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Sex Education and Sexual Orientation in the UK: Policy and Experience in the Classroom

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Sex Education and Sexual Orientation in the UK: Policy and Experience in the Classroom

This thesis examines sex education in the UK. The project presents an account of current policies and materials in practice, in addition to the primary focus of providing an up-to-date participant account of sex education with specific focus on sexual orientation in English classrooms. This study utilised a multi-method approach comprised of several interlinking parts; a literature analysis of policy and sex education materials, a questionnaire-based survey with sixth form students and interviews/focus groups with LGBT identified young people. These provide a snapshot of current issues surrounding sex education and sexual orientation through experiences in the classroom.

It is shown that a public health discourse, at best, guides the topics that are commonly discussed in sex education, both in policy and practice. At worst, it omits various important and contentious issues such as sexual orientation, which are necessary in ensuring a holistic programme. Guidance at the national level is superficial and open to interpretation - this then filters down to the local level which leads to inconsistencies across policies, though it was found that some policies at the local level were both comprehensive and inclusive. While there were classroom materials found to be inclusive of social sex education, these were reportedly not frequently incorporated into the classroom. In the empirical data, young people commonly acknowledged that sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy dominated classroom discussions to the detriment and exclusion of other topics identified as important by the participants. This lack of holism contributed to the prevailing notion that sex education was heteronormative, and was perceived to be the result of social inequalities and past political views.

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After a long and gruelling road, it is important that I thank several people who made this possible, both in love and support, and through guidance and criticism. Archimedes once said, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the world". Well, as I am still trying to move the world, what I have succeeded at was moving around the world. So, first and foremost I would like to thank the one who has been with me through all of this schooling across three continents, my wife Heidi Heddings and of course our husky Anakin. Without you, this journey would have proved impossible and for that, I am eternally grateful. For this, I can only say thank you so much for tolerating all of my stupid o'clock hours, rants about seemingly meaningless things and trips around the world presenting at conferences. And Heidi (though Ani is a smart cookie), I only hope that I can go on to provide that support for you on your current academic journey.

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Thesis Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background

Formal education is widely regarded as an important part of childhood, as demonstrated by being a legal requirement in over 90 percent of countries worldwide (Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992). Basic components include the natural sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry and biology); social sciences (e.g. psychology, social studies and geography); languages; physical education and often, some form of sexuality education (often shortened to sex education). While many of these courses are offered in some variation worldwide, albeit politically and contextually staged by culture and history (Haeberle 1981; Pollis 1988), sex education is one course in particular that often carries a stigma (UNESCO 2008). This stigma causes a reluctance to discuss a topic commonly perceived as private and sensitive, especially in some countries such as the United States and United Kingdom (Irvine 2008), which results in varying degrees of implementation into curricula. However, this is not the case everywhere as demonstrated by the successful integration and normalisation in countries such as Finland and Denmark (Weeks 2003, p. 98; Wellings and Parker 2006).

In England, among several other countries, sex education has been controversial and debated for decades (Grunseit, Kippax, Aggleton, Baldo and Slutkin 1997, p. 42; Formby 2011, p. 256). During this time, the political, health, and religious spheres have continuously debated the necessity of sex education in terms of whether it addresses public health concerns, as advertised, or whether it has negative implications such as diminishing morality. Thus, the status of sex education in England can be argued to be less progressive in terms of content and structure than other European countries such as Austria, Belgium, and Norway (Wellings and Parker 2006). This in part may be due to the implicit heteronormativity that exists in English sex education programmes (Hirst 2004), which ultimately forms a large component of this thesis.

Though there is significant research on sex education in England and substantial literature involving students themselves, there is relatively little literature that examines sex education in terms of heteronormativity when relating it to students' experiences, especially that of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT) young people. This thesis provides a contemporary account of how sex education is experienced and understood by students, particularly LGBT students, in southeast England. Specifically, I will examine three interrelated

facets of sex education (sex education policies, sex education material and views of the sex education from the students' perspectives), with a continuing effort to analyse sexual orientation as it relates to these facets. The first facet - policy - is important in understanding how the government, local authorities, and schools define and interpret sex education. Materials, the second facet, provide a lens on how policy is enacted in the classroom. By examining recommended materials, it should become evident how specific schools choose to enact sex education. Finally, the third facet adds the views of young people/students to the discussion. By speaking directly to the 'users' of sex education, I assess how this enactment in the classroom occurs, (from my participants' perspectives). The importance of each of these facets are further explicated when considering the rationale, aims, objectives, and research questions for this thesis.

1.2 Rationale for the Research

The rationale for this thesis is multi-faceted. These facets include the personal, professional and academic motivations for undertaking this research. I will follow the order listed as this best situates the level of importance given to each facet in conceptualisation. I then conclude with the overarching theoretical arguments for the relevance of this research.

Having attended a large university for my undergraduate education in the United States, I developed friendships and became acquainted with people from various places around the country. In this group of friends, I met two individuals who would later influence my desire to research a facet of LGBT rights. One of these friends came out to me as gay (Ben), while the other made a male to female transition (Jill). Ben did not have much trouble when he came out in university, but he had been forced back 'into the closet' when he attempted to come out several years prior, while still in secondary school. Jill, on the other hand, found herself ridiculed on occasion during her initial transition from male to female. However, this was not the only issue that Jill had to face. For instance, as she was part of a large organisation that travelled, there were issues with deciding how best to class Jill. One such issue was during hotel room assignments when travelling away from the university. Ultimately, this led to her being assigned her own room.

While our university was open and accepting, some people could not grasp the concept of gender or its fluidity. The subsequent treatment of those perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender at my university, by this minority, impacted on me on an emotional

level. Ultimately, it informed my choice to continue identifying ways to educate young people on acceptance of diverse identities, not just tolerance. The experience also led me to want to find ways to help those young adults who might be struggling with their gender or sexuality. The best way I felt that I could affect the outcomes for these young people moving forward was through education. However, this first required a better understanding of what was happening in the classroom, leading to the development of this research study.

The professional motivation for this thesis lies in my continued engagement with sexual health and sexual wellbeing. I completed a Master of Health Science in Sexual Health after becoming interested in this field during my time working in the Student Wellness Center as an undergraduate. Following this, I wanted to address some of the disparities that became evident during these two periods of my education. This was further augmented when I accepted a post in a sexual health programme within the National Health Service upon my relocation to England. In this role, I provided administrative support and database management for the local branch of the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP). In addition, I was afforded multiple other opportunities during my time in the team such as involvement in an outreach capacity providing Chlamydia education and screens to local colleges, universities and businesses (who employed a high number of those less than 25 years of age). While I was aware of the gaps in sexual health knowledge, traditionally associated with 'weak sex education', I witnessed first-hand that these gaps were even more profound than I had originally thought.

A second opportunity that arose during my time with the NCSP was the opportunity to conduct frontline research around the barriers to accessing free condoms in our city. With the support of my manager, we conducted a robust study that utilised mystery shopping, focus groups and surveys to ascertain the extent of difficulty that was faced by the average young person attempting to acquire free condoms. Ultimately, the results from this project underlined the need to address the discrepancies that are referred to throughout this thesis. Further, these frontline opportunities positioned me as a practitioner researcher, which informed my methodological approach, and will be discussed in chapter 3.

The academic rationale stems from Hillier and Mitchell's (2008) work, demonstrating the perceived *uselessness*[1] of sex education for same-sex attracted young people as it was not inclusive of their needs. Hirst (2004), several years earlier, noted in her study of English

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[1] While ineffectiveness would be more appropriate, the decision to use uselessness refers to the perceptions of sex education conveyed by the participants in the original study.

schools, that sex education appeared to have a prevailing heteronormative approach in the classroom. Atkinson (2002), McClain (2006), DePalma and Atkinson (2006) and Cohen (2009) all note the pervasive heteronormative attitude that not only influences the conduct of sex education but education in general. This is not solely noticed in academic discourse, but also public discourse more broadly. Teachers and students alike, including many that took part in this research, noticed the ubiquitousness of heterosexual privilege, even if they were not aware of the term heteronormativity. This indicates the importance of examining sex education from both theoretical (policy) and practical perspectives. As DePalma and Jennet (2010) note, this attitude of privilege occurs in children as young as primary school age, thus the need to tackle the phenomenon as early as possible.

Finally, I chose to conduct this study in England as I felt that it was necessary to research a system in which sex education was established and part of the curriculum. This would not be feasible in many US schools as there is no overarching curriculum that schools must adhere to on either the federal or state level. Therefore, I identified England as providing a suitable locale as it had a national curriculum, including sex education, in place for several years before the commencement of this research.

1.3 Personal, Professional, and Academic Positioning

Having presented the motivations for undertaking this research, I now move on to discuss other factors that have influenced the way in which the research and thesis have developed. This section details the facets described in the *Rationale* section but focuses on the pragmatic aspects of the construction of this research.

Having explicated the motivation to conduct this research in England, this was not an easy transition from a personal stance. While British and American cultures share many similarities, there are also many differences. These differences extend from language and word usage, to government processes. Immersing myself in a new system to undertake a project required a vast amount of contextual knowledge to acclimate myself with the history and systems of England, especially concerning schooling, sex education and liberation movements (e.g. sexual revolution, gay rights and feminism). Each of these aspects of English culture required additional knowledge that is not overtly contained within this thesis, yet shaped the way in which I proceeded to develop and carry out this research. In some instances, it may

become apparent that aspects of education, which seem commonplace to the English, are discussed in depth to enable an enhanced understanding of the processes involved.

In addition to the personal challenges that needed to be overcome to successfully complete this research, it was apparent that my work in the field would also play a role in the way in which this project would proceed. While I discuss the ethical dilemmas and challenges of practitioner research later in the thesis (see subsection 3.5.4), it is important firstly to provide a brief overview of my professional positioning relative to sexual health and sex education concerns.

Less than six months after commencing my first year, I began working for the National Health Service in Sexual Health. This was an important transition as I was now working in a parallel field to that in which I was conducting research and returning to my roots in sexual health and wellbeing. This undoubtedly had an effect on the way in which I modelled the survey and structured the qualitative schedules. Furthermore, the theoretical foundations developed as I developed as a professional: This contributed to the academic framework and guided the solidifying of the aims and objectives detailed in the next section, and the research questions presented in section 1.5.

Finally, before specifying what this thesis sets out to do, it is also important to discuss the disciplinary shift that I undertook to conduct this research. This study was originally conceptualised as research on sex education from a psychological and public health viewpoint; therefore, integrating policy and social theory was a new perspective and one that required the most effort to overcome deficiencies in my previously held convictions in sexual health and sex education. Thus, I decided to approach the research through focussing more on in-depth qualitative data, drawing on sociological techniques, alongside broad quantitative data, which is typically the main focus in public health research. This presented a new challenge in that framing the questions, collecting data, and conducting analysis all required a slightly different skill sets and language, which should become more apparent throughout the subsequent two chapters.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim, and subsequently the objectives, of this thesis is to allow for conclusions to be drawn about how young people (especially LGBT identified young people) perceive their sex education experience in the southeast of England (with particular focus on sexuality and sexual

orientation as an identity and an education theme), while linking these experiences to educational and policy contexts. This study aims to make recommendations on how to progress sex education in the school setting, with regard to both the policy needed to ensure that schools are providing adequate assistance to young people, as well as utilising materials that help achieve a holistic programme.

This aim is achieved by eliciting views from current sixth form students who have just recently completed secondary schooling, speaking with LGBT young people about their experiences of sex education and reviewing the policies and materials used to approach the topic of sex education in schools. In addition to these objectives, it is important to (a) review the history of sex education in England, (b) understand the link between government policy and localised school policies, and (c) review sex education material in schools and the subsequent use of these resources. The latter two points are unique to this thesis, especially in a local context. More specifically, the information provided through the localised policies and materials are often absent in research on sex education, due to what I argue is a perceived lack of association to the quality of sex education in a context where it is common to expect that national policy/guidance be adhered to as uniformly as possible across schools. This association is central to this thesis and will assist in qualifying the results presented in the empirical chapters.

1.5 Research Questions

For this thesis, there are four research questions:

(1) How is heteronormativity manifest in historical and contemporary sex education curricula and policies?

(2) What is the content and quality of the materials and policies of sex education in southeast England?

(3) How do students in a variety of educational settings perceive their sex education?

(4) What are the perceived differences in the way in which sexual orientation is presented and accepted in the classroom, in terms of curriculum and from an LGBT young person's perspective?

These questions have been devised on the basis of personal and professional experience in the field of sexual health and wellness, in addition to literature that suggests that there is a concern over the usefulness of sex education for those who identify as anything other than straight (Buston and Hart 2002; Hillier and Mitchell 2008; Formby 2011).

1.6 Scope and Bounds

The scope of this research project is broken down into three sections, which answer the questions raised in section 1.5. The first component of this research examines the views of young people (16-18 years of age) in southeast England regarding their recently undertaken sex education programmes. This examination was twofold and completed via a survey distributed in schools and through focus groups and interviews. Questions ranging from eliciting individual's perceptions of the curriculum, to topics discussed in the classroom were asked. The survey was given to current students, as this was the most practical way to obtain a sample of young people within the appropriate age range in the researched geographical area. Similarly, the focus groups and interviews were conducted with a small sample identifying as LGBT in the same region. Unfortunately, with this scope, it may be difficult to generalise to other regions of the UK. However, it will still explore the experiences of these young people and provide evidence of the efficiency and effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the sex education component of the National Curriculum.

The second component of this study is comprised of similarly aged and geographically located young people to the first, but focuses solely on LGBT young people and their views of sex and relationship education (SRE) programmes and the usefulness that these programmes have in their lives. While this component may have been completed using the survey, the utilisation of focus groups was decided upon to facilitate a more in-depth understanding. Further, the utility of these focus groups also includes further exploration of relevant topics, probing and the ability to seek clarification from participants, if necessary.

The final component involves the collection of contemporary government and school literature for an analysis of their content concerning sexual orientation within the SRE programme. Government literature from England since the repeal of section 28 will be collected and analysed focusing on policies that have affected both the LGBT population and the inclusion of non-heteronormative material within sex education. This will parallel the localised search for schools' sex education material used to supplement learning.

While this thesis provides a well-documented account of how sex education is conducted and perceived in southeast England, it is difficult to generalise the findings to other regions of the country. However, since there are some commonalities to the rest of the country, such as the national guidance and National Curriculum, as well as students who may have attended schools in multiple regions, inferences are possible to these areas. However, it is recognised that care must be taken not to assume that each area struggles with the same concerns discovered in this research.

1.7 Methodological Framework and Methods

It was important to select a combination of methods that could both provide an overview, yet allow for an in-depth analysis of key points relevant to assessing young people's current views of sex education. Thus, four methods were chosen. First, a survey was selected to assess general views of sex education and provide a broad evidence base to contribute to answering each of the four research questions. Second, a documentary analysis was used to describe current policy from the macro (national government) to the micro level (individual schools). Further, a chapter was dedicated to a sample of supplemental materials, which presents the variety of literature available, as well as demonstrating that there are specialised materials for LGBT inclusion. This documentary analysis contributes information for resolving research question one. Finally, focus groups and interviews were selected to provide an in-depth understanding of LGBT young people's experiences in the school setting, which assist in answering questions two, three, and four. Each of these methods utilise their strengths to produce results, while also complementing the other methods to provide a well-rounded approach.

1.8 Relevant Terminology

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT)

Throughout this work, the acronym LGBT[2] (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) is used to refer to the gay and lesbian community, as well as the wider group of those who

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[2] While this acronym is problematic in the grouping of sexual orientation with gender identification, I have chosen to include individuals who identify as transgender with their LGB identified peers due to the shared hostility and marginalisation often experienced by both groups. This proved useful as there were two transgendered participants who took part in the focus groups/interviews.

identify with a non-binary gender or sexual orientation (GLAAD 2010). Though today gay and lesbian are the socially accepted terms to identify same-sex attracted individuals, there are various other terms that may still be in use in research literature, especially psycho-medical literature. For example, homosexual or MSM/WSW (men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women), which are considered controversial by some groups can be found (GLAAD 2010). These terms will be dependent on whether individuals are looking to describe identity through behaviour or self-attribution.

Given the largely inductive nature of this research, it is appropriate to use terms that are embraced by the population in which this research is undertaken and as suggested by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). It may also be the case in this review that while the terms gay and lesbian are used to identify young men and young women respectively, it is also common practice to use the term gay as an all-encompassing term across both genders (Zastrow 2009, p. 229). Occasionally the acronym LGB will be used when there were no transgender young people speaking on the subject. Conversely, the use of LGBTQ or QQ will be used if the organisation that is being referenced categorises 'questioning' or 'queer' into their acronym.

Sex Education

'Sexuality education' encompasses learning about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive, and physical aspects of sexuality (WHO 2010). This is a standard definition incorporating all of the generally accepted facets of a complex subject. While the contextual application of this term in the UK will be presented in the next chapter, it is important to have an overarching understanding of sex education moving forward. For this thesis, it was necessary to choose the appropriate all-encompassing term to refer to a multi-faceted sex education. Stemming from my personal educational history and experience in the field as described above, it was important to ensure that the term chosen adequately described the subject being researched. Therefore, an understanding of the choice to use the term 'holistic' to describe the programme instead of the traditional term 'comprehensive' is important. Moving forwards, I refer to holistic sexuality education, but in many aspects, this new concept parallels that of the former comprehensive sex education. While these terms should have the same connotation, unfortunately, due to the discourse surrounding how sexuality was viewed, a shift away from the prevailing thoughts required a shift in language. As stated in the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2010) guidance:

> . . . pleas to introduce sexuality education in schools have changed over the years and they have differed between countries ranging from the prevention of unintended pregnancies to that of HIV and other STI [sexually transmitted infections]. In addition. . . calls for sexuality education for younger children . . . has been supported by a change in the perception of the child in general . . . These different motivations have gradually converged in the direction of more holistic views on sexuality education (p. 11).

This excerpt highlights the need for new terminology and a new 'face' for sex education.

In addition, in the United Kingdom, sex education is officially termed Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), which falls under the remit of Personal, Social, Health (and occasionally Economics) Education (PSHE or PSHEE). As this work is about UK sex education, I may refer to SRE or PSHE(E); however, I have chosen to use the label of 'sex education' interchangeably with the localised terminology.

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a term that has gained a following since its first published use in the early 1990s and has now taken on a variety of different meanings. For this thesis, I will refer to the definition used in a later work by the original author, Warner (1991). This definition reads, 'the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organised as a sexuality – but also privileged' (Berlant and Warner 2008, p. 548).

1.9 Organisation of Thesis

The structure of this thesis has been the subject of reorganisation throughout the writing process. Ultimately, I have chosen to use the following structure. Chapter 1: Introduction - This chapter includes a brief introduction to the thesis. It serves to familiarise the reader with the project. In doing so, the aims, objectives and scope, rationale, methods, and key terminology are introduced to the reader to clarify the way in which this project was conceptualised and conducted.

Chapter 2: Literature Review - This chapter covers an introduction to policy and to previous literature that documents and elaborates on the progression of sex education while setting it within the context of the social, the political, the cultural and the individual. Each of these components will provide an account that brings us to our current understanding of sex education in England. Also in this chapter, the theoretical orientation is presented, which positions sex education amidst identity, pedagogical discourse, and educational paradigms.

Chapter 3: Study Methodology - This chapter provides an in-depth justification for the methodological approaches used for the empirical aspects of this study, which includes documentary analysis, surveys, focus groups, and interviews. It is here that the justification for the selection of these methods are presented, as well as coverage of issues relating to generalisability, reliability, bias, and the ethical considerations needed for this study.

Chapter 4: Critical Account of Sex Education Policies and Guidance - This chapter contains the examination of the documents accessed for the purpose of understanding government guidance and school policies on the way sex education is currently taught and whether marginalisation occurs in regards to sexual orientation. Beginning at the top with the national government guidance, I form a hierarchy that then examines policies on a local council level, followed by the school level.

Chapter 5: Brief Account of Locally Recommended (Optional) Materials - This chapter covers a selection of the material that is recommended for use in the classroom. Examples include workbooks and worksheets, which all schools in the geographical area have access through the online school portal. This will ensure that the material that I describe will be that which is widely available at the local level, for use in the classroom.

Chapter 6: Quantitative Data (Survey Results) - This chapter provides the results of the quantitative data collected through the distributed surveys with students. Several areas are examined, such as personal views on the importance of sex education, opinions on the appropriateness of topics in the classroom, as well as recollections of what students were taught during their sex education lessons.

Chapter 7: Qualitative Data (Focus Group and Interview Results) - This chapter presents and examines the qualitative material obtained with LGBT young people through a series of focus groups and interviews. The organisation of the chapter will revolve around the key themes that emerged from the discussions, as well the sub-themes that revealed the most important information about these young people's recollection of the quality, comprehensiveness, and opinions of their sex education.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion - This final chapter provides a venue for discussion of what was learned, the recommendations that can be made from the data collected, and what needs to be investigated further through research and policy development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review on Sexuality, Education, and Sex Education

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

Sex education is only one facet of education and an even smaller component of the politicised institution of education as a whole. Thus, it is important to gain an understanding of sex education in the context of the overarching institution of education and the society in which it is placed. In this chapter, I aim to provide the context that is needed to understand the long-standing history and complexities of sex education moving from a macro lens to a more focused examination of sex education specifically in Britain.

I first present a brief overview of policy, which provides a framework for understanding education and, more specifically, sex education in the classroom. Following this, a summary of the nature of schooling in the UK is provided which, in conjunction with policy, offers a foundation for understanding sex education in Britain. Then the definition of sex education that is used within this thesis is set out before elucidating the history of sex education through an exploration of the evolution of sex education policy and materials in England. Following this, research involving sexual orientation as it relates to educational policy, pedagogy, and society, is introduced, but will be added to with the discussion in chapter 7. Subsequently, it was decided that a section on the perceived problems of inadequate or limited sex education, such as public health concerns (e.g. sexually transmitted infection rates and unwanted pregnancy rates) and health inequalities (e.g. marginalisation of LGBT people) was needed to demonstrate the necessity of this important component of education. Finally, the theoretical orientation for this thesis is presented; this has been developed throughout the research process. Utilising Eisner's work on curricula, the subjectivity of making meanings for individuals, Foucault's notion of discourse, and paradigms of sex education, the foundation for this thesis is set out This provides a foundation for the empirical chapters, which examine the current state of sex education, particularly from the perspectives of the participants.

