like when we did things like PSHE, you couldn't quite talk about what you wanted to, because I was always worried… it made me hypersensitive to the fact that people might work out that I was gay. I wasn't allowed to refer to my ex-partner with full name, we had to shorten it, so that nobody even if it was overhead could work out whether it was male or female.*

Kate wanted to be visible as an LGBT+ teacher, but in signing the NDA, was unable to and felt under surveillance in any space where there may be people that knew her or had connections to the school. She was

experiencing what happens when, as Foucault (1977) describes, one assumes responsibility for the constraints of power. Not only did Kate being forced to present herself as if in a heterosexual relationship cause significant anxiety, but her 'passing' heterosexuality continued to uphold the strict heteronormative ideals that were keeping her marginalised. She explained how much anguish this caused her, "you've got to be closeted, and you've got to be quiet, and you've got to not talk about yourself, and you've got to pretend you're someone you're not".

Kate's story demonstrates the pervasive and permanent nature of panoptic surveillance and how "a sense of being watched, and the fear of retribution for one's observed actions becomes incorporated into an individual's consciousness" (Edwards, Brown and Smith 2016 p300). This was markedly demonstrated by how few photos Kate was able to take to represent safe spaces within her new school, namely her classroom and her car. Despite the homophobic surveillance she was under at her old school being no longer present at her new school, the fear had become an ingrained part of her consciousness, significantly affecting how visible she felt she was now able to be.

So, when I started here, I came from school where no one was allowed to know who I was, so when I first started, I was still very much in that frame of mind, and still sometimes, because of comments, occasionally don't always feel like I can go and maybe speak my mind clearly. So, quite often if I'm listening to something in the morning or, like when I go home, but particularly in the morning, I might have listened to something like a podcast on the way in, or it might be something like that, it's just my little, quiet place where it doesn't matter what I'm listening to, or what is going on… and it just looks out and it's just a nice quiet place.

I asked Kate if there had been any LGBT+ visibility in her previous school to which she replied, "Absolutely zero, there was not a single thing", she explained there was no curriculum content, no visibility and no discussion of it whatsoever, which consequently created a "huge, huge problem" with homophobia. Kate explained that despite having a robust anti-bullying system, there was no way of recording or identifying the problems that were arising with homophobic language in school. The complete absence of any LGBT+ visibility or discussion had created a culture where homophobic language had become, somewhat inevitably, "everyday common language in the corridor" and in many ways, the devolved power that kept LGBT+ staff and students under surveillance.

The lack of challenge towards homophobic language contrasted with how effectively racist language was challenged and sanctioned, once again reflecting Robinson's (2002) hierarchy of differences. The school's strict ban of this often-invisible difference not only marginalised its LGBT+ staff and students, but it also forced all staff into a system of fear and surveillance where they monitored their own and others' behaviour, creating a system of power, predicated on the possibility of discipline (Manning and Stern 2018). As argued by Rich (1980), this institutionalised heteronormativity regulates those kept within its boundaries as well as marginalising and sanctioning those outside them; the result similar to the surveillance culture created by Section 28.

> *Heteronormative conformity was unverifiable, as, in schools, no one really knew by whom, how or from where this law was being enforced. This encouraged teachers to self-censor their own behaviours in case they were 'seen' to be in some way promoting homosexuality in schools (Edwards, Brown and Smith 2016 p300).*

This section has explored the vulnerability LGBT+ teachers often felt within open or panoptic spaces. For some, the fear was only a perception, or a worst-case scenario, possibly built upon outdated cultural narratives. For others, these unregulated spaces created environments where they could be 'seen' as LGBT+ while potentially not feeling safe or supported to do so. The result of teachers occupying these various spaces within school often led to the modifying of behaviours to create a bordering, acceptable form of visibility.

Relationships and Monosexism

Discussion of relationships and relationship status were key considerations for all participants. For many, discussion of a partner was an opportunity to implicitly reveal their sexuality with colleagues or students, something single teachers described as more challenging.

> *I'll go in with my stories about my kids, if it's relevant, I'll go in with my stories about Rosie and it's welcomed (Lucy).*
>
> *'My partner, he's in programming and he does this' kind of thing, so in that way it's been quite like part of conversation (Raj).*
>
> *I also actually divulged that my partner, I was moving in with my partner, and I use the word 'him' (Tim).*
>
> *But like for me, I'm not married, I'm single…like, it doesn't come up as naturally (Toby).*

For others, their relationship status made them appear heterosexual; in Amy and Kate's earlier examples, this was intentional, but for the two bisexual teachers involved in this study, their relationship status often unintentionally made their sexuality invisible. Jack, a bisexual teacher who was engaged to his female partner, described his desire to be a role model and to provide LGBT+ visibility, yet the difficulty in doing so while in a 'straight passing relationship'.

> *I don't think I ever explicitly told anyone that I was bi, but I also don't hide it, but then arguably it's the easiest one to hide because obviously I'm in a, you know, erm, straight passing relationship essentially, erm, so if I talk about my girlfriend or something,*

> *people make those assumptions. But I feel like that yeah, it's just everyone will just assume I'm straight until I literally have to spell it out for them, which can be a bit annoying and frustrating.*

Other participants had used their partner as a way of revealing their sexuality, for Jack, it kept it concealed and would need to be explicitly addressed to get away from the automatic assumption that having a female partner meant he were heterosexual: an example of monosexism. The term monosexism is used to describe the expectation that relationships should be exclusively heterosexual or homosexual (Klesse 2011).