2.2 A Foundation of Policy

Policy can be described in a multitude of ways, starting with the generalised subject of the policy and moving towards the period that a specific policy is created to cover. In short,

policy can be described as falling on a dichotomous scale with endpoints being either substantive or administrative; vertical or horizontal; reactive or proactive; current or future (Torjman 2005, pp. 2-3), or a combination of these types.

These dichotomies provide groupings to better understand the nature of policy and provide organisation. Each pairing provides a different focus on the nature of any policy. For instance, the first pair, substantive and administrative, dictate intent of the policy, thus whether the policy is meant to guide public programming, or evaluate said programme, whereas the second pairing focuses on whether the policy is designed from the top down (vertical), or whether multiple organisations work in conjunction (horizontal) on complex issues (Torjman 2005, p. 3). For sex education, the history of policy development and implementation in England has demonstrated that policy in this area is generally substantive and vertical. The English government provides recommendations, which are then expanded upon by local education authorities and schools to create school level policies that guide classroom teaching.

The latter two pairs concern the timeframe of the policy. Policy that is a result of a public concern is said to be reactive, whereas if the policy pre-empts an issue, it is considered proactive (Torjman 2005, p. 3). This can be further defined by the place that a policy holds in the public arena. If it is currently on the public/government agenda, it is considered current, while a future policy would refer to one that needs further consideration based on perceived concerns not of particular importance to society at the present time. When this is applied to the policy area that includes sex education, it appears that policy is generally current, as the recommendations address the 'here and now', yet reactive in nature, as the policy typically follows social concerns, such as the rise in unwanted/teenage pregnancies or an increase in sexually transmitted infections. As Béland (2014) states, 'social policy problems are . . . historically contingent definitions that change over time' (p. 7). This coincides with the government's agenda in the current administration, while also mitigating against succumbing to outside pressures, such as activist organisations (Bertelli and John 2013, p. 742).

While it is useful to recognise the way in which policy is classified and developed, it is imperative to understand the way in which policy is enacted. As alluded to in the previous paragraph, policy is political and policy is pragmatic (Cohen and Ball 1990 pp. 233-234; Brownson, Chriqui and Stamatakis 2009, pp. 1576-1577). However, once a policy reaches the intended destination, it can become reframed and operationalised in a multitude of ways as demonstrated in the classroom by Cohen and Ball (1990 pp. 236-237). In general, Cohen and

Hall contend that 'policies . . . are made in order to change practice, but they can only work through the practice they seek to change (p. 237)'.

Finally, before moving on, it is important to provide a brief narrative as to the way policy will be viewed throughout this chapter and the remainder of this thesis. Mosse's (2005) work on international development summarises two irreconcilable ways to view policy, which impacts upon the way discourse and practice are understood. These two approaches focus on policy as a 'rational problem solving' method, or as one that 'conceals hidden purposes of bureaucratic power' (p. 2). While these approaches to viewing policy are mutually exclusive, Mosse (2005) further discusses that they alone are not adequately suitable for understanding the true complexities of policy work (p. 2), especially when considering Lipsky's (1980) work which contends that policy begins with frontline workers (e.g. teachers) (p. 9).

Considering the work of the aforementioned authors, I agree with Mosse's (2005) former contention that the government, in this instance, uses policy as a problem solving mechanism as a way to address several social concerns (STI rates and unplanned pregnancies). Unfortunately, this only addresses concern in biological areas, as culture and a sense of traditionalism prevents a true modernisation of policy (Crewe and Harrison 1998, p. 43).

Finally, it is important to consider the assertions presented by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984). They contend that policy creation cannot be devoid of a discussion of implementation as the best conceived plans might still fail if not carried out correctly (p. 143). They also remind us that convolution in the process of policy development makes implementation much more difficult (p. 87). While the government devises the intent of the policy, the lack of training in the specified area (sex education) and the conflicts of interest between key participants (e.g. religion and health) are detrimental to the implementation process.

2.3 The Education System in the UK

This section provides a brief overview of the structure of education within the UK, the different types of schools that exist in England and how the National Curriculum is structured and implemented.

In 1998, devolution occurred as Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland established national assemblies and assumed control over their respective education curricula. England, in contrast, remained under the control of the UK parliament. However, it is important to point

out that some of the UK countries still have similar educational systems, which facilitate moving from between countries for post-secondary schooling but many specific aspects of the curriculum are completely different (Raffe and Byrne 2005).

The second area surrounding education, and of relevance to this research, pertains to the type of schools that exist and the legal academic requirements for each in terms of sex education. There are essentially two main categories of schools in the English school system: state schools and independent schools (Gov.uk 2009). Those that fall within the category of state funded schools must follow the national curriculum as specified in section 84 of the Education Act 2002, while private (or independent) schools are free to implement their own (Gov.uk 2009).

As aforementioned, state schools must follow the national curriculum but in terms of sex and relationship education there is a certain degree of flexibility as to what is provided in the classroom, although this is currently being criticised by organisations such as the National Children's Bureau and their subset the Sex Education Forum (NCB 2013). Some schools such as faith schools, however, are free to develop their curricula in line with their religious values, which may prevent certain topics, such as homosexuality, from being discussed in the classroom (BBC News Online, 2010a). This will become apparent in chapters 6 and 7. Private schools, however, are not mandated to follow the national curriculum (Gov.uk 2009) and therefore the content may vary between schools. While there undoubtedly are private schools that provide a holistic sex education programme, it would be possible for schools of this type to disregard sex education substantially if not altogether, as Ofsted[3] only inspects around half of these independent schools over a three or six yearly cycle (Ofsted 2013).

2.4 What is Sex Education?

Sex education is a lifelong process beginning at birth and ending at death (Lenderyou 1994, p. 127). The World Health Organisation Europe and The Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA)[4] recently released guidance titled *Standards for Sex Education: A framework for policy makers, educational and health authorities and specialists, for European nations* (2010). This guide states that sex education 'means learning about the cognitive, emotional,

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[3] Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. While they serve many functions within the remit of children and young people, this thesis is on concerned with their responsibility for regulating services that provide education to people of all ages.

[4] This acronym refers to the organisation's German name Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung

social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality' (p. 20). Various other definitions have been put forth from other sexual health organisations, such as AVERTing HIV and AIDS (AVERT), which refer to sex education as 'the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy' (2009), while also taking decision making processes into consideration. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) include much of the same information as AVERT, but also refer to sex education as a 'life-long process' (n.d.). For the rest of this work, I use the WHO definition as the staple definition, as it is comprehensive yet succinct.

These definitions refer to a holistic sex education programme that encompasses the social, personal, and physical elements. There are, however, programmes that limit their scope substantially. These programmes range from 'abstinence only' programmes, which educate that no sex before marriage is the only morally correct option and includes no alternative information on STIs or contraception, to 'abstinence plus' programmes which include minimal information on STIs and contraception, while strongly promoting abstinence as the best moral choice (Alford 2001).

2.4.1 Sex Education in England

In the most recent UK government recommendation (2000), sex education was defined as 'the life-long learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love, and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching' (DfEE 2000). This is in contrast to the definitions presented in the previous section, which promote the inclusion of sexual identity as part of the curriculum, but nonetheless still exists in the foundational guidance of sex education in England.

Sex education is divided into two components: compulsory and optional. Compulsory components are detailed in the National Curriculum, which covers anatomy, puberty, reproduction, and STIs. Optional topics cover nearly everything socially related to sex and sexuality, such as sexual orientation, relationships, consent, etc. The components are generally decided upon in an expert-led capacity with little input from students (although parents are included in the discussions). This is elucidated further in this chapter and then subsequently in Chapters 4 and 7.

2.4.2 Evolution of Sex Education Policy in England

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, aspects of sex and sexuality were being taught in UK schools (Pilcher 2005, p. 154). Proponents of the social purity movement regularly referred to sex education in relation to the prevalence of venereal diseases (VD) at the time (Watson 1978). These early courses on sex, were typically health courses focusing on hygiene (Mort 1987), although there are noted exceptions (e.g. The Dronfield case[5]). Nevertheless, these courses concerned the private matter of sex, while linking 'the private' to the current public health discourse, often called the 'social hygiene movement' (Thomson 1994, p. 117). It was also during this time that the first publications placing sex as a central theme were being circulated to encourage parents to discuss this delicate matter with their children (Hall 1995). In 1914, the Board of Education reiterated the message of the publications that were now available by giving lessons to parents on the topic of 'sex hygiene' (Hall 2004), although some local education authorities rejected sex education for children in schools (Mort 1987). Shortly after, the necessity of reducing VDs through education was recommended by the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases as a way to ensure the health and fitness of soldiers during World War I (Evans 1992). However, this was not taken by the government to promote school based sex education (Hall and Porter 1995). With the conclusion of World War I in 1918, the government amended its view and required sex hygiene to be instructed in 'all types and grades of education' (Mort 1987). This was not to last long, as in the mid-1920s suggestions of topics, mostly relating to physical health, were published in *The handbook of suggestions on health education* (Board of Education 1928), replacing the earlier mandated structure. This change was, again, a way to forgo teaching about sex as it was not part of the new recommendations (Pilcher 2005, p. 156). Nevertheless, a small percentage of schools continued to include sex hygiene as part of their course structure (Board of Education 1930). This recession of sex education was not entirely forgotten in social terms as Marie Stopes and the National Vigilance Association still acknowledged the need for better public education (Hampshire 2005, p. 89).

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, there were no major changes to legislation on sex education. This was in part because of the country's involvement in World War II (Pilcher

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[5] In 1913, Miss Outram, headmistress of Dronfield Elementary School (Derbyshire), made news for purposefully teaching young children about pregnancy and childbirth. During a religious education session, Miss Outram decided to answer questions about pregnancy and childbirth as to not lose their confidence in her as a teacher. While the information was presented in a moral framework, basing the information in a religious context, this still angered parents that called for her dismissal. Miss Outram remained at the school for some time after the incident.

2005, p. 156). During this period, England started to see a rise in STIs (then venereal diseases), becoming a major public health concern (Hampshire 2005, p. 89). Along with a Parliamentary debate in 1942, this prompted the government to consider reintroducing sex education in schools. Ultimately, this led to the Board of Education extending the push of the current adult education effort through various media to the classroom (Hampshire 2005, p. 90). Towards the end of 1943, the first government publication titled *Sex Education in Schools and Youth Organisations* (Pamphlet 119), offered support for those schools and organisations who delivered sex education, although containing no strict guidelines for the inclusion of a programme (Hampshire, 2005). However, this particular publication did promote a collection of examples and provided contact information for other services that would assist in the education process.

> This pamphlet . . . is intended primarily to deal with the possibilities and place of sex instruction in the normal training of the school or youth organisation. While this is a subject of importance at any time, it is invested with a special urgency at present when war-time conditions are liable to lead to a growing laxity not excluding the younger members of the community . . . It is important that young people should be warned . . . of the dangers involved, though it is most undesirable that sex instruction should be concentrated on this pathological problem. Venereal diseases . . . must receive frank and objective discussion as a problem of health, and the Board propose shortly to reissue their 'Simple Health Hints', for the use of teachers and youth leaders, with a supplementary section dealing briefly with this subject. It will suffice here . . . to exercise their influence to give protection and guidance where it is needed at this time (Board of Education 1943, para 8).

This was an attempt to integrate a public health discourse within an educational discourse, which ultimately concerned the private sphere, thus contributing to the Board of Education's reluctance to prescribe a sex education curriculum at the time. This cemented their position for several decades (Hampshire and Lewes 2004, p. 310) and opened up the scene for voluntary organisations such as the Central Council for Health Education (CCHE) and the National Marriage Guidance Council (NMGC) to advance sex education (Hampshire 2005, p. 91). However, as the war ended and the rates of STIs began to decrease, the idea of a need for a school based sex education programme subsided (Thomson 1994, p. 117). This would remain the case for much of the 1950s, as Hampshire (2005) notes that no questions emerged about sex education during this span, compared with six in the previous decade and seventeen in the subsequent decade.

In the 1960s, sex education again became a topic of debate in parliament, with the rate of STIs rising sharply, coinciding with the beginning of the second wave feminist movement and sexual revolution (Jackson and Scott 1996). Because of the increase in STIs,

conflict arose between medical (e.g. the British Medical Association (BMA)) and educational (e.g. the Department of Education) factions, leading to a political stalemate in legislation (Hampshire 2005, p. 93). However, even during this stalemate, the fourth (1956) and fifth (1968) editions of the *Handbook of Health Education* were published. These editions, for the first time, included a chapter on sex education and other sexual related terms and situations (Pilcher 2005, p. 159). In the latter edition, seven years after the introduction of the birth control pill in the UK (Jackson and Scott 1996; Ironside 2011), contraception was included in the literature. This also coincided with a changing overall social climate in England with the onset of the feminist movement, which led to an apparent shift in morals, and a change in sexual attitudes and behaviours amongst young people (Hampshire and Lewes 2004, p. 292). Further, the change in attitude was reiterated by the *Sexual Offense Act of 1967*, in which homosexuality between men over the age of 21 was decriminalised in England and Wales (Scott 2008). Thomson (1994) notes that during this era, developments in sex education happened 'despite, rather than because of government policy' (p. 118).

The 1970s presented a new era for British society and sex education. Many social changes that were occurring simultaneously were reaching their peak: The Gay Liberation Front, an organisation that had started their own political movement parallel to their US counterpart as a result of the Stonewall riots in 1969, became known. During this time, non-biological aspects of sex became a focus in sex education programmes (Thomson 1994, p. 118). Everything from what the opposite sex (from the learner's perspective) experienced during puberty to alternative sexualities were now included in the programme (DES 1977). This precipitated the inclusion of the topic of same-sex relations in the greater arena of sex education. It is important to note that this is not the first time homosexuality was introduced in the classroom (Pilcher 2005, p. 164) but rather the time when a desire to conform to societal influence dominated (Thomson 1994, p. 118).

The first piece of legislation on sex education was passed nationally in 1981. This legislation made heads of schools or their governing bodies publish the 'manner and context' of their sex education programme (Pilcher 2005, p. 165), while local authorities were responsible for providing guidance (Thomson 1994, p. 118). As the 1980s progressed, Acquired Immune Deficiency syndrome (AIDS) became a cultural and medical concern, leading to a moral and social panic that caused policy changes around the world (AVERT 2011) and quite possibly influenced the next move of the UK Parliament (Evans 1989). Weeks (2003, p. 2) confirms this with the notion that the 'New Right' spent much effort promoting family life, while opposing sex education and reaffirming hostility towards 'homosexuals'. In addition, the

Thatcher government rallied public support to remove the power of local authorities and relocate it to school governors (Thomson 1994, p. 119).

With the creation of the *Local Government Act* in 1986, the political climate of sex education changed. In this bill, parents and governors were given rights to decide whether sex education was necessary (in a moral framework if taught) and for parents to decide whether their child should participate (Thomson 1994, p. 119). *Circular 11/87* was drafted to account for 'controversial' subjects, such as homosexuality, which ultimately reinforced the traditional view of relationships in the classroom (Thomson 1994, p. 119).

Following this bill was the subsequent controversial amendment in 1988, in which any promotion of homosexuality, as a family structure, was effectively banned from Local Education Authorities (LEA), threatening civil liberty for gays and lesbians. Specifically, the amendment implemented by the conservative government, contained the clause listed as Section 28 (or 2A in Scotland) in which a local authority could not:

(a) Intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

Although this was not intended to remove all discussions of gay and lesbian issues from the classroom (Thomson 1994, p. 121), this was a consequence that will be discussed in several succeeding sections of this thesis.

In 1991, HIV/AIDS was included as part of Key Stage 3 education with students aged between 11 and 14 (Thomson, 1994, p. 122). This addition was subsequently followed by a new reform, the 1993 Education Act, which made sex education compulsory for secondary schools, although there were some restrictions concerning content in the classroom, e.g. homosexuality (Green 1998). Parents were able to opt their children out from the sex education component (Pilcher 2005, p. 166), and this has continued to the present day.

As the 1990s progressed, sex education was continually contested in politics, with the emphasis on teenage pregnancy as a social problem (Alldred, David and Smith. 2003, p. 81). Ultimately, there were no policy changes. This tension reiterated previous debates between 'moral conservatives and health pragmatists', between local and national government and ultimately reigniting the debate over rights - those of the state versus the parents versus the children (Pilcher 2005, p. 166). In 1997, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was launched with the

first report on teenage pregnancy being released in 2009 (Alldred et al. 2003, p. 81). This report detailed the current situation of Britain's teenage pregnancy problem saying that the country had the highest levels of conception in Europe (SEU 1999, p. 5). Subsequently, in 2000, under the New Labour government, new guidance (and responsibility) was given to schools (Alldred et al. 2003, p. 81), which was considered by proponents of compulsory sex education to be a vast improvement over the existing conservative guidelines (Monk 2001; Pilcher 2005, p. 167). Section 28 also became a focal point in the political arena as Scotland officially repealed the amendment on 21 June 2000. However, while the new guidance was promising, the underlying values and priorities remained unchanged from the previous administration (Alldred and David 2007, p. 169).

In England, the most influential change since the perceived exclusion of homosexuality from sex education came in 2003 as Section 28 of the Local Government Act of 1988 was repealed. From this point until recently, there had been little in the way of sex education reform.

Many proponents of sex education, including gay rights campaigners, welcomed news in 2007 and 2008 that sex education was to be made compulsory in all schools, including those labelled as 'faith schools' (Curtis 2008). However, these faith schools would still be able to promote their morals and beliefs when teaching the required Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum, which includes sex education (Curtis 2008; Richardson 2010). In 2010, it was announced that support from the conservative party had not been obtained so the bill would need to be withdrawn (Woolcock 2010).

The government announced that a consultation would take place, beginning in 2011 and conducted by the Department for Education, to examine the state of PSHE and sex education. This was paralleled by an inspection of schools by Ofsted to examine best practice. For ease, selected key results of questions relating specifically to sex and relationship education were obtained from the *Consultation on PSHE education: Summary report* (DfE 2013) and are summarised in Box I. Results were collated from the responses obtained from advocacy groups from both sides of the argument, local authorities, NHS organisations, educational providers and individuals in the community.

Box I: Consultation Summary

Question querying core outcomes and knowledge

(34%) said PSHE must focus more strongly on relationships and the responsibilities that pupils had with, and to, others.

(33%) believed one of the core outcomes of PSHE education should be to develop pupils' emotional resilience and mental health awareness.

(26%) raised their concerns about PSHE education, especially the SRE element being taught to primary school children.

Elements that could be made statutory

(30%) Relationships

(24%) Sex education

Strengthening the priority given to teaching about relationships

(40%) said there was a need to improve significantly the teaching of the significance of marriage within relationships.

(37%) thought the statutory guidance for SRE should give greater emphasis to the teaching of positive relationships and how to manage and maintain them, rather than the current focus on 'sexual relationships'.

Teaching about sexual content

(52%) said it was essential that SRE must place sexual relationships within a clear and objective moral context.

(39%) were of the opinion that pupils did not understand their rights to sexual consent, nor did they have the ability to deal with pressure and coercion and recognise the risks and say 'no'.

(28%) believed that teaching about sexual consent was a key issue within the PSHE curriculum.

(27%) said it was essential that pupils should be taught about the legal age of sexual consent and to respect the law as they believed this had been omitted from the current document.

(21%) felt that pupils must be given clear guidance on issues surrounding sexual consent and be aware of where to go when they needed further information and advice.

Over the past 100 years, many transformations have occurred within the pedagogy of sex education, however, Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) remains a non-compulsory subject, allowing schools to best decide how to handle the intricacies associated with teaching what is perceived as a sensitive topic (DfE 2013). Recently, however, Prime Minister David Cameron voiced his support publicly for the teaching of equality and homosexuality in schools by saying:

> . . . should we teach them about the importance of equality, whether you are heterosexual or homosexual? Yes, we should. Should we teach them about civil partnerships . . .? Yes, we should (Watt 2010).

2.4.3 Sex Education Content

There is a view that sex education must be comprehensive and serve to educate young people, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, etc., about any issues that may arise for them in the growing up and maturation process (Braeken, Shand and de Silva 2006; Federal Centre for Health Education 2010). While this may be the 'ideal' for the classroom sex education curricula, it has been suggested that, too often, sex education focuses on the physical aspects of sex as opposed to feelings and rights (Aggleton and Crewe 2005, p. 303) and is dependent on the political and social climates at the time (as evidenced in the previous section). This may explain the difficulty in setting a curriculum while there is not a general consensus as to what should comprise sex education (Grunseit et al. 1997, p. 422), nor is there concrete evidence that young people are being included in this discussion. Thus, not only will gaps be evident in certain programmes but there will be gaps in the understanding of the material as well, recognising that every child experiences and perceives situations differently. However, there are fundamental commonalities such as risk of infections (STIs), questions of sexuality, and even questions regarding personal relationships that will present in everyone's life. These topics, at minimum, are the standard for what must be addressed in any sex education programme (Braeken et al. 2006, Allen 2005; Strange et al. 2006; Westwood and Mullan 2006); even if young people may feel that, they may already be knowledgeable in these areas.

'Sex education is also about developing young people's skills so that they make informed choices about their behaviour, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices' (AVERT 2011). Using this description, AVERT embodies all of the concepts that follow the WHO definition for 'holistic' sex education. Thus, sex education must not be viewed as a solid entity, taught as its own separate class (see chapter 7), but rather a network of inter-related concepts that encompass a range of scientific and social topics (AVERT 2011).

In many European countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany, as suggested by their sex education curricula (Wellings and Parker 2006), educators and researchers alike argue that sex education is an integral part of a young person's maturation process (Reiss 1997; Rosing and Svendsen 2010). This can be quantified when looking at statistics of comprehensive programmes. Kirby (2007, 2008) found that two-thirds of the 48 comprehensive programmes evaluated[6] proved moderately successful in increasing condom usage and reducing risky sexual behaviours, which are typically considered part of the aims of sex education (The SAFE Project 2006). This finding was also verified by Kohler, Manhart and Lafferty (2008). While Wellings and Parker (2006) demonstrate that many sexually non-repressed countries that utilise comprehensive (albeit not necessarily holistic) sex education show slightly higher rates of safe sex practices, lower pregnancy rates, etc., it must be noted that little empirical research on sex education includes sexuality as a variable.

Currently, biological aspects of sex as well as relationship education are compulsory in English schools and may be included within the PSHE[7], SRE, or Citizenship curriculum. Schools may exceed this requirement but it can vary. They are allowed to choose their own resources as long as they cover the government mandated components of Key Stages 2 and 3, which only provide basic coverage compared to the wealth of knowledge that comprises a truly comprehensive programme. Nevertheless, there is a non-statutory PSHE supplement that contains information about same-sex couples and sexual orientation (Key Stage 3), but again, this is an elective portion of the curriculum (DfE 2007).

The most recent National Curriculum expired at the end of 2013, at which time a new set of curriculum guidance took effect. In this new curriculum, there has been no revision to the statutory content nor the addition of any new material, although the Department of

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[6] These programmes rival abstinence only education and typically include various topics such as contraception, relationship information, sexual rights, etc., and place value on agency in sexual situations.

[7] PSHE comprises topics beyond just sex and relationships, which is the totality of SRE, such as risky behaviours including alcohol and drug use, diversity, decision making skills, etc. PSHE may also be seen notated as PSHEE, which includes additional information on economics and personal finances.

Health has released a *Framework for Sexual Health Improvement* (2013) which promotes sex education as a preventative measure. Again, the focus of this framework still remains on a public health discourse.

2.5 Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity, stemming from compulsive heterosexuality (Rich 1980), is a term coined in the early '90s and 'refers to pervasive and invisible norms of heterosexuality – sexual desire exclusively for the opposite sex – embedded as a normative principle in social institutions and theory, which deems those who fall outside this standard to be devalued' (Weiss 2008). It is also a site in which gender and sexuality interconnect (Ingraham 1994). Thus, Jackson (2006, p. 109) states, 'if heteronormativity pivots on the privileging of heterosexuality through its normalisation, it can only be understood through attention to what it governs, both gender and sexuality'.

When we consider the notion of heteronormativity, we must consider how heteronormativity is reinforced. We, as gendered individuals, continuously engage in this by 'doing' or performing gender roles, whether in the bedroom or on a night out (Butler 1990; Jackson 2006, p. 114). This supports the earlier idea of sexuality being a component of maintaining gender (Person 1980, p. 316). These gender roles are based on a binary system of both gender and sexuality, which establishes a 'norm'. Jackson (2006) maintains that these norms also serve the purpose of regulating such 'marginalised' sexualities, as they would not exist without the norms of heterosexuality and a binary concept of gender. However, according to Butler's (1990) understanding of congruence, we must be careful in considering these 'norms' as anything more than fluid and socially constructed concepts.

This is not the only way to view heteronormativity, however. Heteronormativity also serves to describe heterosexuality as a structure of power separate to sexual connotations (Hartmann and Klesse 2007), enabling a consideration of the implications, that heteronormativity has on other facets of life such as the heath sector, law and, of relevance here, education.

While the notion of heteronormativity is only two decades old, the practice of re-enforcing social/religious heteronormativity, now termed heterosexism, dates back millennia (Jung and Smith 1993). However, as suggested by Weeks (2003), the term homosexual itself is a relatively recent construct. Therefore, a true comparison to anything before the middle of the Victorian era is moot, as sodomy and the sodomite (which focused on behaviour, not

identity) are not equivalent to homosexuality and a homosexual identity. Nevertheless, legal enforcement of laws relating to sodomy, which were introduced in the 14th through 16th century England (Norton 2002), spanned into modernity and repressed those who identified as homosexual.

Historically, one does not need to ponder the implications of the social ideology of heteronormativity, as many instances that would now fall within this discourse can easily be studied through the thoughts, actions, and practices of society throughout the 20th century (Spitzer 1981; Doan 2001).

2.5.1 The Linkage of the Hetero- Homo- sexisms, -phobias, and –normativity

In the previous section, I briefly discussed heteronormativity and heterosexism and it is also important to understand the implications of the so-named 'phobias', including homophobia, bi-phobia and transphobia. However, since this thesis focuses more on gay/lesbian identities, discussing the challenges of homophobia will provide an overview that can similarly be applied to other sexuality-based phobias.

Unlike the other terms mentioned thus far, homophobia is different in practice but similar in concept. Homophobia implies a *fear* of homosexuals (AVERT 2012), whereas each of the other terms implies a *bias* towards a straight orientation. The term 'homophobia' was coined just under 50 years ago by American psychotherapist George Weinberg as a way to identify feelings of aversion towards homosexuals (Herek 2004, p. 6). As a proponent of normalising homosexuality through his work to declassify it as a medical/psychological condition, he created the term homophobia to pathologise the aversion to homosexuality as the true psychological condition (Weinberg 1972). Since this time, the term has been used in a variety of social contexts to mean anything from hateful comments to physical assault on someone who is believed to be gay or lesbian.

It may seem that heteronormativity, heterosexism and homophobia are similar, and in many cases the outcome of such actions are the same. However, the latter two are extreme biases that not only privilege (or normalise) heterosexuality but they also demonstrate an aversion to homosexuals and homosexuality (see Herek 1990 and Weinberg 1972) and equally to bisexuality, transexuality, etc. From the usage of the terms, it is possible to see how they are related. However, for the purposes of this research, I only use heteronormativity as it relates to privileging heterosexuality in sex education material and pedagogy, and homophobia (as

opposed to differentiating bi-phobia, transphobia, etc.) where the material/actions suggest that an aversion or hatred exists towards those who identify as LGBT.

2.5.2 Heteronormativity in Law

This section contains an overview of laws and amendments/acts that concern homosexuality[8], or rather the act of same sex relations through the lens of the Law and conceptions of lawlessness over time'. However, as law is not the focus of this thesis, I will only refer to these key points in history to elucidate the understanding of the laws, which affected society up to and through the Section 28 period.

Laws prohibiting sexual acts between men have been prevalent worldwide since late antiquity (Ottoson 2008), though not strictly in relation to homosexuals as this term did not become mainstream until centuries later. In Britain, the *Buggery Act*, originating in the 16th century, remained throughout the beginning of the 20th century, until abolition in 1967 through the passing of the *Sexual Offences Act 1967*, which repealed the *Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885* (Section 11), commonly known as the Labouchere Amendment. This was based, in part, on the publication of the Wolfenden report in 1957 and then a subsequent successful decade long campaign of the Homosexual Law Reform Society and others (LAGNA 2015).

While the Sexual Offences Act 1967 was progressive, the act contained certain limitations for homosexual relationships that were not considered illegal for their heterosexual counterpart. These limitations included a higher age of consent for homosexual partners, set at 21 years of age (as opposed to 16 for heterosexual partners), and the condition that all acts must be between two persons in private. The notion of 'private' in this sense was meant to mean in the confines of one's home (i.e. hotels did not constitute private). This Act would remain in force until the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 lowered the age of consent to 18, now only two years away from equal rights with heterosexual couples.

However, while this latest Act set out to render homosexual relationships more equal to their heterosexual counterparts, the controversial amendment called Section 28 remained in existence. Although six years since the creation of that amendment, it would take several years after the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and subsequent Sexual Offences Act

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[8] This only refers to acts between men, as no law ever passed in the UK regulating female same-sex relations (Waites 2002, p. 328).

2000, which equalised the age of consent at 16 regardless of sexual orientation, to repeal Section 28 in England and the rest of Great Britain.

2.5.3 Heteronormativity in Health and Medicine

Although the focus of this work is on the educational aspect of sexuality, health and social inequalities are important facets that can help facilitate an understanding of the way in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people live their lives and ultimately the constraints placed upon them historically.

Inequalities in the classroom are not isolated occurrences with regard to sexual orientation. The institution of medicine has also historically been heteronormative. This is most easily identified through the inclusion of homosexuality, as a sociopathic personality disturbance, in the first edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-MD). Through the next volume, DSM-II, until the seventh revision (1973), homosexuality remained classified as a mental illness. In the DSM-III, the illness 'ego dystonic homosexuality' was created. Significantly, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) continued to list homosexuality as a mental illness until 1990.

Aside from the psychological aspect of medicine, general physical medicine also has been implicated in discrepancies in the way straight versus LGBT people are considered and treated, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

2.5.4 Research on Homosexuality and Heteronormativity in Sex Education and the Relation to this Thesis

As early as 1974, research was conducted on teaching intervention strategies for homophobia (Morin 1974; Stevenson 1988). Though many programmes only had limited success in reducing homophobia (Stevenson 1988), this was the foundation for what would be considered a controversial topic in the forefront of sex education for the next several decades. More recently, Reiss, a scholar in education and an ordained priest, argues that there are several benefits for teaching the topic of sexual orientation, and while increased tolerance should not necessarily be the aim of such teaching, a reduction in homophobia may be a probable consequence (1997). This view is seconded by many other researchers (Van de Ven 1995; Buston and Hart 2002; Hillier and Mitchell 2008).

In recent years, there have been multiple studies assessing students' perceptions of their sex education (Measor, Tiffin and Miller 2000; Buston and Hart 2002; Hillier and Mitchell 2008; Turnbull, van Wersch and van Schaik 2010; Formby 2011). However, only a few noted examples specifically cover sexual orientation as a focus for the study (Buston and Hart 2002; Hillier and Mitchell 2008; Formby 2011). The study conducted by Measor and colleagues (2000) is important to this research, irrespective of focus on sexual orientation, due to the proximity of the sample collected relative to my study and the other foci that are present in their work. Their study found that in general, there were discrepancies between the way in which young men and young women relate to sex education, with young men responding more negatively to the prospect due to a gendering of culture, as well as general disappointment about issues relating to sex education policy (p. 10).

Hillier and Mitchell (2008) and Jones and Hillier (2012) examine Australian gay and lesbian individuals' views on sex education as well as an examination of Australian school policy regarding the experience of LGBT people in the classroom. Their results indicate that participants felt that their sex education programmes were useless, as many programmes were non-inclusive of appropriate material for non-straight identities.

Buston and Hart (2002) reported that teachers expressed negative reactions by the pupils when approaching the topic of same-sex sexuality in the classroom. While some students themselves declared the topic was important to discuss, many found difficulty in doing so (Hilton 2007). This is certainly not the case of sex education everywhere (Lewis and Knijn 2002), but there has not been much to add to these findings in this area of research recently in the UK.

Most recently, Formby (2011) found, through surveys and interviews, that LGBT identified individuals shared similar feelings to those in the Australian studies; sex education excluded discussions regarding sexual orientation and LGBT related topics. Moreover, the programmes were deemed by young people to be largely biological in nature. This is not surprising considering the emphasis placed on public health initiatives currently and historically in the curriculum. The final two themes that were prevalent in Formby's study relates to influences on sexual decision making and access to sexual health services, neither of which are prominent in my thesis, thus I will not discuss them further.

2.6 Possible Effects of Poor Sex Education

The outcomes resulting from poor sex education have been extensively researched in terms of acute consequences, such as STIs and teenage/unwanted pregnancy rates, but there may be other life-long effects from poor sex education such as psychological damage, poor general health, and mortality (Astra Network n.d.). Unfortunately, these longer-term consequences are only discussed in the 'occasional' study (Rogow and Haberland 2005). For this reason, I will focus only on three key aspects: public health concerns, inequalities in health and gay suicide, with the latter two focusing specifically on the LGBT community.

2.6.1. Public Health Concerns

Unwanted[9] pregnancy rates and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are usually paramount in policymakers' minds when considering the effectiveness of sex education. Nevertheless, the frequency of other issues, such as mental health conditions, the link to other risky behaviours, offences such as rape and sexual assault and concerns surrounding suicide merit consideration as well. Each of these public health concerns, in their own right, can be tied to aspects of sex education and the importance of discussions encompassing all health issues relating to sex and sexuality.

Beginning with the concerns that are repeatedly researched and reported on an annual basis, teenage pregnancy figures and STI figures appear in nearly every piece of literature assessing the effectiveness of sex education. This reiterates the assertion that the longstanding aim of sex education is to address public health concerns. For instance, campaigns to address teenage pregnancy have been in existence for decades, with the most recent initiative starting in 1998 and continuing today (Swann et al. 2003). During this time, there has been improvement in this facet of public health with the conception rate for women aged 15-17 down to its' lowest level since 1969. In real terms, the estimated number of conceptions to women in this age bracket fell to 31,051 in 2011 compared with 34,633 in the year prior, a decrease of ten percent. The estimated number of conceptions to girls aged under 16 was 5,991 in 2011, compared with 6,674 in 2010, another ten percent decrease (ONS 2011).

Conversely, sexually transmitted infections have been a much longer standing concern for the medical establishment and society at large, as evidenced by one of the original purposes for the creation of sex education (Watson 1978; Hampshire 2005, p. 87). Today, STIs

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[9] This is frequently synonymous with teenage pregnancies in health reports as age is considered a factor when concerning family planning.

remain high in England, with specific programmes, such as the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP), now in practice to reduce the prevalence of the most common STI amongst young people.

2.6.1.1 Gay Suicide and Self-harm

According to recent figures released by a Stonewall (UK) report, 23 percent of British LGB people attempt suicide at some point in their lives, with a much larger figure of six and seven out of ten G/B boys and L/B girls, respectively, entertaining thoughts of suicide (Guasp 2012). This relates to another statistic regarding the prevalence of suicidal thoughts and attempts related to bullying. This same report revealed that the rate of young gay people attempting to take their life was 11 percent higher for those who were bullied versus those who were not bullied and a further 72 percent compared to 56 percent thought of taking their lives versus those who were not subject to bullying. For young lesbian girls, 41 percent have suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide (Guasp 2012).

Interestingly, the Trevor Project, established in the United States in 1998, was setup as a way to increase awareness towards LGBTQ[10] suicide and provide crisis intervention. In *Talking About Suicide & LGBT Populations* this group discusses the possible impact of 'suicide contagion' and the concerns that go along with excessive media coverage of these catastrophic events (MAP 2011). Although I have not uncovered any reports that provide a direct link to the 2010 incidences, the label was apparently applied to the Anoka-Hennepin School District following the death of six of their students throughout 2009-2010, albeit later retracted as a mislabel of a fictitious designation (Anoka-Hennepin n.d.). The key point here is the importance of preventing media publicity from further impacting on LGBT populations and potentially increasing the incidence of suicide. Although suicide may be one major concern within public health discourse, other issues such as self-harm (Guasp 2012), anxiety, and depression are also important to examine (Baldry and Winkel 2004). Guasp (2012) states that 56 percent of LGB young people report self-harm with the rate for girls (72 percent) being double that of boys (36 percent). Although this may reflect research that suggests that there is generally a higher prevalence among young women (HSCIC 2013). This is also reflected in the statistics on depression, with nearly half of LGB people reporting homophobic bullying, showing signs and symptoms consistent with depression, which typically affect young L/B girls more than G/B boys (Zietsch et al. 2013).

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[10] As mentioned in chapter 1, the Q stands for questioning and was added in this case solely because the project utilises it as part of the acronym.

2.6.2 Inequalities in Health

Previous research has shown that LGBT people are typically more reluctant to speak to their physician about their sexual orientation because there are still reports of differential and prejudiced treatment of these people (Aggleton et al. 2000, p. 214). This in turn, lends to health inequalities that are often unrecognised in health and social care settings (Fish 2007). However, there has been a push towards better recognition of LGBT identities in healthcare by many NHS trusts in recent times (i.e. they cannot discriminate on relationships with significant others). Additionally, there are now dedicated NHS websites that provide advice for LGBT patients to assist in finding the best possible option available for maintaining their health. Nevertheless, the NHS as an organisation has been moving towards a more equal, yet dedicated service for LGBT people but the problem of health inequalities perpetuated by staff members remain. Studies suggest that up to 25 percent of healthcare staff were perpetuating negative attitudes, such as embodying homophobic beliefs and being judgmental, towards LGBT people (Beehler 2001; Beyond Barriers 2002), thus leading to ineffective healthcare (Scott 2001). These attitudes then translate to acceptance of knowledge and then ultimately communication. Pringle (2003) notes that many of the training curricula for health care professionals do not include much information regarding people who identify as LGBT. This creates a problem for professionals, such as general practitioners, who ultimately find it difficult to converse with the patient or ask relevant questions (Hinchliff, Gott and Galena 2005). This in turn affects general attendance and even affects important preventative medical initiatives such as screening, where LGBT people may have different health concerns (Fish, 2007).

2.7 Theoretical Orientation

'Schools socialize children to a set of expectations that some argue are profoundly more powerful and longer-lasting [than] what is intentionally taught' (Eisner 1979, p. 75)

As seen through the history of sex education, discourses ranging from religious to medical to social have changed the way we perceive and choose to conduct sex education. This has led to a shift in the teaching of this controversial programme. However, such shifts in other societal and institutional discourses must not be forgotten or underestimated as sex education would not necessarily be under the constraints that it is today.

To achieve an understanding of my research, I have found that it is important to look at sex education from three perspectives; sex education as part of an institution, sexuality as

part of one's social identity and sexuality as part of one's individual identity. Each of these facets is drawn upon in the subsequent sections to give a contextual overview of the intertwined sense of sex education from the stakeholders (the state, religion and parents) to the beneficiaries (young people).

2.7.1 Sex Education, Part of the Institution and its Practice

In a comprehensive examination of the Australian school system, Jones (2011) uncovered at least 27 separate sex education discourses. These discourses were categorised into four groups; conservative, 'in which education is understood as a preparation for work' (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett 1994, p. 129); liberal, 'a preparation for life rather than work'; critical, which aims to 'engage social issues and give students experience in working on them' and more recently post-modern. These fall in line with educational orientation exemplars utilised by Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983, 1994) and revised by Hoepper and colleagues (1996) and Jones (2009).

Although Jones' (2011) study was conducted on the other side of the world, there are similarities with the British system when considering progression or shift in societal thinking over the past 50 years, from a descriptive curriculum to a normative curriculum (Eisner 1979, p. 44-46). Thus, the discourses are essentially presented chronologically to demonstrate continuance and to explicate where English sex education currently falls in the overall social ideological progression. Unfortunately, sex education does not appear to conform to all of the progressions of pedagogy and thus does not necessarily fall distinctively into any one 'box', but the most important tenets are still classifiable as an overall position.

Although these aforementioned discursive groupings were created to better understand the role that the school, and ultimately the state, play in the development of its citizens/children, it is also important to consider how these link to Eisner's (1979) work on understanding curricula through identifying the explicit, implicit, and null curricula. These first two curricula aim to educate on objectives and values respectively, while the third curriculum is what schools decide not to teach. Also related is Jackson's (1968) hidden curriculum, which is similar to Eisner's implicit curriculum. This concept refers to both what is not specifically taught in the classroom, as well as the dynamics that are put into place - and that students are exposed to - in the classroom.

2.7.1.1 Conservative Discourse

Prior to radical social changes that occurred with the onset of feminist movements and the sexual revolution, the conservative discourse was utilised in such a way as to prepare students for work (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett 1994, p. 129). This was the prevailing ideology for education as a whole and the applicability to sex education can be seen through the ideals of authority, structure, and status quo (Jones 2011). By privileging work, emphasising the need for authority and the desire to maintain the status quo, religious ideals that were prevalent at the time were upheld. These included the practices of abstinence education, no sex out of wedlock and predominantly anti-gay sentiments. Students were also perceived as being passive entities in need of being taught the prevailing values and beliefs (Jones 2011). This relates to the concept of tabula rasa, or the *Romantic Child* (Irvine 2002, p. 13), where children are pure, thus void of any innate sense of knowledge or sexuality and must be protected and cultivated correctly to become useful beings. Conversely, Irvine (2002, p. 14) refutes the idea that a child is devoid of sexuality but still ascertains the *Knowing Child* as pure and in need of protection.

Within this idea of purity and innocence, Eisner's implicit curriculum can be seen through the conveyance of sexual morals, which at the time coincided closely with religious values. Conversely, the explicit curriculum focused mainly on venereal diseases. Venereal diseases (or STIs) become one of the core concerns within sex education for decades to come, as a fascination would ensue with what Eisner called scientism: 'the so-called objective procedures for evaluating schooling and appraising competence' (Eisner 1979, p. 24). Finally, the unspoken null curriculum, in the conservative framework, reflected sexuality as an intrinsic facet of human beings. These together ensured the continued existence of social stability under the ruse of protecting existing interests. Since the sexual revolution, feminist movements, civil rights movement, etc., the conservative discourse has evolved, and while some traditional views may still permeate society, especially in religious schools, this discourse has subsided in favour of more progressive approaches to educating society.

2.7.1.2 Liberal Discourse

The liberal discourse became the prevalent way of educating students throughout the 1960s. The premise was an introduction to comprehensive education, a paradigm that saw the shift to the personal rather than the public/work life for the student (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett 1983; Jones 2011). Personal development and decision-making abilities became the

key foci for educators as a change in mentality towards questioning the status quo occurred. Jones (2011, p. 144) argues that 'emphasis [was now] on students' understanding the impact of sexuality on the self, in relation to their own personal agency and individual constructions of knowledge and valuing processes'. Under this framework, students were expected to have choices and thus be able to make rational decisions regarding their sexuality and sexual choices, despite the influence of prevailing ideologies. This follows on Blair and Monk's (2009) four constructions of the child, all portrayed as a decision-maker, whereby children are expected to be partially guided, but still understood to begin complex thought.