> *Any sexuality that blends same and different gender interactions is deemed illegitimate, occurring in a state of sexuality confusion, an experimental phase, or that bisexual persons are somehow dishonest about their orientation, attractions, and their identity (Roberts, Horne and Hoyt 2015 p555).*

This quote describes some of the monosexist assumptions that can be made. This is not to say there are times these assumptions are untrue, (Raj explained how he initially came out as bisexual to maintain acceptance by 'still being part of the heterosexual world') but illustrates the difficulty in bisexuality being accepted as a distinct and valid sexuality. While Jack and Max did experience some of these more insidious assumptions about their sexuality, the most common experience was the assumption of heterosexuality, making their bisexuality invisible and difficult to spot in the wider cultural landscape (Nelson 2020a). For Jack, monosexism was most prevalent when discussing his fiancée. He explained the frustration he felt for having his sexual identity assumed of him when students asked him if he had a girlfriend, "when I say I have a

girlfriend or I have a partner, that could just as easily mean that I'm bi as I am straight". Jack's expectation that it could just as easily mean he is bi as straight, opposed to the immediate assumption of heterosexuality by students and colleagues, demonstrates a culture, understanding and vocabulary that is available to Jack as bisexual, but not to those without the lived experience or education for this silenced topic. It once again demonstrates a need for a greater sophistication in language and thought around the topics of sexuality and gender.

Jack did share an example where a student asked if he had either a girlfriend or a boyfriend, something he was encouraged to hear; despite the open question, in answering with the truth, he was still unable to make his bisexual identity visible. Jack said that to address his sexuality beyond his relationship status would feel inappropriate as "it's a kind of almost intimate thing to do as well". Jack identifying his sexuality may have been read as an explicit description of sexual desire and go outside the realms of what is considered 'acceptable' for school (DePalma and Atkinson 2006), particularly as this was not contextualised within the formal curriculum. I asked Jack if he wished to discuss his sexuality further with students to be a bisexual role model.

> *You don't know how certain kids are gonna react, you don't know how certain adults are going to react if you mention it, erm, so I wouldn't necessarily want to bring it up to kind of shoehorn it in, erm, unless if it came up naturally.*

Jack's caveat of "if it came up naturally" encapsulates the difficulties of presenting bisexual visibility in schools, particularly as bisexual identities are often met with assumptions of dishonesty or promiscuity (Nadal, et al. 2016). Most participants were able to be visible through their

embodiment or discussions of relationships; this was not available to Jack in the same way. The impact of monosexism on Jack was clear, as he had commented he wished he was "one or the other", as in certain situations it would be easier for him. He said he always referred to his fiancé as his partner in the hope it would lead to others asking more questions and remove the assumption of heterosexuality, but he found that was never the case. For Jack, being bisexual and visible was not possible without explicitly addressing it, which he thought would be inappropriate to do.

Max was a 35-year-old MFL teacher who was able to present some visibility as a bisexual teacher. Max felt students responded positively to his bisexuality, and that any monosexism experienced came from colleagues (discussed later). Max had explained some of the ways he had been able to open up discussions of his sexuality with classes. Usually, these opportunities were through answering questions from students, but he gave one example of a time he had "been brazen about it". Max's tutor group were doing a project about concentration camps, to which he had made a point of saying "by the way guys, I'd have been in there too… pink triangle!". Max spoke of the excellent relationships he had with his groups where he had never had a problem discussing his sexuality or relationship status. Much like James and Alfie, Max had been able to achieve a position of "authority and identity" (Braun 2011) through being open and addressing his sexuality.

As an MFL teacher, Max thought there were many opportunities to 'naturally' bring the topic up as they had to make adjectives agree with gender, so when a student had asked him if he were married, he explained to them that they had used the wrong adjective, opening up the discussion. Max was quite playful with his group and said he did not mind them asking questions and laughed when he explained "as long as

they ask in French". Max said he liked how much students cared, which he illustrated with an example of a student who had gone to the effort of working out how to ask, 'do you prefer men or women?', in French. He explained how he had replied.

> *I just said "I like men and I like women", and then he asked me to repeat it…by this time half the class has cottoned on to the question that he'd asked and it was dead silence, so I was like "I like men and I like women", and they go "ooooh!" and then 30 heads just go back to their desks and they carry on with what they were doing. Just an absolute non-issue… which I would say it has been for every single class.*

Like James, Max's strong relationships with his students was evidenced by an example of self-policing, where a student had used the phrase "that's so gay" and the entire group had gone silent and stared at the student. Max's examples demonstrated a maturity he expected of his students in sharing personal information, which students then rose to the occasion of meeting. He explained his tactic of making the students realise it was "boring" by making it everyday part of conversation and, like Raj, was keen for students to realise it was such a small part of his overall personality. Max was particularly keen not to attract surplus visibility as the only bisexual teacher in school, commenting "I don't mind being a teacher who's bi, I don't want to be the bi teacher". He was reluctant to take any responsibility with the LGBT+ club as he felt this may lead to him becoming "typecast" as an LGBT+ teacher and would result in a visibility he would be uncomfortable with.

Max felt the acceptance he received from his students was a sign of generational improvements in attitudes, something he thought was

highlighted in contrast to the monosexism exhibited by some of his colleagues. He chose the staffroom as a place he would have taken a photo (he was unable to due to lockdown) to demonstrate a space he felt less comfortable, a view Gray (2013) suggests is shared by other LGB teachers. "The staffroom can be a difficult site for LGB teachers because much of the conversation that occurs here is based upon heterosexual relationships" (p707). Max presented an improved view of the school staffroom, as felt discussions of gay and lesbian relationships were common, but implicit to these were monosexist assumptions.