Relating back to Eisner's curricula, the explicit curriculum shifted to relate to protecting one's self-interests. Knowledge and skills were introduced via sex education to allow people to use their decision-making abilities to best suit their needs, rather than just the societal need. The focus of the implicit curricula shifted onto the idea of risk. Sexual risk taking was now also an individual concern as opposed to the previous paradigm where societal standards and morals were re-enacted and reinforced. Finally, the null curriculum shifted away from the idea that sexuality was either a learned taboo or theoretically non-existent, as this was an era for openness and curiosity. However, as noted above, a legislation stalemate occurred for much of the 1960s leaving sex education on the table and not necessarily in schools.

2.7.1.3 Critical Discourse

With feminism and the sexual revolution well established by the 1970s, the paradigm shifted again, this time with a focus on a better society. With all of the concurrent political/social movements of the time, the advancement of society permeated many institutions from the medical to the educational (Jones 2011). Gender and sexual equality and equity became a focal point of the period and of the system. Students, as future citizens, were actively encouraged to take a stand and help shape the future, as children were now transformed into political beings able to affect 'future social conditions' (Jones 2011). This push, however, saw the moral conservatives also take a stand against sex education, creating a highly volatile situation for most involved, as society was progressing beyond the confines of religion, yet was in a sense still bound by morals instilled by previous generations.

Similar to the previous discourse, sex education was to push the explicit curriculum, keeping the same liberal stance, yet amalgamating the social reform sentiments of the time. Implicitly, the curriculum focused on anti-discrimination and power dynamics relating to the

body as a social and political entity, not just personal. The null curriculum saw a movement away from linking sexuality related topics to religion, as sexuality was now seen as a human issue, not a moral one.

2.7.1.4 Post-modern Discourse

As pedagogy has progressed to the point of deconstruction and critiquing truth, the supposed current paradigm has taken on a post-modern approach with students needing to demonstrate self-reflexivity (Jones, 2009, p. 42). One key aspect that has undergone a transformation is values. Values can now be critiqued by a socially constructed 'student' or 'child', allowing them to create a sense of self, independent of religious morals. This can be seen within the curriculum as multi-cultural and/or multi-perspective (Jones 2009, p. 44). However, sex education does not seem to adhere quite as strictly to this perspective due to its historic emphasis on a medical/health discourse.

In this paradigm, sex education should be pushing boundaries. The explicit curriculum should be focusing on the ideas of fluid sexuality and gender identity, with the implicit moving from risk to emphasising true equality and breaking the bonds of hegemony and heteronormativity. The null curriculum, on the other hand, should become non-existent with equality equity, and a truly informed curriculum leaving everything, from transgendered people to sex as a source of pleasure (Fine 1988) open for discussion.

2.7.1.5 The Real Sex Education Discourse

Sex education in 21st century England has varying levels of similarities to each of these progressive discourses discussed. As noted, sex education does not conveniently fall into the post-modern discourse just because current pedagogy is approached from this theoretical orientation. Rather, English sex education is still primarily about risk aversion, a liberal approach. Sexual orientation and gender equality have made appearances but as my research will demonstrate, this is not in the majority.

There are other factors that play a role in the dissemination and subsequent uptake of sex education material. While teachers may be presented with options for teaching on a non-compulsory subject, it is hard to argue the impact that society has on the institution, the teachers, and ultimately the students. In the classroom, sex education is usually situated within science or a PSHE context; however, the student is situated in a cultural and social

context, which may not align with the educational objectives. This is perhaps one reason why it is important to acknowledge the influence of the social on an individual's learning.

Although a constructivist approach may inform the development of children's learning, it does not explain the role of power that encompasses the state, school, parents, and the children themselves. Power in this sense is not necessarily repressive, although this effect can be seen, but rather conceptualised as the production of decent moral human beings (Gaventa 2003, p. 1). As Foucault conceptualises power, the concept of government is utilised in relation to freedom: 'Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free (Foucault 1982, p. 221)'. This position problematises the assessment of power relationships, as children are not necessarily considered agents in the educational system, especially those under a national curriculum.

2.7.2 Sexual Orientation and Identity

To fully understand the depth of sex education and the impact on an individual, it is important to understand the construct of sexual orientation as a contributing, though not exclusive, aspect of identity, and to explore the implications that these ideas have for both the subject as an individual and as a member of society. Rasmussen (2006) suggests that gender, among other aspects of identity, should also be included into the discussion as to not privilege sexual identities at the expense of other aspects that 'constitute the self' (p. 41). She contends that 'ignoring these intersections continues the erasure of individuals' lived experiences and obfuscates the power relations that underpin discourses related to sexualities and secondary schooling' (p. 45).

The intersection of gender and sexuality is complex. As I have previously discussed, sexual orientation and the practice of heteronormativity stems from the idea that these concepts are comprised of binary oppositions. Gender is the socially constructed (as opposed to biological sex), and according to Butler (1990) performed, component that expresses our masculinity or femininity. Sexuality, comprising sexual orientation, is more broadly understood as the essence of being a sexual being. When I refer to sexuality throughout this thesis, it will often be drawn from the context in which sexual orientation is assumed, but this does not reflect the way in which I view sexuality. Sexuality is an encompassing term referring not just to sexual orientation, but also to the matrix consisting of sex, gender, identity, perceptions, thoughts, desires, and relationships, etc. However, as mentioned, this thesis focuses on sexual

orientation within sex education and thus a more focussed notion of sexuality will be employed to provide consistency with the empirical data.

The primary debate in the understanding of identity reflects essentialism versus constructionism, the famous nature-nurture debate. As both sides have a range of scholarly support and the latter has emerged as more favourable, I will present a brief overview of both before discussing the position that underpins this thesis.

2.7.2.1 Essentialism

Essentialism stems from the belief in an essence, something that is 'there' and not created by social forces. As Fuss (1989, XI) describes, 'essentialism is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the "whatness" of a given entity'. This has been rooted recently in the biological campaign to identify the existence of a gay identity (Rasmussen 2006, p. 66) and ultimately a gay gene (Terry 1995). Historically, this was the foundation of sexology, as sexuality was composed of a compulsory heterosexuality, as penis-vagina coitus was 'natural' (Jackson 1984, p. 85). However, some who now utilise an essentialist perspective may do so through 'strategic essentialism' (Fuss 1989 drawing on Spivak 1987), which has similar properties of critical realism (McLaughlin 2016, p. 49). For instance, Noble, Poynting and Tabar's (1999) work on ethnicity and identity suggests, 'essentialism is useful [as] it defines an identity operational in a given context' (p. 37). Further, this notion suggests that there must be an acknowledgement that certain events, while containing social constructed responses, are innate and inevitable (Searle 1995, p. 62). This insight will be further discussed in the context of the theoretical position taken in this paper detailed in subsection 2.7.3.

2.7.2.2 Constructionism

The constructionist paradigm is one that emphasises the premise that there is no reality, but a network of experiences and facts that are socially constructed by the individual (Schwandt 2000, p. 197). This view becomes evident when considering social perceptions of gender, orientation, and race, amongst other identity forming facets, across cultures and time (Burr 2015, p. 4). Therefore, approaching research on sexual orientation requires an understanding that an objective reality is not possible. Instead, the researcher must consider the multiple constructions present in a given context (Mertens 2014, p. 16).

According to Butler (1990, viii-ix), identities, often understood to be naturally occurring, are political constructs that are created by discourses and institutions. Plummer (1975) emphasises the same sentiment in his work on sexuality, suggesting that, 'sexuality has no meaning other than that given to it in social situations' (p.32). These ideas suggest that sexuality is a social construction that has no innate meaning outside a cultural context. This is the same position that Weeks (1986) holds as he writes, 'sex only attains meaning in social relations, which implies that we can only make appropriate choices around sexuality by understanding its social and political context' (p. 81). He goes on to write that while sexuality is a basic, though complex, part of every individual it is contextualised within society and influenced by many historical and political factors (Weeks 2003, p. 91). Further, true understanding of sexuality is difficult and problematic as it is a fluid construct which constantly morphs, taking on different 'guises' for different individuals (Weeks 2003, p. 1). This attests to the notion that sex and sexuality are not essentialist concepts but rather concepts that have evolved with society.

Foucault (1980, p. 194) has put forth that sexuality is an intricate matrix consisting of discourses and institutions, laws and morality, among many other things. Moreover, just as sexuality is complex, with sexual orientation being one facet, it is important to recognise that the discourses that are created are, as Weeks (2003) suggests, 'anchored in a dense network of social activities' (p. 56). This in turn leads to an understanding of one's subject position, which is construed in contemporary times as a reflection of one's sexual identity. For example, being gay is just as much about society's perception of being gay as it is of the individual who is behaving and identifying in this manner. A performance of 'gayness' is also subjective and contingent on the audience, for whom the individual must perform at that time (Rasmussen 2006, p.59). It is also contingent on time and place; Epstein (1987) professes that 'the homosexual' is a socio-historical product, which cannot be applied universally (p. 17). Unfortunately, in the instance of those that identify as gay, these contingencies affect their subsequent treatment (Burr 2015, p. 20).

This notion of 'the homosexual' has progressed past the discussion about the construction of sexuality to the deconstruction of sexuality. The works of Derrida and Foucault are two common frameworks to approach the deconstructions of sexuality. One scholar that embraces the Derridean lens is Sedgwick, while Butler is seemingly more influenced by Foucault (Rasmussen 2006, p. 67-68). Recognising that the deconstruction of the hetero-homosexual binary is important to identity politics, I agree with Epstein (2003) in her

hesitation to focus too much on this deconstruction of sexual orientation before the categories of 'lesbians' and 'gays' have been acknowledged in the classroom (p. 281).

2.7.3 Ontology and Epistemology

The ideas that constitute sexual orientation and the way that it affects and is impacted upon by sex education is an important aspect of this study. Sex education is viewed as an extension of society that affects young people through the discourses that currently prevail. These discourses prioritise a sexual health and public health/medical agenda over the comprehensive approach that includes social aspects such as sexual orientation. Although there should not be a dichotomous approach to sex education, this is the result. While I discussed this at the beginning of this chapter, it will remain a prevailing theme in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

Although some progression in the models of sex education has been observed both in England and abroad, England has not completely progressed beyond the liberal approach as discussed earlier. This has implications for the overall framework of this study, but more so retrospectively, as I could not possibly assign such a label before collecting the data. At the inception of this study, I posited that our understanding of sexuality, both of the participants in the classroom and the teaching of sexuality in this classroom, were fluid and socially constructed. These are constructed and understood insomuch as they change with the times, culture, and ultimately the school and teacher. However, I also understood that there was a necessity to understand biological certainties. Thus, this amalgamation of empirical knowledge with a socially constructed existence leads me to adopt a critical realist perspective (not mutually exclusive from social constructionism[11]) in this study on sex education.

Critical realism is a philosophy of science and theory that emphasises realism in the ontological sphere and relativism in the epistemological sphere (Mingers 2006, p. 19). This translates as the notion that there is an independent world that is 'causally active' that leads to actual events, however, also taking into account that our perceptions of these events are contextually (time, culture, place, etc.) understood (Mingers 2006, p. 19). This framework is akin to a mediation between strict essentialism and strong constructionism in that it suggests that there are aspects of both paradigms that influence our daily lives and understanding of ourselves as humans.

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[11] Elder-Vass (2012) posits that weak forms of social constructionism are compatible with critical realism, thus constructionism can still be a useful approach to understanding gender and identity.

As a post-positivist philosophy, critical realism shares some traits with positivism such as realism; however, it digresses in that critical realists argue that while observations and measurements were originally deemed useful in finding truth, they are inherently fallible. With this fallibility, it becomes apparent that although the truth of reality may be the ultimate goal, it is unrealistically attainable (Trochim 2006; Gorski 2013, p. 661). However, this does not imply that we cannot uncover constructions of reality.

Critical realism informs this research in two essential ways. First, one tenet of the theory posits that while there is fluidity and uncertainty in many aspects of human existence, the transitive, there maintains an intransitive component that exists outside of the current societal view (Bhaskar 2008, pp. 11-12). In summary, this implies that although there is a component that exists solely because of the way it is construed and understood by society, there are also essential forces that exist independently of the way in which they are understood.

Within sex, gender, and sexuality, this philosophy allows for recognition of the dichotomous nature of biological sex (sexual organs) in terms of reproduction (the intransitive), while providing an understanding for the way in which the categories (the transitive) of male, female, or intersexed are causally active and do motivate social practices (New 2005, p.57). New (2005, p. 64) further elaborates by discussing how sex and 'sexual difference' is intrinsically linked to gender (described as the 'social representation of sexual difference') through the idea that sex is the basis for gender, but not in a reducible or determinant sense as gender helps make biological sex meaningful. This encompasses the idea of a stratified reality (Wikgren 2005, p. 16) and thus, rejects Butler's stance, as discussed previously, in that she seemingly merges the transitive and intransitive when considering the constructs of sex and gender (New 2005, p. 57).

The second way in which critical realism contributes to the design of this thesis is through the methodology. Critical realism preserves the notion that reality is multi-layered, thus may require different symbolic representations of data to have a fuller understanding of a phenomenon (Scott 2007, p. 6). Thus, critical realists argue that the choice of method(s) for a study should be dictated by the question being asked, and often a combination of approaches is seen as the most effective (Olsen 2002). While this will further be discussed in Chapter 3, a mixed-methods approach underpinned by critical realism, where historically only qualitative methods may have been deemed appropriate is key to the success of this study.

Finally, while sex and sexuality are main foci of this study, it is also important to consider that the problems identified here are replicated in social policy as a whole. As Béland (2014) states, 'social policy problems are also not purely objective realities but historically contingent definitions that change over time' (p. 7). Thus, it is imperative to understand that scientific validity is not the only factor that needs to be considered. Rather, political suitability influences the advising process as well (Lentsch and Weingart 2011). Pedersen (2014) expands on this theory of epistemic and political robustness by positing that the knowledge produced in an advisory capacity must 'transcend normal disciplinary knowledge production' as the purpose of policy is to address a 'specific social problem' (p. 548).

2.8 Conclusion

Sex education has historically been and still is a source of contention. This closely corresponds to the stigma associated throughout history with sexuality. This chapter has provided an overview of the historical evolution of sex education and policy, and ways in which sexuality impacts on both social and political contexts. In addition, this chapter closed with the identification of theory that has been useful in understanding this thesis since its inception, although my understanding has evolved alongside the research.

In the next chapter, I move to the methodology utilised for this research. The chapter explores the methods used in collecting the empirical data as well as the literary analysis data. This follow in chapters 4 and 5, where I continue with contextual information that lends to a better understanding of the empirical results presented later in the thesis in chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 3: Study Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Sex education in the United Kingdom, among many other places in the world, is a contentious facet of education (Halstead and Reiss 2003). This was detailed earlier in this thesis along with the history of how English society has arrived at its present, albeit contested, views on sex education. With this contention, research into the area, as well as research on many matters relating to young people and sexuality, tends to draw much concern and criticism, especially when planning an investigation into their 'private' realm. This is not entirely due to the subject matter, as working with young people in any capacity demands the utmost concern for the welfare of the participants, but special care is a necessity when considering how to approach young people for answers to what some may call difficult questions. A combination of openness, directness, and a sense of sensitivity are all required when researching a high-risk group. As this chapter progresses, the utility of mixed-methods research is discussed followed by a description of the individual methods that comprised this study. Within each section, I elaborate on the design, utilisation, and subsequent analysis of each of the methods.

As a holistic understanding of sex education requires both data on personal experience as well as empirical data, four methods (a critical literature analysis, survey, focus groups and interviews) were chosen that would result in data aligning with the critical realist perspective. This perspective and provides an account of the socially constructed views contained in the classroom and culture (Mertens 2014, p. 19). This multi-method approach is similar to the approaches taken by Measor and colleagues (2000); Bourton (2006) and Formby (2011) in similar studies on sex education and one supported by Mertens (2014, p. 19) as a way to increase validity.

Selecting methods that would work in tandem, as well as providing a platform to expand upon single method projects was the goal (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 17). While the research questions posed in this thesis could have been partially answered by either quantitative or qualitative methods, having the breadth that quantitative methods allow, as well as the depth that qualitative methods bring, were conducive to a more holistic and robust study (Creswell and Clark 2010, p. 7). In addition, Creswell and Clark (2010) posit that if the

study requires more than one data source and further explanation of findings, then mixed-methods research is a useful tool (pp. 8-10).

Further, this model allows for the triangulation of a more exhaustive representation of sex education by those that are users of the programme and was deemed to be the most methodologically sound (Denzin 1970; Thurmond 2001). Between-method triangulation is based on the theory that no single method can uncover everything about a researched topic, and that qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as complimentary (Jick 1979, p. 2), although there is an identified gap with validity in the utilisation of triangulation in mixed-methods research (Hesse-Biber 2012, p. 138). In this case, each method utilised will have been constructed by the same researcher, thus the weakness of one method, is compensated by that of the other (Denzin 1978, p. 303). Finally, a deciding factor in positioning a critical realist study into a triangulation model serves a specific purpose for future policy and classroom development. As discussed earlier , two aims relate to furthering both policy and education in the classroom, thus empirical data helps to contextualise the constructed realities of all of the young people involved, making interpretation, and thereby its future use, easier.

3.2 Documentary Analysis Methods

3.2.1 Document Selection

Initially this research sought only to examine the national guidance, but following initial data collection for the empirical chapters (6 and 7); it became apparent that school specific information was equally important as the broad guidance that encouraged some degree of independence from individual schools. Thus, the search was expanded to school documents and educational related material used by schools in the delivery of sex education in the area of southeast England where this research took place. The justification for this was to trace the progression, or lack thereof, of sex education from the highest level to the lowest level, which ultimately told more about the schools in terms of the manner in which they chose to deliver their individual programme.

An attempt was made to obtain policy documents from all of the schools affiliated with the colleges that were used for the questionnaire distribution; some of these schools did not make their policies available online, but said that they could provide them upon request. This coincides with Creswell's (2011, p. 223) note on one of the disadvantages of using

documents. However, to compensate, the parameters were expanded to include policies from a broad selection of other schools in the county, as this may suggest something about the reason why access was not granted to the original sample of schools, as well as provide an additional level of anonymity for the schools in the empirical sample. In addition, the logic behind this reflects the notion that not all of the young people that are in a specific college may have attended the lower levels at the affiliated schools, so gaining a broader sample of documents would be more useful in gaining a better overview of the area. Therefore, a list of all the schools in the county was used and from this, three schools were selected, each with varying location, size and type of school, as well as religious affiliation, to demonstrate the variety in school level policies.

3.2.2 Document Analysis

In order to answer research question two relating to the quality of the policies and materials, an evaluation criterion needed to be utilised. However, this is problematic in that it is subjective to say that one policy or set of materials is better than another when there is no research to demonstrate this. Thus, I decided to overcome this issue by evaluating both the policies and materials in terms of the definition of sex education used within this thesis and as provided by the WHO/BZgA (2010) for the promotion of a holistic sex education programme. This was done by roughly following Lupton, Burchardt, Hills, Stewart and Vizard's (2013) framework for policy analysis, which followed the goals of a policy to the policy, then examining resources, inputs, outputs, subsequently examining the outcomes (pp. 3-7). I omitted the resources aspect, as this thesis did not have the capacity to examine the monetary aspects of curriculum development, material creation, etc. However, in a broader sense, the focus of the government on pregnancy prevention programmes outside of the classroom and Nation Health Services initiatives to reduce STIs could be considered in the resources capacity. It must be noted that the broader policy analysis context is detailed in each subsequent chapter, as the inputs, outputs and outcomes are discussed through the data collected and in the final chapter's discussion and recommendations.

As noted in the previous chapter, comprehensive sex education is known to be effective in multiple areas (Kirby 2007, 2008), thus by adding an additional layer of complexity and looking at the social aspects of sex education, as well as considering research on anti-homophobia programmes, the amalgamation of a similar type of style would also prove to be

successful. This view also follows additional definitions of sex education such as the one provided by SIECUS (referred to in chapter 2).

Although the policies are notably descriptive, the discussion is based on a descriptive critical analysis and keyword search, which sought to look at three themes (Fairclough 2010; Bernard 2000, p. 443). First, the organisation of the material and topics covered; second, the tendencies of homogenising or simply ignoring sexual orientations, thus heteronormatising sex education and third, whether young people were stigmatised and marginalised based on sexuality and sexual attitudes. These themes were selected based on the research questions posited at the onset of this research, as well as my personal experience of working in the sexual health sector.

3.3 Quantitative Methods

In order to collect data on the current views of sex education in with a larger group of young people, a cross-sectional survey that was distributed in colleges in East Sussex was employed (see Appendix V). This method was used to gather a larger sample of data to provide a general overview of current views and experiences of young people's sex education (Bryman 2008, p. 217; Creswell 2011, p. 378). This method was chosen for several reasons, including the strengths of survey methods to access a larger sample more conveniently and time efficiently, and the possibility of generalisation of the data to the larger population. Further, from a critical realist perspective, additional strengths include the possibility of developing reliable descriptions and accurate comparisons within the data, thus allowing the research to uncover patterns that might not be readily apparent (McEvoy and Richards 2006, p. 71).

Another point in favour of using a quantitative method when examining aspects of sex education entails anonymity (Whelan 2007). For an intimate topic such as sex, individuals may be hesitant to disclose personal facts, their views or their habits to an outsider, or in this case a researcher but they may be willing to disclose facts if methods allow for anonymity (Tourangeau and Yan 2007, p. 860). This is where the privacy of the survey is pertinent. In addition, as this survey only involved circling the selected choices, the possibility of identifying an individual based solely on their responses is negligible.

3.3.1 Questionnaire-based Survey

The survey was chosen, as it was the best way to gather a larger sample that would inform this thesis on the current state of sex education (Bryman 2008, p. 217). This also assisted in providing a larger data set for research questions one and three to ascertain whether sex education is currently heteronormative, what factors affect the perception of heteronormativity (if it exists), and also provide data which could allow for a comparison between straight respondents and LGBT identified respondents in the classroom.

3.3.1.1 Design and Development of the Survey

The design of the survey is critical in obtaining legitimate results from fieldwork (de Leeuw, Hox and Dillman 2008a, p. 11). The decision to use a survey with young people initially posed an interesting dilemma, as it was important to be aware that the data collected might not accurately depict the issues that I was researching. For this reason, it was imperative to be sure that the method employed was constructed in the appropriate manner for the population being researched (validity) (Creswell 2011, p. 159). This was initially difficult as what seemed like commonplace concepts and terminology for myself, someone who has worked in sexual health for several years, might not be readily apparent for the young participants. Thus, each question needed to be written in a user-friendly manner, while still being effective in capturing the desired type of response (Foelwer Jr. and Cosenza 2008, p. 139). The survey format chosen had previously been used to obtain information and opinions from adults on various components of a local sex education curriculum in the United States. As this survey was created and used for other research on sex education in the US (UNF Public Opinion Research Laboratory 2006), it became apparent that modelling on this specific tool would be advantageous in the early stages of my research planning.

Upon systematically reviewing the results that the original survey obtained and the structure in which the questions were asked, it was decided that the survey for this research study (Appendix V) should be crafted in a very similar fashion, apart from changes to account for the importance of using culturally relevant terminology (Schwarz, Knauper, Oyserman and Stich 2008, p. 18). This allowed for a template on which adding additional types of questions could be easily achieved. Several questions were then chosen from the original survey based on relevancy to my research, with several additional questions and additional topics being

included, as the original survey was developed for a phone survey with adults (e.g. questions in section 3 concerning age appropriateness and topics covered in section 4).

After considering the types of questions that were being asked, the order of the items on the questionnaire was considered. Cohesiveness and coherence would be important as young people needed to be able to navigate a multiple page survey with minimal assistance, in a reasonable time limit, while also attempting to minimise non-response (de Leeuw, Hox and Dillman 2008a, p. 10).

The questionnaire was comprised of 35 questions divided into four sections (Bernard 2000, p. 243), each relating to a different facet of the participant's views and experience of sex education, and an additional five demographics questions. The order of the sections was determined after thinking about the perceived impact of each question in that section. The easier or less contentious questions were at the beginning, the slightly more contentious and thought-provoking questions in the middle of the survey (the appropriateness section), and concluding with simple reporting on previous topics discussed in sex education (Lensvelt-Mulders 2008, p. 469). This organisation was mirrored as best as possible in each section, although it became apparent that many topics could be perceived as contentious, even if I did not view them as such. Finally, the length of the survey seemed appropriate, as students would typically be asked to complete the survey during school time, thus it was important to minimise the inconvenience perceived by the teachers and schools (de Leeuw and Hox 2008b, p. 260). I also felt that in this specific situation, attention from the students on the survey might have waned if the survey required more than 10-15 minutes to complete.

3.3.1.2 Assessing the Perceived Importance of Sex Education

The first section of the questionnaire contained questions that were chosen to assess participants' perception of the importance of sex education and the topics contained within the curriculum. Each question's response set was designed using a five-point scale to allow for ease of use by respondents (Fowler Jr. and Cosenza 2008, p. 151) while retaining the quality of measurement (Krosnik and Fabrigar 1997). For this section, the options ranged from 'not important' to 'extremely important'. The endpoints were labelled, despite a small potential impact on reliability, to ensure that students would not be deterred or confused by the choice of adjectives used to describe the middle options (Fowler Jr. and Cosenza 2008, p. 152). It is also important to note that the 'refusal' or 'indifferent' options were not made explicitly clear,

but rather the participant could choose not to answer any of the questions (Dillman 2008 p. 169).

3.3.1.3 Assessing the Perceived Level of Agreement with Topics related to Sex, Sexuality, and Sex Education

The format used in the second section of the survey is similar to the first section, except in this particular grouping of questions, young people were asked for their level of agreement, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Topics in this section, however, were not entirely focused on sex education, with questions ranging from whether religious and family values affect sexual decision making to questions about bullying. It is important to note that there were two specific questions placed within this section to determine the level of agreement with sex education in the curriculum. These two questions were asked as a pair of reversed questions, to assess internal consistency and were placed at the beginning and end of the section (Creswell 2011, p. 161).

3.3.1.4 Assessing the Perceived Appropriateness of Topics for Sex Education and Inclusion in the Classroom

The third section of the survey relates to the appropriateness of topics in sex education. First, young people were asked at what ages they felt that the selected topics were appropriate for inclusion in sex education. The choices were then laid out in order of Key Stages, as defined by the Department for Education, with the corresponding approximate age groups for the Key Stages. This was to ensure that participants were able to consider both the age during certain periods of schooling, along with the corresponding terminology of the Key Stages that they are likely to have been exposed to throughout their education.

Upon concluding the questions relating to appropriateness, young people were asked to circle, from a list of 16 topics, any topics they could recall at any point in their history of sex education. These topics were chosen after considering what topics are considered to be compulsory in Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as those consistent with various definitions of comprehensive (and holistic) sex education. The final question of the third section was one that called for an opinion of the way sex education should be viewed and subsequently taught (e.g. abstinence only versus comprehensive sex education).

3.3.1.5 Open-ended Questions

The fourth and final section of the questionnaire, excluding demographics, contained five open-ended questions. The questions were chosen to elicit a much more detailed response other than simple agreement (Bryman 2008, p. 232). It was also a way to allow young people to comment on current themes of sex education and how that intersects with society in both the public health and social realm. For instance, how the UK can reduce STI rates and for opinions concerning commonality of homophobic bullying in schools. However, as these questions obtained very few answers and even less useable data, I have opted not to discuss them further in this thesis.

3.3.1.6 Socio-demographics

Finally, a small demographics section was attached at the very end of the survey, which was put in place to gather some information about the participants. Standard demographical questions of sex and ethnicity were asked, along with sexual orientation, religious identity, and a final question on where the participant completed the majority of their secondary schooling, used to assess eligibility for the study. Age was excluded because it was deemed non-relevant to this research, considering the sample consisted of young people in sixth form colleges between the ages of 16 and 18.

The survey was piloted with three sexual health colleagues who had extensive work experience with young people in the geographical area. Although piloting is usually conducted to pre-test the survey with the prospective population (de Leeuw et al. 2008a, p. 6), I felt that this was not possible due to the ethical conditions considered during the ethical review stages. However, the feedback that was received from my sexual health colleagues prompted me to make changes to the wording of some questions (Campanelli 2008, p. 185).

3.3.1.7 Sample

Young people attending colleges were chosen for this study because of the relatively short time lapse since their last formal experiences of sex education. In addition, due to practicality issues, the southeast of England was chosen as the geographical location. At the inception of this study, I was aiming for 400-500 respondents. This number was roughly five percent of the total number of individuals aged between 16 and 18 in the city (ONS 2011). In

order to attain such a large number from a relatively small geographical area, all colleges within a small coastal city in southeast of England were contacted. However, the logistics of getting all of the colleges in this city to consent to the research was impractical, thus the sample area was expanded to encompass all colleges in the county (which expanded the total number of individuals in that age range five-fold and sixth form students exponentially). Nineteen out of 20 colleges in a single county were contacted with six consenting to take part in the research, leading to the employment of convenience sampling (Creswell 2011, pp. 145-146). The exception was one college that identified itself as primarily an international student college, in which the students would not have met the eligibility requirements. Within these colleges, my aim was to survey at least the original estimate of 400-500 students approximately aged 16[12] to 18 (Bryman 2008, p. 243). This was to ensure that I was able to access the most diverse sample possible within my data collection means. However, the actual number surveyed was 294, which was further reduced in the analysis to 260 participants as I had decided that participants who were not educated primarily in England would be excluded. This criterion was confirmed post survey collection as this information was part of the demographics section.

3.3.1.8 Procedure

After contacting colleges via several mediums, phone, e-mail, and online contact forms, access was granted to six educational providers, three colleges funded by the local authority, two independent private colleges and a youth organisation comprised of young people who were excluded from mainstream education for various reasons. Within these colleges, participation was limited to courses that focused on social sciences. Although not confirmed, it appeared that this limitation was due to the social science framework utilised for this study leading to an easier justification for colleges allotting time to allow the survey to be distributed in the classroom setting. However, it was agreed by several colleges that additional surveys be made available to other students if the instructors were happy offer them.

Distribution of the surveys occurred in two manners, but both classified as 'drop-off' surveys (de Leeuw and Hox 2008b, p. 239) suitable for group administration (de Leeuw and Hox 2008b, p. 259). I either personally distributed them, or the faculty member who was my contact in the school distributed them to the students. At the colleges where I personally

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[12] 16 is the age of consent in England, thus it was not practical to access a younger sample as this would require parental assent.

distributed the surveys, I introduced my research, provided a supplemental information sheet (Appendix III), explained the research process including the overall aim of examining sex education, as well as discussed informed consent. However, I did not disclose what I was specifically looking for in terms of heteronormativity. In multiple cases, I was asked as a favour to the instructors, to spend a few minutes discussing my research and my discipline in general for those who were considering university in the next year or two. In the colleges where I did not distribute them, I provided the instructor a brief description. This description was to be read to the students, and covered everything that I conveyed at the other colleges (de Leeuw and Hox 2008b, p. 260). This was done alongside distributing the information sheet to each student. I also advised that any student who wanted more information after completion of the survey had the option of contacting me via e-mail. Finally, it is important to note that in line with ethics committee recommendations, I compiled and distributed a sheet containing contact information for sexual health services in the local area. This was comprised of sexual health clinics, contraception and sexual health centres, alongside centres that could provide advice on alternative sexualities.

3.3.1.9 Analysis

The analysis of the questionnaire was completed using descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation coefficients, and Mann-Whitney U tests. The descriptive statistics, utilising cross-tabulations (frequency tables), were necessary as most of the questions asked about the frequency in which specific topics were discussed in the classroom and a general overview of current views towards many facets of sex education (Bryman 2008, p. 322). The Mann-Whitney U tests, however, were chosen to look for trends in the data as well as differences between multiple samples and key questions amongst non-parametric data (Creswell 2011, p. 191).

For each question on the survey, a frequency table was run using split cases for gender, sexual orientation and school. This was done to provide an overall view of sex education as perceived by current sixth form students (research question two). Gender was grouped dichotomously (male/female) as no one identified as transsexual or intersex in the sample. Seven did not disclose their gender and these were coded as missing (Bryman 2008, p. 318; Creswell 2011, pp. 181-182), but only in terms of the demographic representation. For sexual orientation, cases were reported in their original individual categories (straight, gay/lesbian, bisexual, other, and prefer not to answer) for the total demographics figure, but

then gay/lesbian and bisexual were grouped into an overarching LGB group, which served as the comparison group for 'straight' in the remaining data analysis. Again, there were 11 surveys whose response on that particular item was coded as missing. This breakdown was done to provide a comparison that would assist in determining perceptual differences, which relates to research question four. The final division, by school, was to provide a comparison between, but also to consider the implications of public versus state schooling (research question three).

3.4 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research enables an understanding of individuals' perceptions in much greater detail than that achieved through a standardised survey and in this way is complementary (Bernard 2000, fp. 207). Here, this approach allowed for the inclusion of in-depth discussion with young people (specifically LGBT identified young people), in both focus groups and follow-up interviews (Chapter 7), which provided a much greater insight into both the experiences and narratives of users of sex education in England. In addition to the strength of obtaining deeper and greater insight into the researched topic, another benefit of qualitative methods relates to power dynamics. These methods give the individual a voice, which allows them to shift power back to them, an important facet of both focus groups and interviews (Gibbs 1997; Bryman 2008, p. 437; Millward 2012, p. 416; Mawson 2013, p. 3). This voice and empowerment has the potential to open up an array of feelings and insights that an individual on the outside, such as a researcher, might not consider an integral part of the subject matter originally planned for discussion, thus aligning well with the critical realist perspective (McEvoy and Richards 2006, p. 71). Additionally, this provides the link to what surveys only begin to uncover. As with surveys, participants may find it difficult to relate to preconceived, and possibly misdirected, choices put in place by an outsider (Mack 2010). However, the open-ended forum of an in-person interaction can examine and utilise the intricacies of personal responses, or at least enable explanation and clarification of any uncertainties.

3.4.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups were chosen as a way to elicit in-depth and personal responses of LGBT identified young people in a comfortable setting[13] (Bryman 2008, p. 473). These enabled participants to contribute additional knowledge around the current state of sex education, as well as answering research question four as to how sexual orientation is played out in the classroom, both within the curriculum and for LGBT users of the system (Bernard 2000, p. 208). Both of these goals could have been achieved in another manner, but the use of focus groups allowed the participants to be more involved than when using a survey, and also more interactive and expressive than they may have been in a one-on-one interview (Bryman 2008, p. 475; Mawson 2013, p. 3).

3.4.1.1 Design

The focus group script needed to be culturally relevant but also consider the negative experiences that the young people may have experienced in the past, which may have related to their sexual orientation (Bernard 2000, p. 211). With this under consideration, a script of eight main questions (Appendix VI) was devised, consisting of topics ranging from experiences of sex education, perceived school's attitudes to alternative sexualities, and reflection on their experiences. Also contained in the script, were additional cues (probes) that would help facilitate and clarify these discussions (Creswell 2011, p. 221). My supervisors reviewed this script prior to the focus groups to ensure that the material and language was culturally relevant and sensitive to the population in which I was conducting the sessions (Frith 2000, p. 279).

3.4.1.2 Sample

The focus group element of the research was exclusive to participants that identified as LGBT (or QQ[14] in some cases) as the focus groups were used to expand upon survey data and to answer the research question of how sexual orientation was viewed in the classroom from young people identifying as LGBT. The other necessity of seeking an exclusive LGBT group

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[13] This refers to the physical location of where the focus groups took place. This was in a room in the youth group's normal meeting place.
[14] Queer and Questioning

was that it increased the diversity of the overall sample by including additional LGBT voices, as the surveys did not capture a high volume of LGBT identified young people in the classroom.

When considering where a pool of approximately 20-25 LGBT identified young people, ideally between the ages of 16 and 21[15], could be accessed, I decided to search the internet for LGBT societies and groups alongside contacting my university's[16] LGBT group via Facebook. Facebook resulted in virtually no interest, so contact was made with two local youth organisations (within the county) which worked specifically with the desired group of young people. One was known through my employment with the National Health Service (NHS), and the second was found via a Google search. The first was an established group for LGBT identified young people (that I l refer to as OUT), and the second was a programme that had ended, but was trying to start again under a new banner (which I refer to as QYP).

Concurrently with the recruitment process, I was invited onto an NHS training course covering basic sexual health awareness. On this specific training in sexual health, I met a youth worker that worked with my target population via OUT. After an informal discussion with this individual, he recommended that I contact him via e-mail so that he could acquire further details of my research to discuss with the programme manager. I contacted him formally to enquire whether I could forward a call for participants to which he and his manager agreed. During this time, I also made contact with QYP; however, the programme had not started running youth groups at the time of data collection.

After receiving approval from OUT, I sent a short paragraph asking for expressions of interest that my contact circulated during the LGBT group's weekly meeting. I was invited to conduct my research on their premises spanning a minimum of three weeks. In each of the three weeks I attended, I asked openly at the beginning of the group for volunteers to participate, though this refutes the notion put forth by Krueger (1994) in that the group should not know one another (p. 18). However, as the topic was something that personally affected them, I did not consider that this needed further consideration as Bernard (2000) writes that participants will disclose more if the groups are 'supportive and non-judgmental' (p. 211). Furthermore, the specified demographic researched would have been even more difficult to access without using a group such as this. Therefore, each of the three weeks resulted in three

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[15] Minimum age was selected for the same reason as in the quantitative portion of the study, youngest age allowed to give personal consent, While the upper age was expanded to 21, to ensure that I would be able to obtain a slightly larger sample, since some LGBT identified individuals may not have come out until after compulsory schooling.

[16] The other university in Brighton was not contacted as their online presence was not conducive for me, as the researcher, to contacting a mass audience as was the case at my university.

focus groups consisting of 4-6 participants, which formed a 'natural group', defined as those who already know one another, in the youth group setting (Bryman 2008, p. 482).

In total, 15 young people participated. This made up approximately half of the total number of participants that attended this youth group on a weekly basis and nearly 80 percent of those that fell within the relevant age range.

3.4.1.3 Procedure

The focus groups were conducted on the premises of the youth group in a separate room from the rest of the activities for the week. The participants were asked to make themselves comfortable and were allowed to bring food and beverages into the room with them to supplement the food that was provided as a thank you gesture for participation. At this time, a brief introduction to the research and focus groups were explained. Participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix II), consenting to both take part in the study and to allow audio recording, which would allow for verbatim transcripts to be generated (Bryman 2008, p. 476). They were then given a brief overview as to the expectations of the group concerning confidentiality and acceptance of everybody's view as equal with no correct answers (Bernard 2000, p. 211). The participants were informed that a topic guide would be used; however, any points that could require further discussion would be welcomed. It was at this point that the audio recorder was started and the focus group began.

As I wanted the groups to be informative and open, I did not dictate any specifics regarding the way responses were to be made, rather participants were allowed to respond as they saw fit, using the language that they chose. This was important in this research, as I needed to consider that young people might not be able to differentiate concepts if using overly complicated or professional language (Creswell 2011, p. 389). If a language barrier were to exist during the questions or dialogues in the focus groups, either the participants or myself might miss a valuable opportunity to discuss other themes that might emerge (Bryman 2008, p. 480). For instance, one theme that emerged and will be discussed later involves the 'camp gay' as a stereotype. With this, care had to be taken to discuss and clarify any terminology that was confusing, while not influencing word choice. These methods also allowed participants to provide answers that they were comfortable giving, for example when asking about perceptions of sexuality. In some instances, the participants gave responses with definitions that were not completely 'correct', but nonetheless, it was important to allow the participants

to express their views openly without feeling as if they were being judged or corrected (Bernard 2000, p. 211). However, in these instances, I confirmed that everyone agreed on the definition of the term that we were discussing at the present moment.

3.4.1.4 Focus Group Schedule

The topic guide (Appendix VI) was developed in conjunction with the survey. The main points focused on experience as opposed to just whether or not a topic was discussed in the classroom. There were eight questions with additional prompts in the event that participants did not understand a question correctly. Each question focused on an aspect of sex education, starting with general experiences and then moving onto topics covered in lessons, ultimately discussing sexual orientation and sexuality. The final two questions were reflective in nature, asking the participants to recount whether they thought that their school was effective in its teaching and whether they recall what they learned at any point now in life. All of the questions used in the focus groups were developed in order to best understand the complete sex education experience of these young people.

3.4.1.5 Analysis

Upon completion of the focus groups, the audio files were transferred to a programme called Transcriber 1.5.1 in which they were fully transcribed. Care was taken to ensure the transcriptions were correct, although on occasion it was difficult to accurately understand what was being said. In these cases, brackets were used in the transcript to indicate that something was missing or unclear (Creswell 2011, p. 239). I also chose to exclude excess 'buts, ums, and yeahs', as nothing was lost in the transcription of the responses to the questions (partial intelligent verbatim transcription). Finally, emotions were coded within the transcript based on the audio file as well as my recollection and any personal notes that I took to indicate when a participant became emotional, as the capacity for the recommended two staff members was not attainable (Bernard 2000, p. 211). There was one clear example of this, where a participant started to sob during a response, but this was difficult to hear on the audio file.

Once the transcripts were complete, thematic analysis was employed and each statement was carefully critiqued and coded to what appeared to be the underlying meaning

(Braun and Clarke 2006), if it was not explicit (Bernard 2000, p. 444). A second coder was not utilised in this process, however, a random section of two of the focus groups were reviewed by my supervisor. Upon coding the three focus groups, I had established over 100 different codes. To make sense of these codes, they were grouped into three overarching themes (Creswell 2011, p. 244). These themes formed the basis of my critique of the sex education culture towards LGBT identified young people and the perceptions that LGBT young people have of sex education, as well as the education system.

3.4.2 Interviews

Of the three methods used with participants, the semi-structured interviews were designed to be the most flexible, as the list of questions was not used with everyone, but rather a selection to expand on previous thoughts that I felt warranted more information for this research (Mertens 2014, p. 20). Thus, they were used to generate a more in-depth understanding of themes that directly arose during the focus groups (Bryman 2008, p. 196).

3.4.2.1 Design

After completion of the initial review of the focus groups, several themes became apparent. However, what seemed to be lacking was an in-depth account of the emotions that were experienced. This became a major focus for the interviews, along with clarification of other topics such as teaching materials and perceptions of the schools and teachers towards heteronormativity or in some cases homophobia. From these topics, a list of themes was devised (Appendix VII) that I wanted to address with the participants in the short time slots (approximately 15-20 minutes) that I was afforded per individual in the youth group. This was due to time constraints with the young people's participation in the youth group event that evening.

3.4.2.2 Sample

The sample population was identical to that of the focus groups, thus there was potential overlap with those who had taken part in the focus groups several months prior to the interviews. However, since this was approximately six months after completing the focus

groups, there was a new cohort of young people that started attending the youth group. This increased the likelihood that I would obtain information from new participants, therefore, I aimed for approximately five to ten additional participants.

After attending the youth group session for an additional two weeks, I obtained a sample of seven young people[17], with two being participants in the focus groups and the other five being new to this research. Of these seven young people, five identified as LGB and two as transgendered. Finally, while it may not have been ideal to have this overlap, it provided interesting supplemental information to the focus groups, as well as confirmation of findings.

3.4.2.3 Procedure

Prospective participants in this research were approached at the beginning of the evening youth group meeting and those who wished to take part registered their interest with the staff member. The staff member coordinated the interviews to assist in managing the sessions efficiently.

On commencing the interview, each individual was welcomed and given a brief synopsis of what my research was about and how the youth group had been involved in the past, as all but one were not regular attendees at the youth group at the time of the focus groups. After the introduction, I set out the framework for the interview explaining that I wanted to gain more insight into specific topics that had been broached in the focus groups. It was during this time that I distributed the information sheet (Appendix IV) and requested that the participants sign consent forms, in which they consented to both the interview and the audio recording of the interview. Each session lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and contained questions to assess the type of sex education that participants had experienced themselves followed by the questions devised after preliminary analysis of the focus group data. On conclusion of the interviews, I asked if there was anything that the participant wished to add that I had not discussed with them and most participants closed with a final remark.