> *In the staff room… you've just got to be gay (laughs), because adults… kids don't care, adults do. It's not that it's too much effort, but you've ticked the gay box in their head, and now they're not thinking about it.*

Staff knew that Max was bisexual, but having been married to and separated from a man, he was still often assumed to be gay. He explained how people had made the comment "oh, so you're not bi anymore?" when he had been married, reflecting the view that bisexuality is either a transitional phase or cannot exist as a valid identity once in a monogamous relationship. Max was frustrated by the assumptions of staff yet understood why they found it easier to pigeonhole his sexuality. He joked that "you're only in there for 20 minutes and don't need to explain your sex life", illustrating Reimers' (2020) view that colleagues are often well intentioned but ignorant in relation to gender and sexuality. This example presents a contemporary view of homonormativity in schools. Max's example demonstrates a culture where teachers were comfortable discussing and assuming homosexuality of a teacher, as they had the language and understanding to engage, yet were limited in their linguistic techniques to discuss sexualities outside of the constraints of straight,

lesbian or gay (Gray 2013), ensuring bisexuality remained invisible through omission. Homonormativity can also be considered generationally as the students did not present the assumptions and beliefs that staff did; staff whose social realities were likely formed in eras of silence or moral panic. Max considered this further, "Older people have that experience of intolerance which I really don't think the kids have got".

Although Max understood and was able to reconcile monosexist assumptions within the staff room, he shared an example where he felt discriminated against. Max explained how he had been using a newly-set-up dating website for teachers called Edudate. He had been considering allowing them to share his upcoming date on social media for publicity. He explained how a colleague had contacted him asking "I need to ask, is it a man or a woman you're going to be on a date with?", fearing how the Head Teacher would react. Max replied he believed it would be a man to which she responded, "try not to do that… make sure it's with a woman". Max was "stung" by this comment but explained he knew why she had said it. He thought the Head Teacher would not have a problem with him publicly dating a man, but "The Trust" might, exemplifying Plummer's (2001) notion of 'culture wars' in his description of intimate citizenship.

> *And I know why she said it. If I'd been a very, very camp guy going on a date with a guy in the public eye, that would have been fine, but it's that cross over between liking guys and not being camp, but also liking women… in front of your boss that's confusing. "if they're going to promote someone, they want someone easily categorisable and a damn good employee… and you don't want anything to take away from that".*

Max's example speaks to the earlier discussions of embodiment and masculinity, with the expected congruency between masculinity/heterosexuality and femininity/homosexuality. Looking again through the lens of homonormativity, he felt being gay would be a non-issue in the school, but it was the uncertainty of bisexuality that remained problematic. As earlier posited, desexualised heteronormativity saturates most educational spaces (Reimers 2020); bisexuality creates 'confusion' for others, bringing direct considerations of sexual desire into the school sphere. Despite his frustration with this perception, he was acutely aware of the implications. He gave an example of a male Head Teacher looking to promote a member of staff and the thought process they may go through. "They might think 'we don't quite know that guy very well, and I never know how to talk to him'… you're creating that ambiguity", exemplifying Lee's (2020) view that school leadership in the UK remains overwhelmingly male, heterosexual, white and masculine. Max's description of 'ambiguity' once again speaks to the topic of sexual desire his bisexuality brings into the school, causing a disruption to the respectable homonormative subject (Ullman 2020) that leadership teams may desire.

Summary

This chapter began by identifying that although the data from this study supports the view that the relationship between schools, gender and sexuality remains problematic, there are also significant areas of progress. Some of the teachers in this study were able to present a 'normalised' form of visibility that challenges the existing LGBT+ visibility literature; some teachers were even empowered by their LGBT+ identity and considered it a source of professional strength.

Identifying the circumstances where LGBT+ teacher visibility remained problematic, helps highlight the areas in which work may still need to be done. From this research, it appears that identities that do not fit within fixed binaries or within homonormative expectations (e.g., bisexuality, gender non-conformity) are the ones that experience discomfort with their surroundings and are not intelligible within their school culture. Religious schools were also environments where LGBT+ visibility remained highly contentious. These ideas and their implications for practice are explored in the conclusion.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the two most prominent themes to emerge from the research: heteronormativity and visibility. In this work, it was important for me to be led by the findings from the participants, as although I had key ideas I wished to explore, I wanted to gain insight into the unknown unknowns (Allen 2011) of these LGBT+ teachers' lived experiences. As seen in Appendix 2, the sheer number of potential themes to emerge from the research, shows both the breadth and depth of discussion that is possible and pertinent within LGBT+ inclusion, and I hope this thesis highlights several important topics for further research and discussion. This conclusion will summarise the key findings and consider their implications for both knowledge and practice.

There has been a growing body of research examining the experiences of LGBT+ teachers (Reimers 2017, Newman 2010, Mayo 2020, Gray 2013, Sparkes 1994, Braun 2011, Edwards, Brown and Smith 2016, Lundin 2016, Wells 2018, Ullman 2020, Ferfolja and Ullman 2020). These bodies of research have primarily focussed on the experiences of lesbian and gay teachers, with limited focus on trans teachers (Harris and Jones 2014), and almost none for the experiences of bisexual, pansexual and non-binary teachers; something I was keen to address in this research. The existing literature almost entirely problematises issues of LGBT+ teacher visibility. I highlight these points to demonstrate my contribution to knowledge through this piece of work. While my research strongly supports the view that issues of LGBT+ visibility and inclusion remain problematic, this thesis also takes seriously the opportunities for visible LGBT+ teacher identities in schools. It demonstrates the significant improvements in attitudes in schools that have allowed *some* participants

in this research to flourish. The thesis also highlights the important work that some LGBT+ teachers felt their identities had enabled them to do

My approach to using photo elicitation is also a contribution to knowledge. Despite the ethical concerns associated with this method (Copes, et al. 2018), I effectively used photo elicitation to gain detailed insights from two hard to access areas: LGBT+ populations and a range of secondary schools, including faith, private and single sex. The effectiveness of this method is evidenced through the vast number of important themes and ideas that have emerged from the interviews and photos, many of which would have been unlikely to emerge through traditional methods alone. Using photo elicitation to see through the eyes of participants and allow them to be the authors and agents of their own lives was not only a huge benefit to the research, but it also identified an unintended theme: empowerment.