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[17] Considering that two individuals were the same as in the focus group sample, the total number of participants questioned in the focus groups and interviews totalled 20.

3.4.2.4 Analysis

All interviews were transcribed using the intelligent verbatim style and then twice coded in the same manner as the focus groups to allow for thematic analysis as well as providing a more coherent set of data that could be used in 'between method' triangulation with the focus groups and questionnaires to corroborate the data (Denzin 1970). This thematic analysis complemented the themes that were apparent in the focus group data, while adding additional insight into areas that were only superficially discussed in the focus groups. It must also be noted that even though the data supported the use of triangulation, the method was employed solely for validity in the policy sphere.

3.5 Ethics

The implications of ethics for methodology are pertinent to understanding how the methodology evolves in a research project. Equally important is the idea of access. As this research involves the topic of sexuality and a sample of young people, this leads to thoughts on whether strictly controlled access to young people in schools is conducive to allowing them to shape their own future through research. Thus, this section will discuss access to young people, the utility of gatekeepers, my personal account of the ethics process in this research and the implications of practitioner research.

3.5.1 Access to a Vulnerable Population: Children/Adolescents

As this research sought participants under the age of 18, it is important to discuss the implications of such research, and also to discuss the importance of research involving children.

When designing a research project that involves children as participants, there are usually conditions that must be met before the research is approved (Atwool 2013, p. 1). These stipulations come from both ethics committees and the institutions that researchers are seeking to enter. Especially when the topic is deemed sensitive, these approvals are hard to acquire (Lewis and Knijn 2003, p. 115).

Most universities and research-based bodies have set recommendations for involving children in research. I am only concerned here with social research and engaging children in

social-based projects can be beneficial where the research will ultimately benefit future children (Atwool 2013, p. 2). While this justification is typically one that allows research to proceed, this may not always be the case, although it is difficult to ascertain the number of social research projects with children that are declined.

3.5.2 Gatekeepers in School-based Research

As the survey for this study was conducted in colleges, it is necessary to consider the role of gatekeepers who are tasked with protecting the establishment as well as the users of that establishment (Denscombe and Aubrook 1992; Heath et al. 2004 p. 4; Creswell 2011, pp. 211-212; Bourke and Loveridge 2013, p. 5). In this case, I am referring to those who ultimately need to give approval for research to be conducted in schools as each college had staff members in various positions making the decision concerning the access request.

In practice, the role of the gatekeeper, as aforementioned, is to dictate who can access the institution and the people within. In the case of schools, the board of governors, the headmaster/principal, and teachers typically hold the power to make these decisions (Bourke and Loveridge 2013, p. 5). However, when I contacted colleges, I found that the head of SRE was typically a good starting point to request participation in my research on sex education. These staff members were typically able to provide advice or identify the next point of contact.

From the experience of conducting this research, schools who allowed teachers more autonomy in making decisions enabled more flexibility with access being granted. For instance, in all of the schools in which I distributed the survey, the first point of contact, usually the head of SRE, was the individual to approve their college's (or certain class's) participation. The schools in which the individual felt they needed further approval resulted in access being declined or contact being lost.

3.5.3 Ethics Recommendations for this Study

For this research, there were several recommendations put forth by the university's Social Sciences Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (University of Sussex) which prompted me to rethink my initial strategy. For both of the participant interaction elements of my research, it was requested by the review committee that I (a) add additional layers of confidentiality by using only audio recording for the focus groups/interviews and providing a

drop-box for survey collection; (b) provide a contact sheet with details for local clinics and organisations that worked in sexual health and sexuality concerns; and (c) verify that the young people were fully aware of what was being asked of them by providing a detailed information sheet. These sheets were to be distributed with the standardised University of Sussex consent form, which clearly needed to state what the participants were consenting to. The research (reference 1011/05/15) was officially given ethics approval on 14 September 2011 (Appendix I).

There were, however, two deviations from the original research plan that was ultimately approved by the university's ethics committee. First, in a few institutions, I was not granted access to the student body myself; instead, I had to rely on a faculty member to distribute the surveys and obtain consent. In these instances, I was explicit in my instructions to the faculty member who distributed the surveys that participation was optional and provided a short paragraph that was to be relayed as an introduction to the survey. I was able to monitor consent in that consent forms were to be returned with the surveys and in all cases, this occurred.

The second deviation that arose during the data collection involved the committee's request for me to remove myself from the data collection process. As mentioned above, the decided approach was for me to distribute the survey in class and then allow participants to complete the survey at home and return them, sealed in an envelope, to a drop-box placed at a convenient location in the college. In every school except one, participants did enclose their completed survey in an envelope; however, four of the six schools decided against a drop-box as they thought this would be difficult to manage in their environment. In these cases, a nominated faculty member collected the completed surveys and forwarded them to me once they were certain that no other surveys would be received.

Finally, all data was obtained in accordance with internationally recognised ethical standards (Singer 2008, p. 93) and held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.5.4 Implications of Practitioner Research

From the outset of the data collection process, it became obvious that there may be both benefits and concerns that would arise from my employment with the National Health Service as some of the schools that I approached, as well as the one youth group had a pre-existing working relationship with my team. The benefits include a better understanding of the

key groups that I worked with through my employment, the potential for improving personal practice (Campbell 2013, p. 2), as well as results that would potentially have localised and real-world implications (Nutley, Walter and Davies 2007, p. 70). Of these advantages of this type of data collection, the latter is in evidence throughout the empirical chapters. Conversely, this method of research is not without concern. Possibly the more important concern and the one that could affect the research the most is the potential for claims against the credibility of the data. This meant that the boundaries surrounding ethics, confidentiality, and bias needed to be considered and reflected upon throughout the research process (Fraser 1997; Hammersley and Traianou 2012).

When approaching the university's ethics committee's recommendations, as stated above, there had been some concerns that had been overlooked in the decision-making process about collecting data on a sensitive subject, in a sensitive environment. As Walker (2013) states, research committees often pose questions surrounding ethical issues that are overlooked by practitioner researchers (p. 148). These concerns required the utmost attention in that a study built on ethics, is a study built on a quality framework (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2007, pp. 205-206).

Once the data collection began, confidentiality became paramount. As someone who had screened several of these young people for STIs, it was important to reflect on how to approach them in a different capacity. Going from an educator in sexual health to a researcher in sex education required openness with the young people regarding the role that I would play in the data collection process, especially during the interviews and focus groups. Fortunately, many of the young people involved understood the dilemma and were accommodating in screening with me one night and openly talking to me about their sex education and experiences of bullying the next night. This may in part be explained by the infrequency of the professional contact.

A second main concern that requires reflection is around bias (Fraser 1997, p. 162). With my role in sexual health, I aimed to ensure that the population, with which I worked, was receiving the best service that I could offer within my role in the NHS. Therefore, I have a stake in young people finding fault with their sex education, though this should not detract from the privileging of young people's voices (Mockler 2014, p. 154), which ultimately was the cornerstone of this research. While I have addressed this in the context of the methods chosen, it is important to acknowledge that supervision within my place of employment - and within academia - helped me to focus on the role that I needed to play in each specific instance

(Fraser 1997, p. 163). Further, academic supervision aided in my data analysis, which allowed me to maintain ethical boundaries in the confines of this research.

Finally, it is important to clarify the impact that my professional role had on the data collection from the standpoint of accessibility. It is undeniable that my role within the NHS assisted in acquiring contacts within several of the schools and organisations in which I sought participation but only half of the data collected was from the schools/organisations in which my NHS trust had a previous working relationship. There were several schools contacted, in which I personally had a relationship with a staff member, that could not consent to take part in the study. This ultimately led to the expansion of the data collection area to encompass a county.

3.6 Discussion

The methods chosen to conduct this research were selected based on their utility of complimenting each other. With this, methodological triangulation has allowed me to corroborate my research findings from one method to the other, while accounting for the shortcomings of each method individually (Denzin 1970). Further, it was important to make sure that each research question was influential in the design of both the quantitative and qualitative methods. This leads to the question of validity, reliability, and generalisability.

The validity and reliability of this research lies in the construction of the methods. Thus, each method needs to demonstrate these characteristics. In general, the survey needs to assess what is meant to be assessed and the questions must demonstrate that they can produce the same result consistently. With the survey in particular, the validity was tested by comparing findings to those in existing literature. These demonstrated a strong similarity, therefore, suggesting that the survey items did capture the data that was intended. As for the reliability, triangulation with the qualitative methods sought to provide this consistency (Denzin 1970).

In the qualitative methods, reliability was the main emphasis, as the subjective nature of the data and subsequent analysis makes assessing validity more difficult (but not impossible). Again, each was counterpoised with the previously completed survey, which demonstrated congruence between the methods used. Moreover, since piloting the surveys and focus group schedule were difficult due to the limited sample sizes and ethical considerations, it was necessary to consult experts in sexual health as well as in academia

before the research commenced. As multiple methods were employed, this was deemed a suitable validation for the research.

However, even though validity and reliability were considered during the course of the research and analysis, I note that caution must be taken when considering the wider applications of the results. While I have strived to minimise such issues within the research, the utilisation of small samples in a relatively small region of the UK needs to be considered. This does not suggest that aspects of this research cannot be taken forward for future work but rather that this research, even with the multiple methods employed, will not be able to unequivocally answer all questions about sex education and may not be generalisable outside of this geographical area.

Aside from the methods chosen for this research, ethical implications ultimately guided the actual data collection. Ethics played a large part in the conception and conduct of this study. Care was taken to protect the individuals participating in this research, based on recommendations from the ethics committee, as well as the organisations and schools that participated. This had an impact on the way in which the data was collected and ultimately the number of participants achievable in the quantitative component of the research - with the biggest impact being those restrictions put in place by the schools themselves. However, at all times the participants' best interests were cared for through ample explanation of the research and a clear reminder throughout the sessions of the right to withdraw consent.

Finally, it is important to consider one final aspect of a school's decision to approve data collection in their classrooms. This aspect is convenience, as each school had ways in which they wanted to protect the students and their views, yet place time constraints in accordance with other classroom expectations. In some of the institutions where the survey was distributed, the teacher requested that I stay and collect the completed surveys from those who wished to participate, as allowing them to leave the premises would likely lead to more of a time investment by those teachers. This limited my availability to distribute them in several sessions at the school, as spending more time (from their perspective) on this outside project was not feasible as not all teachers had time to spend during crucial learning periods of the year. This was also a concern for several of the schools who chose not to take part.

3.7 Conclusion

This research on sex education utilised a multi-methods approach, with the aim of collating the data to form a coherent account of sex education as experienced by users, and more specifically, the marginalised group of LGBT identified young people. Utilising documentary analysis, a survey, focus groups, and interviews in combination, allowed me to corroborate findings that otherwise would have been limited by relatively small sample sizes for research using each of these methods exclusively.

Young people taking part in this research were assured that their information was treated as private and confidential, even for those who completed the surveys in class. A couple of teachers planned accordingly and made the research part of the lesson for the day in exchange for my contribution to the class by spending some time talking about my topic, my discipline and university, which is similar to what David, Edwards and Alldred (2001) experienced with their whole class sessions. This was a well-planned way to utilise a guest speaker and also support research that will ultimately expand upon the existing literature and contribute to knowledge about perceptions of sexual orientation in sex education.

Having outlined the structure of the empirical research in this chapter, I will proceed in the following order. In the next chapter, I present an account of a selection of sex education policies and guidance documents before moving into the final contextual chapter where sex education materials are examined. After these two chapters, the empirical chapters begin with the quantitative data detailing the results of the survey. Subsequently, and for the penultimate chapter, I discuss the qualitative data obtained in this study, which focuses on the focus groups and interviews. Each chapter will be presented in the tradition of each method discussed, as opposed to an initial amalgamation of the themes, which serves to lend specific focus to each method and the population that made up each sample. This will then culminate with the conclusion, where the data is amalgamated to provide a concise overview of this thesis and provide specific recommendations for the future of sex education.

Chapter 4: Critical Account of Sex Education Policies and Guidance

Thus far, I have presented a comprehensive literature review of sex education in the UK and the methods employed for this thesis. This chapter marks the first of two data analysis chapters in which material relevant to understanding how sex education is viewed and conducted in schools today.

I have elected to discuss polices first as understanding the structure of how sex education is organised and guided is paramount in understanding how the programme is applied in the classroom and ultimately how the programme is received by young people. Therefore, this chapter examines the pre-existing national guidance and the localised policy covering the geographical area of my sample, as well as three [18] schools' policies. These three policies will be from schools in the geographical area of my sample, but may not be from the specific schools in the sample. This is to assure anonymity for the schools and participants who participated in the survey as schools could be identified through the descriptions of their policies. Finally, I discuss the most recent changes to the national curriculum in relation to the teaching of the sex and relationship curriculum. I present this chapter in a way that moves from a macro (national educational policy) to a micro (school level policy) perspective.

By the conclusion of this chapter, it will be evident that while policies are in place, there is out-dated content, due to the last revision of many of the documents and content that is not specified, which does not fully take into account the recommendations of specialist groups who are experts in the field of sex education research. This serves as evidence to illustrate what guidance schools have to work with when developing their own policies. School policies will then be compared to the results obtained from young people, in terms of content and structure of sex education. Finally, the information contained within this chapter will also serve to demonstrate to the reader that there is much difficulty in enforcing a comprehensive programme with superficial guidance.

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[18] Three were chosen to illustrate the broad range of policy coverage from different types of schools. These three consist of one public school, one state-funded school and one religious school. There will also be variance between the educational level of the policy (e.g. primary versus secondary school).

4.1 National Government Guidance

With its last thorough review in 2000, sex education has remained relatively unchanged in terms of policy and guidance at the national level. It was then, under the new Labour government, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) put forth the *Sex and Relationship Education Guidance* document. This document, while maintaining that sex education is not a compulsory subject, set out a framework for which schools were to give 'due regard' to sex and relationship education. It provided guidance on multiple topics ranging from designing a school sex education policy to recommendations on the types of materials that should be used in the classroom. Written in a straightforward, mostly bullet point format, this document is very clear, albeit not providing depth.

The document is composed of seven chapters, each addressing a facet of the educational process. Beginning with the development of policy and then spending the majority of the document addressing the educational properties of sex education, the guidance, then concludes with sections detailing the involvement with parents and the community, and confidentiality. Since this document was the main national influence on local authorities and schools, it is important to look closely at the way in which the document was written. This enables further understanding of the data as this is the document that should have guided schools as to the ways to develop and conduct sex education during the participants' school years.

4.1.1 The Introduction

In the first section of the document, there is an acknowledgement of what sex education should be and how it should be delivered, as well as a list as to what should be achieved during the course of this provision (p. 3). I do not discuss these here, as they will become clear through the rest of the document. Finally, this guidance advises schools/individuals to seek further information to supplement this document from local authorities as well as health promotion groups. This serves to inform readers that this document may not be able to account for every situation arising within sex education.

The guidance then provides a summary of the way in which effective sex education should be organised and conducted in schools and the classroom. The first point made labels sex education as essential. 'Effective sex and relationship education is essential if young people are to make responsible and well informed decisions about their lives. It should not be

delivered in isolation (p.3)'. Interestingly, sex education, as a whole, is still not a compulsory component of the National Curriculum, as the curriculum had just been under consultation, resulting in no significant change (NCB 2013).

This section continues with a general overview of the objectives of sex education. These are similar to, but not as encompassing and more morally/family focused, the recommendations by health organisations such as the World Association for Sexual Health and the World Health Organisation, as well as socially focused education invested groups such as Stonewall and the Rainbow Project who specialise in LGBT rights for young people. This is demonstrated, for instance, by the purposeful statement that serves as a definition:

> [Sex education] is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching. (p. 5)

This statement/definition is not as comprehensive as referenced from the WHO earlier in this thesis, leaving more room for interpretation on what constitutes classroom appropriate sex education.

Finally, while I will later draw attention to areas where this guidance says that no student should be stigmatised for various reasons, it is important to reiterate the final sentence of the definition provided in this document. It reads, '[sex education] is not about the promotion of sexual orientation . . . this would be inappropriate teaching'. This caveat falls in line with the amendment referred to as Section 28, which led to great confusion amongst teachers and staff regarding the teaching of sexual orientation in the classroom and was even identified by participants in the focus groups as something they felt still had an impact on sex education. Alldred and David (2007) note that this line could also apply to heterosexuality, but undoubtedly, this is not the way in which it would have been framed (p. 42).

4.1.2 Developing a Policy for Sex and Relationship Education

This section of the guidance discusses the design of sex education policy. Interestingly, the first subsection states that, 'all schools must have an up-to-date policy' (p. 7), yet this guidance itself has extended over a decade and through a major amendment change and still has not been updated. The text next recommends the integration of sex education within the PSHE (Personal, Social, and Health Education) and Citizenship framework. Thus, sex education

was to become part of an overarching 'wellness' curriculum, designed to reflect on the views of the parents and the local community, as opposed to research based health education. Subsequently, this put sex education under Ofsted inspection (pp. 7-8).

The use of materials is commented on briefly, but no formal requirements are issued. Rather, stipulations were placed upon the use of material deemed inappropriate by parents (p. 8). However, in this document, inappropriate is subjective, as there are no limitations discussed. The only mention of boundaries lies within religious and cultural ideals, which may vary between people within the same culture and religion. This makes it increasingly difficult for schools to develop a sound policy as considerations need to be made on the basis of diversity; for instance, 'schools of a particular religious ethos may choose to reflect that in their sex and relationship education policy' (p. 8). This does not account for the religious diversity that may exist in a single school, even though the school itself is bound by a religious ethos (DfE 2011).

The guidance then continues with a brief discussion on the recently created National Healthy School Standard (NHSS). In 1999, the NHSS was introduced as a way to compliment the PSHE framework in existence, including the future writing of this guidance (p. 8). In this standard, flexibility was given to schools in order to allow them to make the 'best' decision for their policy and conduct of sex education, rather than instituting an explicit national policy. This was reiterated in the design of this guidance document. One facet of the NHSS was the inclusion of student's views in decision-making, which corresponds to the student-led approach to curriculum development. This will be further discussed through the narratives in chapter 7.

There are straightforward recommendations for what should be covered in the classroom, in both primary and secondary schools (pp. 9-10). Within the secondary school guidance, sexual orientation is discussed in a way to ensure that all of the student's needs are met. 'Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs' (p. 12). However, this is undermined by the last line of the definition presented above; 'It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation . . . this would be inappropriate teaching' (p. 5). This condition, coupled with the statement regarding 'direct promotion of sexual orientation' (p. 13), along with Section 28 as current law, positions sexual orientation as a difficult topic to navigate within the classroom.

While promoting sexual orientation is not allowed with respect to the legislation at the time, Section 28 only restricts the promotion of homosexuality. As this document uses the

general term sexual orientation, this seemingly conveys the message that even straight/heterosexual identity should not be promoted, nevertheless, as I will describe in chapters 6 and 7, straight sex is privileged, albeit maybe not overtly promoted. This makes this section confusing for those who already acknowledge that sexual orientation is a contentious issue.

The purpose of this section was to provide a detailed account of how sex education policy should be designed and implemented, yet this is where we still see the issues today. As I will discuss later in the chapter, sexual orientation is mentioned in most schools' and local authorities' policies at present but according to the young people who participated in the empirical part of this study, something is lost between theory and practice. This should not come as a surprise as Corteen (2006), in addition to Alldred and David (2007, p. 48) revealed that teachers were not always aware of the policies in place relating to sex education.

4.1.3 Specific Issues when Teaching Sex and Relationship Education

This section of the guidance covers problematic themes within sex education, though all of the listed topics follow a public health/medical discourse for sex education. It is understandable that sexual orientation was not included because it was spoken of at length in the previous section. However, reemphasising the importance of respecting sexual plurality, including sexual orientation, should be paramount in ensuring that all students are respected and provided with correct information; 'Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs' (p. 12). Another aspect in this section relates to the training of staff. This guidance suggests that staff should be supported and trained, as well as understand, the sensitive nature of the topics being delivered in the classroom. This theme will re-emerge in chapter 7.

Finally, the moral ethos of a school is identified as a major contributor to how the programme should be designed and implemented (p. 9). With regard to the issues within this section, schools are again given the flexibility to adapt how they choose to handle issues that may arise during sex education; however, this is where there is potential for additional shortcomings in the real world knowledge of the young people educated in these schools. While it is clear what the government was trying to accomplish with this document, it created a way in which the schools with a particular religious ethos could exclude or prevent young people from being able to make a sound judgement based on facts. Alternatively, if the faith

school is listed as an academy or free school, there is no obligation to adhere to this guidance (Brook et al. 2014).

4.1.4 Sex and Relationship Education within PSHE

In the third section of the guidance document, a brief overview of how sex education should fit into the context of PSHE is provided. Although basic, the topics included as part of the National Curriculum are outlined across four Key Stages. The first two Key Stages correspond to primary school (ages 5-11), while Key Stages 3 and 4 are in line with secondary school (ages 11-16). Through each of these four Key Stages, information is to be presented in an age appropriate manner, including topics decided upon as important for mandatory education.

As sex education falls into the remit of both science and PSHE education, the aspects that I present here are those laid out for natural sciences in relation to sex education followed by a few excerpts from the PSHE guidance. As PSHE is not a compulsory subject, only the science information is compulsory in the classroom, therefore this is listed first. At the time of this guidance the Science National Curriculum, here only containing relevant points to SRE, was written as such:

Key Stage 1

1. b) that animals including humans, move, feed, grow, use their senses and reproduce

2. a) to recognise and compare the main external parts of the bodies of humans

   f) that humans and animals can produce offspring and these grow into adults

4. a) to recognise similarities and differences between themselves and others and treat others with sensitivity

Key Stage 2

1. a) that the life processes common to humans and other animals include nutrition, growth and reproduction

2. f) about the main stages of the human life cycle

Key Stage 3

1. d) that fertilisation in humans . . . is the fusion of a male and a female cell

2. f) about the physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence

   g) about the human reproductive system, including the menstrual cycle and fertilisation

   h) how the foetus develops in the uterus

   n) how the growth and reproduction of bacteria and the replication of viruses can affect
      health

Key Stage 4

2. f) the way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effects of sex hormones

   g) some medical uses of hormones, including the control and promotion of fertility

   l) the defence mechanisms of the body

3. d) how sex is determined in humans (p. 20-21)

Since the time of this guidance, the National Curriculum has been revised on multiple occasions but very little has changed from the science requirements, thus the sex education provision contained within remains relatively unchanged as well.