Almost all the participants commented after their interviews what an enjoyable, important and even cathartic experience taking part had been. Many participants had not considered their lives and identities in such an analytical way before and valued the autonomy and sense of empowerment this project gave them. In examining their position as an LGBT+ teacher through a critical lens, the participants were able to identify the systems and structures around them that either supported or restricted their ability to be visible. Since the completion of this research, several of the participants have been in touch to let me know that after taking part in the project, they had been inspired to do more work in their schools to develop LGBT+ inclusion. These included a teacher that had bought a rainbow badge for their lanyard, a teacher that had come out to their class, and a teacher who had met with their leadership team to discuss their experiences and explain what they thought the school

needed to do to be more LGBT+ inclusive. If participating in a research project for just a few hours can empower LGBT+ teachers in such an important way, the implications for practice need to be considered. The silence around gender and sexuality has been well documented in this thesis, but perhaps highlights the transformational power of LGBT+ teachers being seen. We need to consider how schools can empower and mobilise their LGBT+ staff in the way this study did. Lee (2020c) uses Gray (2013) to argue the progressive power that LGBT+ teachers that have been empowered by leadership can have.

> *When LGBT teachers become school leaders, they trouble institutional heteronormative and heterosexist practices and via their own visibility, give other school stakeholders such as children and young people, parents, and colleagues, permission to also participate authentically and without fear (Lee 2020 p4).*

This is not to say that LGBT+ teachers should all be given positions of leadership or authority, or should even be out, as it may not be safe to do so, but demonstrates what can happen when LGBT+ teachers are empowered and can see themselves in the places in which they work. Lee's quote also discussed troubling institutional heteronormativity, which nicely captures the first theme of this thesis, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Heteronormativity

The third chapter illustrates the ways in which schools are continually produced (and reproduced) as heteronormative spaces. Through analysing the factors that teachers felt marginalised them, it aimed to make the implicit explicit. The chapter examined the tangible aspects of

school that silently provided the messaging that schools are designed to meet the needs of heterosexual, cisgendered citizens, such as toilets, uniform and the curriculum. It also analysed the more subtle messaging that may only be felt by those that the actions seek to exclude; these included microaggressions, use of language and silence. While these findings only compound the view that schools remain stubbornly heteronormative, through analysing the minutiae of each participants' lived experience, it is possible to name and therefore challenge each of these contributing factors, to disrupt the production of heteronormative spaces. The fact that many of these contributing factors remain invisible, except to those who they may marginalise, provides a starting point to think about how to challenge heteronormative institutions more effectively. LGBT+ teachers have the critical thinking and therefore critical awareness of what does and does not represent or include them in schools, due to their lived experience. This may not apply for cisgendered or heterosexual colleagues, who may not consider the impact of an innocuous question like 'have you got a girlfriend?' to a male student/colleague or using phrases like 'man up'. Critical awareness has been discussed at various points throughout this thesis, and as Turner-Zwinkels, Postmes and van Zomeren (2016) argue, a critical awareness is important as it allows us to pinpoint what needs changing (p144). Thus, for schools to become more inclusive, we must first pinpoint what needs changing to then identify opportunities to challenge and provide inclusive alternatives.

To develop both critical thinking and awareness, Plummer's (2001) *narrative and moral stories* show us the importance of ensuring colleagues hear the "the grounded day to day stories of new ways of living" (p248). I have discussed the impact that empowered LGBT+ staff can have in this area; but also discussed was the fact that LGBT+

inclusion is often the responsibility of the LGBT+ staff. Leadership teams in schools need to ensure that training is available to all staff and for them to have the opportunity to hear the experiences of LGBT+ individuals. This allows people to develop an empathetic understanding of what it is to be a marginalised citizen, as well as consider the ways in which their actions may contribute to normative expectations. A greater emphasis on inclusion and diversity may also be required at the initial teacher training stage of teaching careers, as some participants felt they had not been adequately prepared in how to challenge discriminatory views. Some participants also felt unprepared in how to deal with personal questions relating to gender and sexuality. Through training, CPD and creating a shared understanding, all staff can become allies that challenge heteronorms. Cerezo and Bergfeld (2013) argue the importance of this, explaining the vital role that straight/cis peers hearing from their LGBT+ peers can have in "facilitating a critical consciousness of what it means to be an LGBTQ person or ally" (p362).

As well as developing a critical awareness among staff, it is important there is a common language. Staff require a language to not only identify and call out incidents that enforce heteronorms, but they must also have a language with which to discuss and present alternatives to traditional views of sexuality and gender. Lucy discussed how she felt there was a disconnect in the sophisticated ways students discussed gender and sexuality that was lacking in staff. If heteronormativity is socially constructed, then a more sophisticated vocabulary is required to challenge the norms and present alternatives. By not having a common language, alternative understandings of gender and sexuality become unintelligible, therefore denying some LGBT+ staff and students their lived, social reality (Keaton and Bodie 2011).

Once staff have the awareness and language to challenge heternormativity, there must be structured opportunities to challenge norms and present alternatives. Several successful examples of this have been discussed in the thesis, such as Jack's examples, including the 'Word of Wonder' sign, in which students were challenged to think about what the word 'heteronormativity' meant; or the student that wore gender non-conforming clothes on non-uniform day, creating an opportunity for discussion of gender norms in the classroom. Raj talked about how wearing a rainbow lanyard had opened conversations about LGBT+ stereotypes. James explained how his embodiment as a trans man created opportunities for students to question their views of gender, particularly in relation to Catholicism. All these examples demonstrate moments of degrounding, moments in which the consent required to maintain heteronormativity is briefly disorganised, with an opportunity for new ways of thinking to be explored and established. During this momentary 'discontinuity of acts' (Butler 2006) new ideas can be explored that challenge the dominant narrative and encourage critical thinking, rather than passive compliance. Atkinson and DePalma (2009) rightly argue that these opportunities are often fleeting, where 'sedimented meaning' threatens to reorganise the consent required for norms to continue. It is therefore vital that a school's culture and curriculum is one of inclusion and diversity, where opportunities to present a plurality of voices are embedded formally, rather than left up to LGBT+ colleagues, or colleagues that feel a duty to support inclusion. Inclusion and diversity must be the golden thread that weaves through a school's formal and hidden curriculum to have any chance of presenting true inclusion, rather than acceptance within existing structures and systems, as has been found in many of the stories in this thesis. It is clear there is great work being done in schools to develop inclusion and challenge heteronormativity, and this progress must be celebrated.

However, there is still much to be done; this is particularly highlighted when analysing which LGBT+ identities remain unintelligible in schools.

The lens of homonormativity has been employed throughout this thesis to critically analyse the types of LGBT+ identities that were and were not included in the formal and hidden curriculum of the participants' schools. The findings from this research point to a 'new homonormative'; a simultaneous improvement in acceptance for some LGBT+ identities and continued marginalisation of others. While LGBT+ has been the collective noun used throughout this project, what is clear is that there have been significant improvements for some identities and not others.

Much of the existing literature explores the experiences of lesbian and gay teachers, and to that, I hope I have presented new insights and evidence of progress, where visibility is often normalised and even celebrated (discussed shortly). I also hope my research has identified the difficulties that still exist for identities that challenge binary views, such as bisexual and non-binary teachers. Jenny, Jack, Max and Nadine's stories all spoke of times where they felt their identities were unintelligible to their colleagues as they did not fit the rigid heterosexual/homosexual, male/female binary. Jenny felt it would be too challenging to assimilate their non-binary identity into their school and therefore did not address their preferred gender-neutral pronouns with students and colleagues. They explained how through their gender presentation they had been assumed as a lesbian by students, an intelligible LGBT+ identity within the school, but did not feel the need to correct students with their true identity. Jack and Max spoke in great detail about the difficulty of making their sexualities visible and spoke of numerous instances of bi-erasure (Elia 2014), where they were assumed to be gay or straight due to their relationships, making their bisexuality invisible. They also felt insidious

views still existed about their bisexuality, such as being promiscuous or untrustworthy, which viewed through the lens of homonormativity, demonstrates a shift in acceptance as these were views that were commonly ascribed to gay men.

Nadine felt that she did not embody traditional cisgender femininity and often felt incongruous with her environment and colleagues, leading to significant anxiety. These four teachers in particular stand in contrast to the other lesbian, gay and trans participants. These participants embodied their gender or sexual identities in ways that were both intelligible and acceptable within their schools. Whether this was gay and lesbian teachers who presented traditional gender performance and heteronormative ideals through their sexual citizenship, e.g., in monogamous relationships or as parents, or in Alfie's case, a camp man who was gay, which was therefore intelligible to others. In contrast, Max explained how his traditional gender performance both confused and created discomfort among colleagues when he explained he dated both men and women. James and Amy, the two trans teachers in this study described environments in which they were supported and able to thrive. Both trans teachers operated within gender normative binaries; James embodied traditional masculinity and Amy, through stealth, was often assumed as a cisgender female.

I highlight the two trans teachers as they presented genders that were intelligible to the male/female binaries within school and therefore found acceptance and inclusion. If their gender presentation existed outside of the male/female binary, they may have experienced inclusion differently, like Nadine and Jenny. Although LGBT+ inclusion has progressed significantly, inclusion still appears to exist within the narrow parameters of homonormativity. For true inclusion and integration to be achieved,

binaries need to be challenged and dismantled, making way for more nuanced, fluid conceptions of gender and sexuality.

Visibility

The second theme explored in this thesis was visibility. Patai's (1992) and Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2010) concepts of surplus visibility and passing, bordering and polluting visibility were employed to conceptualise the ways in which LGBT+ teachers are visible (and invisible) in contrast to the heternormativity of their schools. Earlier in the thesis, I shared a quote used by DePalma and Atkinson (2009), exemplify the types of narratives that are predominantly associated with openly gay and lesbian teachers within existing literature.