These topics are unquestionably useful and will help young people with regard to reproduction but this alone does not constitute sex education (AVERT 2009; WHO 2010). Under the PSHE curriculum, many other topics were included such as relationships, decision-making processes, risk, diversity, and personal identities, although as I will present in the empirical chapters, few participants felt that these were covered in the classroom.

While sex education is arguably important at nearly every age in the life course (SIECUS n.d.), official non-statutory guidance was issued only for Key Stages 3 and 4, as this is the level in which sex education was to be conducted.

4.1.5 Teaching Strategies for Sex and Relationship Education

Section four of the guidance document details pedagogical recommendations for teachers. The majority of the recommendations made comprise skills that many teachers will have covered in formal training, such as ground rules, distancing techniques, active learning techniques, and reflection. The one aspect of this section that may prove useful for teachers

becoming involved with sex education is how to deal with questions (p. 23). In subjects such as English, History, and Social Studies, it is unlikely that there would be any personal disclosures (e.g. intimate or embarrassing in nature) divulged in the classroom. For sex education, this is not only a possibility, but a probability.

4.1.6 Working with Parents

In several of the previously discussed sections, the idea of parents being an influential part of the sex education curriculum design and implementation has been noted. In this section of the guidance, direction is given on effective utilisation and management of parental involvement, and the perceived benefits of a symbiotic relationship.

The first point contained in this section refers to research that suggests young people want to receive their first sex education experience from their parent(s), with schools functioning as a tool in education to further young people's knowledge (p. 25). Although the source of this research was not referenced, a guidance document such as this should provide a more detailed account of the sources of the information contained within. However, as service users, we are left with an account of something that we cannot verify, even if it may make apparent sense to many individuals.

The second point presented seems slightly out of place for the flow of the section. As the third point discusses why parents are important, this is skipped over initially, to reiterate a point presented at the beginning of this document about the concerns that parents may internalise due to the school talking to children about sex. Again, as mentioned earlier in the piece, parents are reassured that teachers must work within the framework of the policy of the school, in which parents are responsible in assisting with development. Although this section may be a useful place to quell uncertainty, this statement detracts from the documents point of why parents are important in sex education.

Next, the guidance lays out what parents should do and what they may need help to do. For the former, parents are 'key' in teaching young people about:

- sex and relationships;
- maintaining the culture and ethos of the family;
- helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up;

- preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities that sexual maturity brings (p. 25).

Moreover, for the latter, parents are then expected to, with help from the government:

- help their children learn the correct names of the body;
- talk with their children [about] feelings and relationships;
- answer questions about growing up, having babies, feeling attraction, sexuality, sex, contraception, relationships, and sexual health (p. 25).

The assistance is to be in the form of media campaigns and their child's school. This means that very little is discussed as to how to do this, other than through consultations, as this is to be a recurring process in order to assure that sex education is receiving approval from parents. This section also attempts to ensure that schools account for parental involvement, which then transfers the responsibility from engaging parents in home sex education to schools.

The final note made in this section refers to parents' rights to withdraw children from the non-compulsory aspects of sex education. To the credit of the author, this is not publicised as a primary option but rather informs the reader that schools must have alternative arrangements in place if a parent chooses to remove their child from the programme. This guidance also puts forth that the DfEE will provide additional information via the school, for parents who do withdraw their children (although I have not been able to readily obtain a copy of this material).

As Alldred and David (2007) note, throughout the introduction, parents are mentioned several times before there is any attention given to teachers or the actual students themselves (p. 46). It has been argued that this section is one that the government feels compelled to emphasise, as consumerism has taken over the classroom - at least in terms of sex education (Alldred and David 2007, p. 46). This is also exemplified by the integration of parents in several other sections of this policy.

4.1.7 Working with the Wider Community

In this penultimate section, the guidance conveys the importance of understanding that sex education is not just the responsibility of schools. Several groups are identified as those who have the ability to impart some aspect of sex education to young people. The list includes health professionals, social workers, youth workers, peers and visitors (pp. 27-30).

Each of these groups is given their own section containing ways in which the schools can use them to support the curriculum. However, as with many aspects of this guidance, the recommendations are very broad and superficial, although the guidance does offer insight into the types of relationships that these groups may have with the young people and can therefore affect knowledge acquisition in various ways. For peer education, the guidance adds that this should only be used supplementally (in the context of Key Stages 3 and 4) but this should be noted for all of these groups, especially health professionals, as they are identified as already working closely with many schools.

4.1.8 Confidentiality

The final section of the guidance closes with the importance of a confidentiality policy for the school and recommendations on how to draft this document. It also serves as a guide for the circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be maintained. It must be noted, however, that this section does not just refer to sex education but rather guides teachers as professionals on the way in which these matters need to be addressed.

At the onset, the guidance makes clear that schools must understand the legal and professional responsibilities as an institution while simultaneously extending the idea that much of the information contained within this section typically falls under 'exceptional circumstances' (p. 30). After these succinct points, the guidance moves on to child protection. Child protection deals with suspected abuse or those identified as at risk of abuse. This guidance states that sex education, which can lead to a better understanding of appropriate relationships, could potentially lead to disclosure from a student. If this were to occur, schools should have pre-established policies in place based on recommendations from another guidance document, Circular 10/95, along with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* published by the DfEE, which 'sets out how all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect' (p. 31). As this section progresses, specific examples of what the confidentiality policy should contain are mentioned, such as making sure everyone is aware of the policy to reporting suspected abuse and personal disclosure issues. After the break in the specific guidance aspects, the next topic addressed is personal disclosures. This section is broken down to primary and secondary schools, with the former concerning itself with child protection and the latter extending into the notion of communication. This means that teachers are instructed to persuade young

people to talk to their parents. Again, this is only to be done if there is no child protection concern.

The final two sections discuss other people in the school who may be involved with young people and sexual concerns (e.g. head teachers/governors and health professionals). The responsibility of the head teacher or governors is to monitor any occurrences. According to this guidance, 'if [concerns] are frequent this points to deficiencies in young people's awareness of sources of confidential medical advice' (p. 33). This is interesting in that the opposite could be true. With quality education, there may be more knowledge surrounding child protection issues. It could also suggest a lack of access to medical advice. Both of these need to be taken into account before it is decided that too many people coming forward is an indication of a problem with the curriculum.

Lastly, health professionals (e.g. school nurses) are mentioned in respect to their codes of conduct in reference to confidentiality. In this instance, they are bound not only by their professional practice but also by the school policies in place, thus their treatment of disclosure in the classroom is to be different from disclosure in their office. Outside of the classroom, professional judgment can be used along with individually relevant advice, which is not practical in the classroom.

4.1.9 Discussion on the National Guidance

Overall, this document is straightforward and practical but with several limitations. It is important to understand that this guidance does provide key pieces of information that should assist schools with the creation of policies relevant to sex education as well as assist with teaching strategies. The document does this by logically presenting the main themes and then producing a caption of the applicability or justification for teaching it. While, this may not be necessary for all topics and sections, this justification helps in asserting the reason for bringing each topic under guidance.

An example of the previous positive aspect is the section on sexual orientation. Although this document was written during the time of Section 28, this section does make clear that sexual orientation is an allowable topic in the classroom and that homophobic bullying must not be tolerated (pp. 12-13). These points are made to ensure that schools are meeting all students' needs. However, although the overt mention of sexual orientation is lauded, the document then mentions that the topic may be contentious with parents but

explicit reassurance about the aims of sex education should be evident through the school's policy. This notion of parents' approval will be seen again shortly.

Another partially positive aspect of a guidance document allows for the flexibility of schools to make decisions based on their ethos and their population. This is suitable in areas where there may be varying levels of cultural integration or where there is something specific about their population that would not adequately be covered by a national mandate. To clarify, this does not affect the necessity of an all-inclusive programme, but rather more work can be done with specific ethnic groups if their culture dictates any additional risks or confusion that may not be evident to Western views, such as ways to act in relationships and in sexual situations. However, this also assumes that schools are in the best position to make decisions about material covered in the classroom. As the national guidance promotes the idea that parents should be instrumental in the decisions made by schools regarding sex education, it is important to consider whether parents are in the correct position to make an unbiased decision regarding a programme that discusses the fact that their child is a sexual being. This links to issues of sexual orientation and leads me to the negative aspects of this document.

Having noted the positive aspects of this document, there are several places where the guidance lacks depth. This was explicitly done to allow schools the flexibility to tailor the policy design and implementation to their school and local culture. Unfortunately, this lack of strict guidance may have detrimental effects on students by not mandating provisions that cover the most up-to-date information on sexuality and sexual health. Next, when individuals need health care advice, they seek out health care professionals. This should be no different when we are concerned with the education of children. Educators are certainly capable of providing quality sex education. As the document states, it is important to seek out other professionals who can supplement the process but this needs to be done from a holistic programme perspective, instead of one whose focus is solely on the biological aspects relating to better public health outcomes. I am highlighting this, as sex education should be viewed as scholastically as other subjects, instead of relying on parents to provide unbiased and factual information. Unfortunately, this document emphasises the power that the government bestows upon the parents in this aspect of their children's education, therefore, assuming that parents are the most knowledgeable individuals regarding their children. Comparatively, this power is also present in the ability for parents to remove children from the non-biological lessons. This maintains a conservative platform that focuses on the family and not society as a whole.

I do support the inclusion of parents in the process of education for young people but as other have noted, it must be a joint effort (see Durex et al. 2010). In this guidance, it is emphasised that parents should assist in teaching their child some components of sex education. In theory, this is good practice but the school then cannot opt to not include any of these possible topics in the classroom, especially if children are empowered to contribute what they feel is needed from their perspective. This would be problematic for those that do not live in traditional family units or may not have the necessary support from their parents or carers, as parental sex education has been called infrequent and inadequate (Goldman 2008, p. 417). Walker (2001) confirms this as she found that the amount and quality of sex education provided by parents varied greatly (p. 135) and this is why the schools should be responsible for educating young people. However, this is just one of several possible issues with parents attempting to provide sex education to their children (Ingham and Carrera, 1998; Feldman and Rosenthal 2000; Renold 2005).

This would be a moot discussion if sex education was a compulsory subject but at the time of writing this dissertation, there has been no real change from pre-existing policy, including the dismissal of a better written (albeit not flawless) draft consultation in 2010 (DCSF 2010). Thus, even as the new National Curriculum went into effect in 2014, the government still refers to this 14-year-old policy.

4.2 Local Authority Guidance (Brighton and Hove and East Sussex)

In this section, I examine the local authorities (Brighton and Hove and East Sussex County Council) that govern the schools from which my sample was obtained. Currently, the localities have joint guidance, which is used to direct schools in both the city of Brighton and Hove and the county of East Sussex across all Key Stages. I must note that there was confusion as to the current guidance for the county as there were still working links to documents that appear to have preceded the document discussed within, with no clear clarification as to the dates of coverage. However, with the emphasis placed on this document, such as the occurrence and the branding of the document discussed shortly, it is assumed that this was the updated version.

Within this analysis, some selections are only briefly mentioned. This is not intended to undermine the necessity of these sections but to recognise that they are virtually identical to sections contained within the national guidance. In some instances, the sections fall outside

the scope of this thesis, therefore they have been condensed so that due consideration is given to issues that are more pertinent.

Unlike the recommendations from the national government, on a smaller scale, sex education guidance has been reviewed more recently, though much of the content has not changed dramatically. As I have detailed the national guidance in depth, I will take note of the similarities but instead focus on the additional or different information contained in this guidance.

On the Brighton and Hove City Council's Learning Platform Hub Pier 2 Peer and the East Sussex Learning Platform, sex education is placed under the heading of PSHE. However, on the Brighton and Hove learning platform, sex education is given a section devoted to relevant documents, recommendations and materials needed by school. This is in more extensive depth than the East Sussex website.

4.2.1 Introduction and Legal Requirements

The Sex and Relationship Education Guidelines (2003) is the document used currently in Brighton and Hove as well as East Sussex. This guidance is longer than the national guidance and covers additional topics, though the format of the document remains the same, choosing the bullet style over a more fluid style. This does seem conducive to conveying specific points, although the document can seem disjointed on occasion. The document begins with a short introduction and then outlines the legal requirements followed by general points for school governors and then parents /carers. Much of this information is similar to that contained in the national guidance, although some points are added for clarity and assurance. One specific example falls under section 1.3 where this document identifies that young people suggest that they 'learn too little too late' (p. 5). This is an indication that the authors are aware of the problem, so it is relevant to investigate what specific recommendations are made further along in this document to ensure that this is corrected. Another difference from the national guidance is apparent in section 1.7. The guidance refers to The Learning and Skills Act 2000, which specifies that young people should 'learn about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children' (p. 6). This suggests that this act was passed after the national guidance was written.

Finally, it is important to note that the section devoted to parents/carers has been moved to the beginning of this guidance, as opposed to the end as it is presented in the

national guidance. This may just be the preference of the author(s); however, it appears to suggest that schools should supplement parental education. This is noted in section 1.15. Unfortunately, the guidance fails to address what should happen if there is a lapse in this parental responsibility, although appended is a lengthy section which focuses on the consultation with parents/carers and how to support them in their parental duties (pp. 39-40). Again, this could be problematic if parents are not made aware of the expectations placed upon them and more so if they are not in a position (i.e. possessing the appropriate skills or knowledge) to provide teaching at home.

4.2.2 Aims and Objectives

Although contained mostly in the introduction of the national guidance, in this guidance, aims and objectives are presented as a distinct section, which draws clear attention to the purposes of sex education. Each subset of the aims and objectives falls in line with the national guidance although there are a few differences, which makes this local guidance more inclusive for all young people, even though the national guidance states that diversity is to be recognised. For instance, under section 2.4 attitudes and values, this local guidance states that students will 'develop an understanding and valuing of diversity regarding religion . . . gender [identity] and sexual orientation' and 'be aware of and comfortable with their sexuality' (p. 8). These aims suggest that the local authority is ready to accept all students but as mentioned before, teachers may have found this difficult with the legal requirements in place at the time of the writing of this guidance. However, any concerns should have been alleviated by the repeal of Section 28 a decade ago.

4.2.3 The Sex and Relationship Curriculum

The second part of the guidance provides recommendations for appropriate topics that can be covered in primary education and secondary education, as well as special needs/learning difficulties education before concluding with a short section on monitoring. These last two sections are virtually identical to the national guidance. Two appendices are included in the document, detailing both the Ofsted recommendations and a summary of the National Curriculum Science requirements. The former is not mentioned explicitly in the national guidance but it does elaborate extensively on the knowledge that students should

have at the end of each Key Stage, with practical learning outcomes[19]. The latter, however, is included in the national guidance. These appendices may serve as a reminder to schools of the responsibility placed on them by the national government.

Although sex education should be conducted in an age appropriate manner, this guidance recognises that beginning in primary school can establish an 'effective foundation for SRE' (p. 10). The document goes on to list specifically that the main stages of the human life cycle and even topics such as masturbation may be discussed if done so in a sensitive manner. However, the guidance does leave the decision on best practice to the schools, for instance, full class instruction or teaching on an individual basis (p. 10). Finally, in the primary school subsection, parents/carers are mentioned again as an important aspect of sex education curriculum design and implementation.

As the majority of sex education is expected to take place in secondary schools, this subsection is longer, yet yields virtually no coverage of true guidance on the curriculum as no specific topics are recommended outside reference to the National Curriculum. Therefore, it is important to note that although topics are not conveyed within, there are several important points that warrant mentioning that are not covered in the national guidance. The first bullet point (3.6) is one of the more important aspects of the essence of totality in sex education. This point states that 'SRE will be taught in a variety of curriculum areas' which lends credence to the idea that sex education cannot be exclusively a science based component (p. 11). In point 3.9, the guidance conveys that sex education cannot solely be about imparting facts but also about assisting young people in developing decision-making skills. This is a highlight in the national guidance as well but here there is no mention of sexuality or gender identity development as a necessary component of sex education. Lastly, before moving to the brief subsection on special educational needs, point 3.11 reminds schools that there are still statutory components of sex education that should be addressed in colleges (p. 12). I mention this as it links to some remarks made during the focus groups and interviews, presented in chapter 7.

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[19] Sexual Orientation is listed as a diverse aspect of the curriculum. This recognises the importance of tolerance, even though Section 28 was still in force when this document was written.

4.2.4 Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning is a multi-faceted topic, hence this section is lengthy as well as quite dispersed. Much of the information contained here can be found in varying degrees in the national guidance. The opening to this section discusses how the teaching and learning environment should be created and maintained. It also covers the importance of developing communication skills amongst students in large groups as well as developing social skills amongst peers.

The section then moves to dealing with questions from students. Much of the information conveyed here is in the national guidance (with specific examples included as appendix 3, p. 38), although the use of a question box is noted as a best practice example. Aside from this, a few publications are mentioned and appended to assist with any issues that may arise (Appendix 7, pp. 46-56). This is relevant as it was identified in the previous chapter as one of the preferred ways to manage questions from students.

The subsequent two subsections then cover matters of gender and cultural diversity. The former refers to assuring young people that there is a supportive learning environment for both boys and girls collectively and separately on occasion. There is also a focus on specific issues such as self-esteem, friendships, identity, and stereotyping (e.g. homophobia) for boys and self-esteem, power, body image, and contraception for girls (p. 16). The latter recognises the importance of diversity in the community and that not all family backgrounds will be the same. There is also a brief mention of racism but only in that teachers should challenge these notions if they are presented in the classroom (p. 16). These gender alignments, while seemingly trying to break down stereotypes by sensitising boys and empowering girls, reinforce these stereotypes by not making the information available irrespective of gender.

Next is a brief mention on working with visitors, such as health professionals or agencies that have a stake in young people and sex education. There is an appended section at the end of the document, which covers this topic more thoroughly. This appendix highlights that there is a utility for these professionals in the classroom, but it should not comprise the entire programme.

The penultimate subsection discusses continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers, which was emphasised in the Ofsted SRE report (2013). In points 4.18 and 4.19 respectively, this guidance reiterates the Ofsted stance that 'SRE should be taught by teachers who have the necessary knowledge and teaching expertise' as well as emphasising that the

training that these teachers require is important in building confidence in those who opt to teach sex education (p. 17). The final point made in the CPD subsection is that there is a government initiative to provide an accreditation for PSHE as a teaching subject (p.17).

The final subsection of the teaching and learning section details assessment. Again, as this is based on the Ofsted report, this information is new to this document when compared to the national guidance. In short, schools must monitor students' achievement through assessments on the information that is described as 'factual knowledge' (pp. 16-18).

4.2.5 Vulnerable Young People and Teenage Pregnancy

This short section gives a brief description of risk factors linked to vulnerability and the role that schools should play in assisting vulnerable young people with sex education components. The guidance suggests that young people who have low socio-economic status, low educational achievement and mental health problems, among other factors, are at an elevated risk of becoming teenage parents; therefore, schools must play a crucial role in the lives of these young people. Utilising local Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Project (TP3) workers provides individual and group SRE sessions for at risk young people and is important for building self-esteem and relationships within these young people's lives (p. 19). Although this section is short, the information is key as it reminds teachers that it is important to know their students and be able to identify any signs that may require sign-posting the young person to another professional.

4.2.6 Child Protection and Confidentiality

In the penultimate section of this guidance, issues surrounding child protection and confidentiality are presented. As child protection and confidentiality are serious issues, it is unsurprising to find the information here very similar to that of the national guidance. In this section, schools are reminded to have a clear confidentiality statement that can be referred to at any point to avoid confusion and provide information to teachers or parents who may be questioning situations that arise during sex education courses (p. 20). There is also a brief mention at the end of this section on referrals and the differences between confidentiality within the school and with a health professional consultation (p. 21).

4.2.7 Specific Issues

The final section of the guidance deals with issues that may be encountered both through the curriculum and within the course of teaching sex education. Echoing a theme in the national guidance, the authors of this document have made minor changes by opting to omit the topics of puberty and menstruation and including other topics such as family life and sexuality, which may be seen as more difficult areas that may need covered. Since the topics of STIs, abortion, and contraception contain very similar information, I will only look at the content of the new additions.

As noted in section 7.10, marriage and family life is privileged in the national guidance but the author of this document 'recognises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside of marriage' that need to be observed to prevent stigmatisation of children based on their individual circumstances (p. 24). Examples of types of familial systems that young people may reside within are given. This section then concludes with a brief mention of the importance of educating on family life in an attempt to provide insight into the family unit (as well as the breakdown of the family unit) and how it impacts child rearing, as well as open lines of communication with the parents or carers (e.g. for advice).

The second, and most crucial aspect of this guidance to my thesis, is that of sexuality. This section opens with the acknowledgement that the national guidance specifies that sex education is important to and needs to be relevant for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation (p. 26). This particular guidance specifies that sex education should be inclusive regardless of sexual orientation and specific lessons should be concerned with combating homophobia as well as addressing the specific needs of LGBT students. Subsection 7.20 reminds schools of the current legislation in place, Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, yet reaffirms that this legislation 'does not affect the activities of school governors or teachers' and will 'not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom' (p. 26). This serves as reassurance to schools that teachers should be discussing sexual orientation. The final three bullets in this subsection refer to specific topics involving sexuality that should be covered in the classroom in both primary and secondary schools.

4.2.8 Appendices

While a few of the appendices are noted throughout this chapter section, I here mention a selection of other topics included as supplemental as these could have been written in the document itself. In this section, there are the following appendices:

Ofsted Guidance;

National Curriculum Science;

Framework for a Policy;

Key Teaching & Learning Strategies;

Working with Parents and Carers;

Visitor Guidelines and Good Practice;

National Support Services;

Recommended Resources;

Local Services;

A Selection of Research Findings;

National Health School Standard; and

Bibliography.