> *The lesbian or gay outsider, then, can be an outsider in insider's clothing. and herein lies the rub: to choose to be "out" opens one to potential harassment, discrimination, denigration, and violence; to choose to be closeted stunts the development of friendships, support networks, and emotional and mental development needed for healthy living. For the gay or lesbian student, teacher, or academician, life becomes a tight wire act: the illusion of safety on one side, the hope of authenticity on the other (Birden 2004 p21).*

I hope this thesis presents a new, contemporary narrative; one that provides a less inflammatory understanding of the challenges of being an LGBT+ teacher, as typified by this quote and much of the existing literature. I also hope it highlights the enormous benefits and opportunities that can arise from being openly LGBT+ as a teacher. Surplus visibility describes a form of hyper-visibility, where minorities are seen to represent the views of an entire minority group and "their mere

presence seems excessive" (DePalma and Atkinson 2009 p887). DePalma and Atkinson further argue that "LGBT teachers are denied the powerful position of simple visibility, a third option reserved only for the majority group" (p887). I would like to argue that, although within the confines of homonormativity, some teachers in this study had access to new forms of visibility. The teachers may not have had the 'simple visibility' their cis/straight colleagues had access to but were able to present forms of 'normalised' visibility, and even forms of visibility that carried significant capital. Coleman-Fountain (2014) uses 'post-gay' to describe an 'ordinariness' that some now associate with being gay or lesbian. Post-gay also suggests a view in which sexuality is considered a secondary thread of an individuals' identity, rather than the defining feature, as described by surplus visibility. This contemporary view of what it means to be visible as a gay or lesbian person was evident in some of the examples in the study, particularly with the gay men.

A criticism of the LGBT+ rights movement is that historically the narrative has focussed on the rights of gay men. This focus may explain why some gay men, and to a lesser extent, women, have been able to achieve a normalised form of visibility that assimilates into, without disrupting, the existing norms of schools. The LGBT+ teachers that were able to achieve a form of normalised visibility very much align with the earlier discussions of a 'new homonormative', where the identities that gained greatest acceptance were the ones that aligned with heteronormative ideals. This post-gay possibility was also contingent on the 'social fields' in which each teacher existed, as explored shortly.

Although not all the teachers had access to a normalised form of visibility, some managed to turn this lack of access into an advantage. Ferfolja's description of polluting visibility of one as "strength, agency and

empowerment" (p62) can be employed here to conceptualise the advantages available to some of the LGBT+ teachers through their visibility. Alfie and James both spoke about how their embodiment of their gender/sexuality immediately made them visible, initially placing them as a source of tension among the silent expectations of heteronormativity. In being forced to address their difference with their classes, usually in the first lesson, these teachers were able to present an LGBT+ role model to their students and have open and honest conversations. Through giving the students an opportunity to hear the lived experience of a role model, the teachers were creating moments of degrounding in which students were able to develop an empathetic understanding of what it is to be LGBT+. Both Alfie and James thought this honesty had allowed them to create stronger relationships with their groups, where the students had gone on to become allies for LGBT+ inclusion. Max spoke of similar incidents, where open discussion of bisexuality in the classroom had made students begin to self-police their language and remove assumptions in the way they asked questions about gender and sexuality. These are just a few of the examples in this research where teachers spoke of the transformational power of their visibility. It also suggests we should think about the spectrum of LGBT+ visibility in new ways. Much of the existing literature presents a victim narrative for LGBT+ teachers, and although we have seen evidence of this, we have also seen the ways in which LGBT+ identities can be seen as an asset, even carrying a form of cultural capital.

Cultural capital (Bourdieu and Richardson 1986) has been conceptualised in recent scholarship to consider the forms of knowledge, advantage and privilege that belong to groups, such as the LGBT+ community. The capital available to LGBT+ populations has been described as gay capital (Morris 2018) and queer capital (Pennell 2016). These forms of capital are

examined within a range of contexts, often considering the capital LGBT+ individuals have access to in LGBT+ spaces or among LGBT+ peers. However, Pennell examines how queer capital can transgress beyond this to proactively push boundaries and challenge norms.

> *Transgressive capital, then, indicates the ways in which communities (queer or other minoritized groups) proactively challenge and move beyond boundaries that limit and bind them, creating their own reality (Pennell 2016 p329).*

Pennell argues that queer capital can be used to provide positive examples of LGBT+ role models and to ensure the narrative surrounding LGBT+ inclusion is focussed on positivity and not one that is solely associated with negativity and issue making (Lundin 2011). The examples from James, Alfie and Max give examples of what queer capital might look like. Having a visibly queer identity in a heteronormative environment produces a form of transgression that these teachers had leant into and were able to reap the benefits of. Not only had they been able to challenge and move the boundaries within their classroom, but they also had access to powerful relationships with their students. In coming out to their students, these teachers had shown a level of honesty and vulnerability that gave students an insight into the lived experience of an LGBT+ person and role model. These transgressive acts had created a form of allyship in which students developed respect and empathy not only for the teacher, but also the LGBT+ community that they were a part of.

A lot of the negative stories in this research involved participants' colleagues, whereas a lot of the positive ones involved students. Max's queer capital seemed to only exist among his students, as the earlier

examples of issue making and bi-erasure mostly happened among colleagues. This could link to Lucy's earlier point that students often have a sophistication of language or a receptiveness to new ideas that adults may not. It also helps identify where pre-existing LGBT-phobic attitudes may exist. As Morris argues "for gay capital to exist, it is necessary that homophobia (and homohysteria) has diminished or disappeared from the social fields" (Morris 2018 p1199). Morris' definition of where gay capital can and cannot exist offers an interesting approach to consider the spaces within school that are experienced as inclusive.

Several teachers took photos of their classrooms to represent spaces in which they felt safe. These were spaces where they had authority and the ability to create a 'social field' in which they and other LGBT+ identities could be celebrated and where any discriminatory issues could be appropriately accounted for and sanctioned. These structured environments stood in contrast to photos that represented unsafe spaces, such as playgrounds, fields, halls and staff rooms. These spaces have been conceptualised as spaces of panoptic surveillance, where individuals are always visible and may feel the need to self-police their behaviours for fear of being seen as LGBT+. This need to self-police in many instances was not based upon any issues that had occurred in the school, but was a perceived fear, likely to have come from earlier experiences in life. Even though these spaces were often 'social fields' where the participant had never experienced any issues relating to their sexuality or gender, the discomfort they experienced in these spaces was no less valid. Kate spoke of how the discrimination she had experienced at her old school had made her extremely anxious in being seen as LGBT+ in her new school, and Raj spoke of his anxieties in giving assemblies in case someone said something homophobic. This perceived fear raises an interesting question about whether schools are doing enough to make

their spaces fully inclusive, as opposed to presenting heteronormative spaces that are simply LGBT+ tolerant. If schools have strong policies to deal with discrimination, no recorded incidents of LGBT-phobic behaviour and have LGBT+ content within their curriculum, they may consider themselves to be inclusive and meeting their requirements to Ofsted and The Equality Act (2010). However, if LGBT+ colleagues still feel discomfort in these environments, more needs to be done to develop truly inclusive spaces.

The photo elicitation approach to this project revealed themes that in some cases were not even apparent to the participants until the interviews. The themes of perceived threats and panoptic spaces emerged through the participants voicing the significance of these spaces. As Harper (2002) argues, visual images evoke deeper parts of human consciousness than words do. If the participants themselves did not know the significance of these spaces until being asked to critically engage with them, then it is almost certain that leadership teams would not understand the impact these spaces can have. The methodology used for this research is one that progressive leadership teams could consider engaging with in their school community to gain new understandings, experienced through the eyes of their staff and students. Leadership teams could ask marginalised groups to engage with their environment in the way this study did. Although not as effective, a simpler version would be for leadership teams to go on a walk around their school and experience the environment through the critical lens of a minority group. This would provide an opportunity for 'horizon scanning' (Lee 2020), in which leadership teams could critically engage with what does and does not represent marginalised groups in their school and the spaces in which they may not feel safe or included. These approaches would help develop the critical understanding of what it is to experience an environment that

is often not designed to include diverse sexual and gender identities. In doing this, schools can identify what they do well, and what may further need to be done to ensure inclusive environments for all.

Closing Comments

Completing this EdD and having the opportunity to listen to the experiences of such an incredible range of LGBT+ teachers has been a great privilege. It was extremely important for me to present the stories of these 12 LGBT+ teachers as honestly and fully as possible within this thesis. Although limited by the word count, I hope I have managed to present the lived experiences of each participant in a sensitive, honest and nuanced way. Each teacher had a unique story to tell, and each story contributed something new and exciting to the findings of this thesis.

The intention of this study was to present a contemporary understanding of the lived experiences of LGBT+ teachers in English secondary schools. I believe the title of the thesis, 'Changing The Narrative', captures what this contemporary understanding needs to be. Although much work still needs to be done, we need to present new and alternative narratives about what is it to be an LGBT+ teacher. Narratives that address the challenges as well as highlight the enormous opportunities, as if there is one thing this research has shown, it is how powerful an LGBT+ identity can be.

Appendices

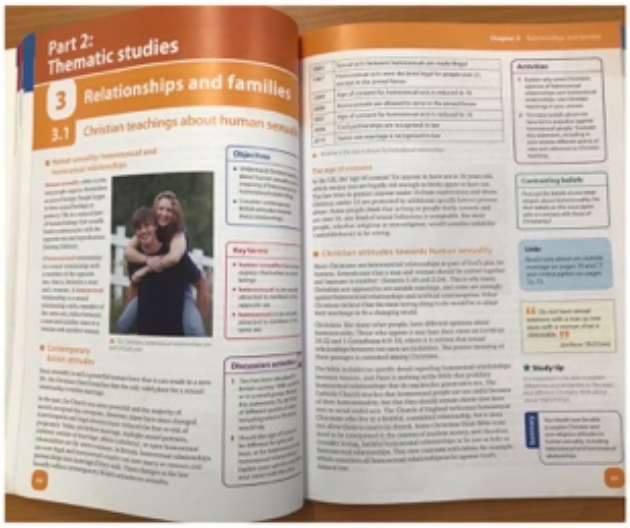
Appendix 1: Photos

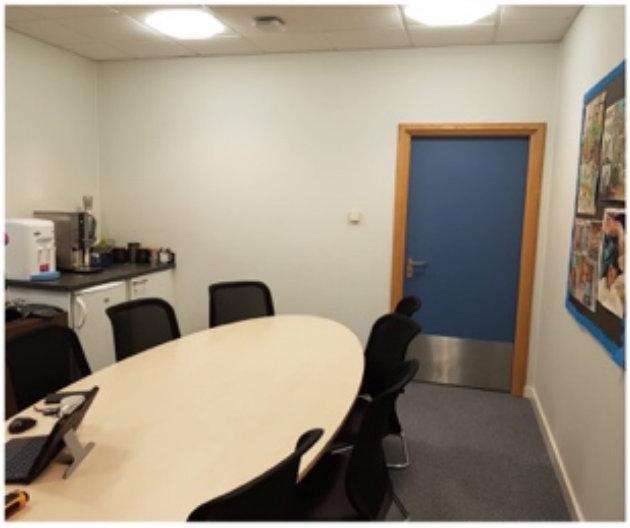
Artefacts promoting LGBT+ inclusivity


RE
Bishop Gene Robinson
(1947-)
American retired bishop
First man in an openly gay relationship to be elected bishop
Voted USA's 7th most influential gay person
Delivered invocation at President Obama's inaugural weekend
Gay man
Schools OUT UK
TOGE THER WITH PRIDE
STARBUCKS
To everyone in Boxing Club
Happy New Year!
If you support LGBT+ community please send a card back.
From Pride + Equality club
SOME PEOPLE ARE GAY. GET OVER IT!
GET ANGRY GET INVOLVED
IGNORANCE = FEAR
SILENCE = DEATH
FIGHT AIDS ACT UP
Stonewall SCHOOL CHAMPIONS
Life would be boring if we were all the same
Be proud of who you are
It's illegal to discriminate against LGBT+ people
Be yourself, everyone else is already taken
Homophobia has no place in our school
Transphobia has no place in our school
Biphobia has no place in our school
EQUALITY
Love, not hate.


SOME PEOPLE ARE BI. GET OVER IT!
WORD OF WONDER
Heteronormative
Ask me what this word means!
I won't stay silent because...
SHH! SILENCE HELPS HOMOPHOBIA
Stand up, speak out!
HE'S GAY AND WE'RE COOL WITH THAT
LGBT+ MASS
A MONTHLY CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST FOR LGBT+ CATHOLICS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS
ALL ARE WELCOME
EVERY THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
3:00PM
FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS AND SOCIAL
STARTS SUNDAY 17TH MARCH 2019
SOME PEOPLE ARE LESBIANS. GET OVER IT!

Spaces, situations or artefacts that made participants visible as an LGBT+ teacher:


Part 2:
Thematic studies
3
Relationships and families
3.1
Christian teachings about human sexuality



Safe spaces

Unsafe spaces

Appendix 2: Initial Codebook

Theme	Description	References
Visibility and surplus visibility	How 'visible' teachers feel because they were LGBT+	42
Heteronormativity	Situations where heterosexuality was assumed as the norm	33
Personal and professional boundaries	The blurring of the lines of being a teacher and being LGBT+	29
Silence or invisible	No mention of LGBT+ issues, whether purposefully or not	27
Fear of reaction	Teachers fear of being found out to be LGBT+	24
Safe and unsafe spaces	Areas in the school LGBT+ teachers feel safe and unsafe	24
Curriculum	How LGBT+ content is formally included/excluded in the curriculum	22
Indifference or not a priority	Where LGBT+ issues are not a top priority due to the indifference of colleagues or the leadership team	22
Personation and role models	The importance of having real LGBT+ role models in school	22
Queer-phobia	Examples of gay, lesbian, bi or trans-phobia	20
Trans	Examples of trans issues in school	20
LG Vs BT and non-conformity	Looking at which aspects of 'LGBT+' are and are not accepted/included in school	18
Homonormativity	When LGBT+ issues are aligned with acceptable heterosexual behaviours and beliefs	17
Faith Schools	Conflict between LGBT+ and faith schools	15
Gendered spaces and aspects	Aspects of the school and school life that are gendered	14
Posters, Flags and Displays	Any LGBT visibility in school e.g., rainbow lanyards, posters etc.	14
Coming out	Any time a teacher had to reveal their LGBT+ status to students or colleagues	12
Improvements and progress	How LGBT+ inclusivity has developed and improved	12
Passing	Concealing LGBT+ identity to 'pass' as heterosexual of cisgender	12
Toilets	Issues relating to toilets	10
Visibility not sayability	Schools that may have displays and posters but no discussion or culture for LGBT+	10
Vocabulary	Having the correct language to discuss LGBT+ issues	10
Assumption of heterosexuality	Examples of where it's been assumed the participant was heterosexual	9
Inappropriate topic for discussion	Where discussing LGBT+ was considered unacceptable or inappropriate for school	8

Problematic	When LGBT+ gets conflated with issues such as pedophilia and sexual inappropriacy	7
Normalising	Examples of when discussing LGBT+ issues are done to make it a 'normal', everyday topic	6
Responsibility of LGBT+ teachers	LGBT+ issues only get addressed in school by LGBT+ teachers that take it upon themselves	6
Section 28	References to the impact of Section 28	3

Appendix 3: Visibility Codebook

Name	Description	References
Embodied teacher	Discussions of their embodiment as an LGBT+ teacher, including clothes, behavior etc.	19
Passing	Being assumed to be straight	19
Coming out or being a role model	Examples of coming out or discussion of being a role model	17
Surplus visibility	When teachers' felt their identity was defined by their LGBT+ identity	16
Artefacts encouraging visibility	Things that made the teacher feel comfortable to be visible	14
Perceived threat	The fear of incidents occurring due to being LGBT+	14
Polluting	Using your position to challenge heteronorms	12
Being asked by students	Instances where students would ask if the teacher was LGBT+	11
Clash with professionalism	Times teachers felt like their identity caused issues or clashed with their professional identity	11
Professional gay	When a teacher's LGBT+ identity is 'professionalised' often by becoming responsible for LGBT+ inclusion	11
Relationship status	Discussion of their relationship status with students	11
Safe spaces	Spaces they felt safe as an LGBT+ teacher	9
Homonormative	Examples of LGBT+ visibility being aligned with heterosexual expectations	8
Discussion with SLT or staff	Specific conversations with colleagues about being LGBT+	7
Glass closet	Teacher who felt they were visibly or 'obviously' LGBT+	7
LGBT- phobia	Specific instances of LGBT-phobic behaviour	7
Panoptic spaces	Spaces where LGBT+ teachers felt exposed or hyper visible	7
Staff support	Feeling supported by colleagues	6
Discussion of desire	Examples of talking about sexuality/sexual desire	5
Gendered spaces	Discussion of gendered spaces in the school	5
Problematic or paedophilia	Conflation of LGBT+ identity with paedophilia or unfavorable practices	5

Banned from discussing	Explicitly being told not to discuss being LGBT+	4
Stealth	Using their 'passing' visibility to challenge heteronorms	3

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