The information contained within the final several appendices gives schools and teachers some statistics on sexual health as well as contacts for signposting students to sexual health services for those who may need more assistance than is available in the classroom. This is not mentioned in the national guidance but is good practice in that it helps new individuals to the area to become acclimatised to the local situation and services. In addition, it reiterates the point made by the ethics committee upon approving this research that it is important to provide contact details for services that can assist with queries when the researcher is no longer available to support.

As a whole, this document was very well developed and presented. Even though this guidance was written under a different government with different policies, the information provided covers most major aspects of teaching sex education, which are still relevant today. I would argue, however, that the appendices should be worked into the framework of the original document so as to not minimise the points that they cover.

4.2.9 Discussion on the Local Guidance

As this document references and is structured similarly to the national guidance, it is evident that strong emphasis and consideration was placed on that guidance in the creation of this localised document. There are however some distinct differences that make this local guidance stronger than the national guidance. In part, this is because of the flexibility afforded in the national document to allow the local authorities and schools to have more power; although a prescriptive (or compulsory) guidance at the national level could have resulted in the same localised guidance.

It is apparent that this localised text contains additional topics to assist in a more coherent framework between schools and is thereby useful in attempting to secure consistency in the curriculum. Therefore, while this document is generally helpful, it does reflect some outdated political agendas, namely Section 28. However, sexuality is discussed in detail as it pertains to the classroom (p. 26). This is similar to the expression in the national guidance, but discussed in a more pertinent way. For instance, in the national guidance, there is a call for every child to be treated equally, whereas in this guidance this extends to familial circumstances as well as the impact that same-sex relationships can have on primary school children (p. 26). Additionally, this guidance makes clear that it is important to foster a sense of acceptance and understanding for sexual identity formation in young people (pp. 8, 27).

Finally, within this document, as referenced in the national guidance, parents are expected to play a key role in the sex education of children, both in and out of school. There is specific guidance on how to conduct consultations or educational sessions with parents. As mentioned in the discussion of the national guidance, I am hesitant to put emphasis on parents influencing the curriculum. Although the latter aspect is a useful endeavour, due care needs to be taken around assuming that parents will have had the agreed discussions with their children (Walker 2001, p. 135; Goldman 2008, p. 417). It appears that this document does share this concern due to the way in which certain sections are written, for instance the previously mentioned section on sexuality. This document does imply that school based sex education (as opposed to parental guidance) is an important part of the curriculum.

4.3 School Level Polices

Every school must have a sex education policy as described in the national guidance (DfEE 2000, p.7). In this section, I examine three different school's sex education policy due to

the length restrictions of this dissertation. Although specific examples of the material covered may not be covered within each policy, the policies should provide insight into the ethos of the school and allow access to the likelihood of certain aspects, such as sexual orientation, being covered in the classroom. As noted earlier is this chapter, the three policies that are examined are not necessarily from the schools in which I distributed the surveys. This is to provide anonymity, but also include different types of schools from the geographical area in this research. There is another variation in the policies reviewed in that one is from a public school, one is from a state-funded school and one is from a Church of England school. There is also variation in the ages that these policies represent. This ensures that I have covered the variation that will exist between primary and secondary schools. Finally, I have noticed a variation in the lengths and comprehensiveness of sex education policies. The shorter polices are designed for use in conjunction with other school and national documents instead of containing all of the information within a single policy. Again, I have included documents that are markedly different on this spectrum. However, consideration is given to aspects pertinent to this thesis, which in some instances may mean that sections have been superficially covered or merged for convenience purposes.

As I proceed, I refer to the schools by a pseudonym, even though these policies are public information that has been included on their website for parental consultation. The three schools are Dockside College, Harbourview Academy, and Glebeshire Primary School.

4.3.1 Dockside College Sex and Relationships Education Policy

In this section, I examine the current sex education policy for the entirety of Dockside College. This is a co-educational secondary school with Sixth Form (ages 11-18 years) that provides education to students in the southeast. Within this school's sex education policy, it is important to see what information was shared with the previously discussed guidance documents and specifically, any differences that may strengthen or weaken this specific document.

From the outset, this school's policy is very detailed and contains most of the information contained within the policies and guidance documents of both the local authority and national government. This policy begins with the context for the policy, which emphasises the importance of sex education as a lifelong process. As stated within, sex education is placed within the PSHE framework but some topics may be examined in science, child development,

and religious studies. This leads to the aims and objectives, which specify where the emphasis of the programme will be placed. These are very similar to the others documents examined previously; however, additional objectives are mentioned within this specific policy such as the inclusion of learning about sexual exploitation as well as a larger focus on diversity (p. 2-3). This latter aspect is reiterated in several lines, demonstrating the importance of recognising and understanding diversity (e.g. ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation), in a progressively multicultural country, such as England.

The third section of Dockside's policy focuses on the curriculum and gives a comprehensive overview of what topics should be taught throughout the various year groups ranging from year 7 to year 11. Of specific relevance to this research is the teaching on sexual identity. According to this document, this occurs in year 8 and again in year 10 at Dockside. While it could be argued that this should occur even earlier, it is promising to observe that a topic not made compulsory under the national curriculum was deemed important here in the context of education as opposed to a matter of diversity.

The next section focuses on the manner in which sex education should be organised and conducted. Staffing needs are discussed as well as how visitors should be used within the curriculum. One point mentioned here which is not part of the national guidance, is the identification of who holds the responsibility for the actual teaching of sex education. Prior to 2010, form tutors were responsible for the classroom education but since this time, the school has moved to utilising a specialist PSHE team. This model seeks to utilise those who have specialised training in PSHE, including sex education, to be the facilitators of the sessions. It is also noted that specific training will be provided every three years as a minimum (p. 4).

The fifth section of this policy discusses the delivery of sex education. This is a logical progression from the preceding section and is informative on several concerns that parents may have regarding how their children will be educated. First discussed are teaching methods. These include using distancing techniques, role playing, understanding how to deal with questions from students and reflection, all of which are exemplified in the subsequent chapter on materials used in the classroom. This is followed up by discussing the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. It is also made evident within this section that 'the SRE programme is inclusive of all sexual orientations and will also seek to prevent homophobia, bi-phobia and transphobia' (p. 6). This is further exemplified by emphasising the usefulness of mixed-gender groups as the preferred setting of instruction as well as emphasising the unique condition of different religious and cultural beliefs being held within

the same classroom. This is encouraging as many of the students in the focus groups argued that both genders needed to understand the transitions of the opposite gender as well. In addition, as migration has increased over the past several decades, the frequency of multi-cultural education, emphasising inclusion, is becoming more important (Dune, Mpofu, Evans and Sullivan in press).

The latter half of section five covers assessment and evaluation of the programme as well as a final mention on how to handle 'specific issues' that may arise as a result of sensitive questions or situations. As stated within, there is currently 'no formal assessment of PSHE', thus the curriculum should serve as a means of communication rather than assessment. However, there should be reflection from the students with subsequent written feedback produced by the tutor to help guide the student (p. 7). This then ties into the evaluation of the programme, which is the responsibility of both the teachers and students, linking to the argument for a student versus expert-led development of the curriculum. To conclude this section, the policy mentions that to ensure 'lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development' (p. 7), liaising with partner schools is important to ensure that students are getting a complete education.

As with any policy involving children, confidentiality and child protection are explicitly mentioned as recommended in each subsequent guidance document. Section 6 is a lengthy section, which demonstrates the importance placed on keeping children safe. The information within refers to the way in which the school seeks to promote safe behaviours of children as well as how the school will act in order to protect them. The school and teachers are to promote having discussions with parents and carers but will discuss certain matters with children at the school via someone such as the school nurse. If there is concern for the child's welfare, parents or an outside agency may be contacted by the school if it is deemed in the best interest of the child (e.g. sexual activity before the age of consent or sexual abuse by parents/carers). In addition to these standards in child protection being reiterated and unlike the other documents reviewed, Dockside actively promotes the local sexual health services as another source of confidentiality and an option for confidential sexual health information and services. The obvious importance placed on this is noticeable as the next section emphasises that students should be made aware of off-site provisions and locations where they can access confidential services for both contraception and support.

The policy concludes with information on liaising with parents /carers, health and safety, implementation of policy and the policy's development process, along with monitoring

and reviews of this policy. All of these short sections contain information that is provided in the local and national guidance documents and, where appropriate, signpost to other documents on the subject.

On conclusion of the policy, there are several appendices that cover specific issues and deal with questions, teaching and learning, faith and religion. The first three appendices mirror the information provided in the local guidance but the final appendix on faith and religion provides educators with a brief summary as to the beliefs and practices of several of the world's major faiths and religions. Again, this demonstrates the emphasis that Dockside puts on equality and diversity as they strive for best practice in multicultural education.

Viewed as a complete document, this policy is sound in most areas that professionals and organisations would argue are integral to sex education (see previous definitions of sex education). While it could be argued that there could be more emphasis on any specific topic (e.g. sexual orientation and how to normalise it in the classroom), this policy provides adequate coverage to ensure a basic understanding of the needs of young people learning sex education. Therefore, if the quality of education in this school mirrors the quality of the policy described, the students should be acquiring a high level of sex education instruction.

4.3.2 Harbourview Academy Sex and Relationships Education Policy

In this section, I examine the sex education policy for Harbourview. Harbourview is a single-sex (all girls), public boarding school in the southeast. As there are few single-sex schools, it is important to include Harbourview in this section of the dissertation to compare whether sex education policy was written differently to cater for this population.

When first perusing Harbourview's sex education policy, it is obvious from the onset that this document is meant to be used in consultation with other school policy documents. This makes the document a bit difficult to critique on its own, as there is little substance to discuss.

The document begins with a declaration that this policy 'sits in conjunction' with other school polices on child protection, confidentiality, etc. (p. 1). It then goes on to list several supporting documents under the section *Rationale,* which should be used concurrently if any specific questions or situations arise in which this policy needs consulting before providing a short summary of the rationale for teaching sex education.

The second page of this policy briefly mentions the objective of sex education while also referring to other documents like the Ofsted Report on SRE, National Healthy Schools Guidance and the national guidance. In the original text contained within, sex education seeks to enable students to develop knowledge, understand 'external factors' (e.g. media, peer groups, etc.), become aware of personal development of themselves and others, understand the law, and where to go for help (p. 2). Students are also expected to develop sensitivity and honesty while understanding difference, which are traits identified as important in psychosexual development (p. 3).

Finally, this policy document contains a brief mention of delivery, learning outcomes, and monitoring of the programme. These are key facets included in aforementioned guidance, but only covered superficially in this document, which is consistent with the lack of depth afforded to all of the other points contained within.

On reading this policy, it is evident that Harbourview expects their teachers and staff to be aware of all of the policies relating to this area within the school and to make use of them when necessary, as well as the prescribed references contained within. This is not problematic in itself but it does make the process of conveying the stance of the school on sex education convoluted, as several documents need read in conjunction with one another.

4.3.3 Glebeshire Primary School Sex and Relationships Education Policy

The third and final policy that I document here is that of a religious institution at the primary school level. As it is possible for religious schools to teach within their faith, I deemed it important to document one case to provide for comparison with non-denominational schools. Like the previous two schools, Glebeshire is in the southeast and, as noted, this policy is only for the primary school, although similarities to the previous policies can be observed. Before reading into this policy, it is apparent that the information contained is more detailed than that of Harbourview, thus making it more similar to that of Dockside's policy but lacking the depth.

The policy begins with a brief context, which emphasises that the programme is designed to '[take] into account the variety of faiths' that may exist within the school (p. 2), a relatively progressive statement in the policy of a Church of England (CoE) school. This section continues with the school aim which is 'to develop an understanding [of the] moral aspects of

sex and sexuality' (p. 2), which does imply a religious focus; however, this wording is contained in the other school's policies as well.

Glebeshire's policy continues with aims and objectives (pp. 2-3). This section lays out the attitudes and values, personal and social skills, and knowledge and understanding which are the specific learning outcomes that should be achieved during the schooling at this institution (e.g. to learn the value of respect, love and care, and to know about human life processes such as conception, birth, and puberty). For a primary school, these outcomes are well developed and similar in intent to the more comprehensive Dockside guidance. Although it must be kept in perspective that more robust sex education will take place in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Following this, Key Stages 1 and 2 are mentioned briefly in the context of the curriculum as they describe the key topics and themes that the National Curriculum requires and what they teach (pp. 3-4). Interestingly, and unlike the previous two policies, a specific resource is mentioned. Channel 4's *Living and Growing* DVD and resource pack is listed as a utilised resource, though later in the policy it is revealed that other resources are used as well (p. 4). Although this information about material is limited, even the listing of one resource can be considered good practice as it allows parents and outside organisations to be aware of what is being used in the classroom.

Next listed is the method in which the curriculum is delivered (p. 4). This section is also unique in comparison to the other school policies as it lists the context in which SRE is to be delivered. Although many schools utilise a specific time slot for SRE (as will be discussed in chapter 7), this school mentions the usefulness of 'cross-curricular links'. This means that sex education may be delivered in conjunction with religious education, humanities and literature, as well as the required science lessons; a concept that I advocated earlier in the thesis.

The next few headings address the organisation and training of school staff who are involved in sex education (pp. 4-5). Coordination of the subject, staffing, and the role of governors are mentioned, although unlike Dockside where specialists conducted sex education, at Glebeshire, class teachers with assistance from the PSHE leader deliver it as they are 'in the best position' due to knowing 'about their pupils in terms of age, maturity . . .' (p.5). While teachers/professionals with specialist training could be advantageous, in primary school this may not be necessary due to the limited information that is covered. Also included in this section is reference to the school's perception of allowing specialist visitors into the classroom. Throughout this chapter, this is a common complimentary approach to in class sex education

and here again is reiterated in the statement that 'visitor sessions . . . never replace or substitute teacher-led curriculum provision' (p. 5).

Following relevant information for staff, there are three short sections on the issues pertaining directly to students (p. 6). The first states that sex education will predominately be conducted in mixed gender groups, the second acknowledges the diversity in the school and specifies that religious and cultural diversity will be celebrated, and the third recognises that pupil consultation is important in understanding what the students feel that they need. The third clause is of immense importance and relates to the discussion of expert-led versus student-led sex education. Glebeshire is progressive in this manner and demonstrates that young people can and should be part of the curriculum development.

The final pages of this policy contain the usual consultation information, liaising with parents/carers, assessment, specific issues, monitoring, and child protection (pp. 7-8). All of this information is straightforward and not distinctively different from the higher-level guidance. However, there is one inclusion in this document that particularly merits attention. In the section on specific issues, there is an example of good practice - the utilisation of question boxes. Good practice examples are beneficial to educators, thus the inclusion in a policy document is encouraging. Thus, mentioning the use of question boxes as part of the sex education process is encouraging, as this method received favourable feedback during the focus groups and interviews.

4.3.4 Discussion on School Level Policies

Each policy selected demonstrates the variation and different level of depth and guidance that exists between schools, even within the same geographical area. While all of these schools will fall under the same superseding guidance, the variability afforded at the national level permeates even the best-written local policy down to the school policy.

The first school policy reviewed was that of Dockside. Overall, this was a very strong policy and included material that should be standard in holistic sex education, but is intentionally excluded from the national guidance. This may be because the national guidance is outdated; however, the school has followed the instructions of the national guidance in that the school policy is mostly current. There are noticeable shortcomings, although this should not detract from the overall strength. The policy itself does not list any best practice examples for parents and students to review in order to provide accountability in the event that there is

a deviation from this document. Secondly, there are no examples of sex education materials or a reference as to where these materials may be obtained. With that being said, if Dockside does in fact deliver the education that the policy suggests that it does, then this would be an ideal representative for reviewing best practice standards.

The second school, Harbourview, requires a bit more effort to understand the policy presented. Instead of the inclusion of the major discussion points within the policy itself, there are references to several other policies including but not limited to, the national guidance and other school policies on relevant topics. This may be problematic in that those who read the policy may not have access to the supplemental documents, thus leaving room for speculation as to either the intent of the policy or even how to handle various concerns that they may have about teaching sex education. The other main problem with this policy is that although it is reviewed regularly, it still focuses on national policy that is outdated.

The last school, Glebeshire, a religious primary school, provides a good framework for the age in which it is working. The example of materials used is good practice as it allows parents or other professionals to gain insight into how the curriculum in this school is structured. The topics for discussion in the classroom are also well laid out and in accordance with the National Curriculum. Undoubtedly, there needs to be no mention of sex, though sexuality and gender identity would be useful for pupil psychosexual development, as this is an ever developing and fluent process. Overall, this is a good policy structure for primary schools.

Just the variation in these three policies should support the notion that sex education needs to be more standardised. Each of these documents were composed/updated at least a decade since the latest national guidance and just under that time span for the local guidance. If the two schools that had excellent policies followed the out-of-date guidance, many topics identified within would not have had the same recognition. This demonstrates that schooling is progressing, while the variations are expanding.

4.4 Discussion

As a whole, these guidance documents, especially the local authority guidance, are generally good for pushing the public health agenda, but they generally lack the emphasis on social and psychological sex education when compared to the definition of a truly comprehensive and holistic programme (AVERT 2009; WHO 2010). This is likely to have led to many young people feeling that sex education is too biological (UK Youth Parliament 2007, p.

3). There is also a general statement in the national guidance in which schools are instructed to be inclusive of everyone, yet this does not happen (Formby 2011, p. 257). This may stem from uneasiness of discussing the topic of sexual orientation or even the lack of understanding current recommendations. This will again be seen in chapter 7, as each of these ideas was disclosed by the participants of the focus groups.

Generally, the guidance and policy documents show that information is transmitted from the government to schools via the content of the policies reviewed. It is evident that some schools understand the importance of sex education, yet this is not reported as students are continuously stating that their sex education is 'too little, too late' (Woodcock, Stenner and Ingham 1992, p. 523; Measor et al. 2000, p. 159; Buston and Wight 2002, p. 240; Buston and Wight 2006, p. 142; Blake 2008, p. 37). One specific concern lies at the top of the hierarchy. While schools review their policies on a regular and sometimes annual basis, the fact that the national guidance is still the basis for subsequent policy is problematic. This is because both culture and law has changed dramatically over the past decade in relation to gay rights, but this is not always reflected in the documents that teachers use to construct their lessons (as will be revealed later in chapter 7). This is where the national government needs to become more involved (NCB 2013). Without up-to-date legislation, schools can omit certain topics, such as sexual orientation, because they can refer back to the national guidance as their source of information. An example of this could be Harbourview, as their policy is not explicit about any topics that should be covered in sex education sessions, thus the idea that the national guidance should be more prescriptive, and influence the National Curriculum, can be argued. This is also demonstrated (as discussed in chapter 7) in that where information on sexual orientation is provided, it is usually superficial and brief. Again, this only augments the argument that a more prescriptive policy could improve young people's sex education experience.

As I have noted earlier, the government has given schools more power. This has led to the importance of discussing two other key players in the design of these policies, those players being parents and teachers. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that parents might themselves lack an understanding and the corresponding facts that are important in educating children about a topic that can have life altering consequences (e.g. illnesses, pregnancy, or even mental health issues). This is one concern that is often overlooked in research. While there is definitely a use for parents in supporting sex education, I question whether they are generally in the best position to give unbiased and correct information, notwithstanding being diligent in their role as an educator (Turnbull, van Wersch and van Schaik, 2008). This bias may

not be the biggest concern but if it prevents young people from being knowledgeable about an act that they are likely to take part in at some point in their lives - and usually sooner than realised - it is important for them to be informed. This is where the school, and teachers, can play a large role in teaching children about the risks and rewards of being in sexual relationships and being a sexual being (this includes identity).

As Alldred and colleagues (2003) note, PSHE coordinators, while often enthusiastic, find difficulty in the constraints in which they have to work. This is due to form tutors having very little experience and in many cases no formal training in delivering SRE. This suggests that a more prescriptive guideline and support network can help alleviate some fears, in addition to offering additional training (p. 84). Also found in this research was that form tutors felt that parents should bear more responsibility in sex education (p. 90). This is problematic as demonstrated previously, and while this could lead to an in-depth discussion alone, this thesis must remain focused on considering the state of sex education and the impact on the classroom and specifically LGBT students. However, this theme is important to recognise here and will be referred to again later in the thesis.

Finally, a consultation took place approximately six years ago to update the official guidance for the conduct of sex education (DSCF 2010). However, this was not adopted (presumably because there was a lack of political support), and the guidance from 2000 is still listed as the official guidance. More recently, there has been a push from organisations, such as the Sex Education Forum, for more statutory inclusion in the curriculum as the new National Curriculum began in 2014 (DfE 2013). After comparing the National Curriculum of recent years to the new proposed curriculum, it is clear that very little has changed. In a press release by the National Children's Bureau, the key changes to the new curriculum are:

- The new National Curriculum document refers to sex and relationships education (rather than sex education) as being a requirement for all state secondary schools.
- Puberty is now included in science for Year 5, a reference which was not included previously.
- The unhelpful note stating that pupils should not be expected to understand 'how reproduction occurs' is still included in Year 2.
- Schools are advised to teach about the menstrual cycle to 11-13 year olds 'without details of hormones'. (NCB 2013)

While there was some celebration by the Sex Education Forum:

> the overall picture is muddling and will leave teachers wary of what questions they can and can't answer. We will therefore continue to campaign for a coherent curriculum that includes the essential underpinning scientific information about the body, puberty, human reproduction, fertility and sexual health. (NCB 2013)

Thus, Brook, together with the PSHE Association and the Sex Education Forum (2014) have released a supplemental document that is expected to provide updates to the national guidance issued in 2000. Although there is useful content, too often groups of young people say they feel excluded in SRE lessons. For example, lesbian, gay, and bisexual pupils (who make up approximately 10% of any school population) often report that their SRE is solely about heterosexual relationships, or that non heterosexual identities were addressed negatively and that it fails to address sexual health issues linked to the range of sexual behaviours and activities that people encounter whatever their sexual orientation (p. 12).

As this is exactly one of the points addressed in chapter 7, there is a clear indication that this is a recurring problem. While this is useful to point out to school staff, it does little in the way of assuring change or providing ways to implement the change (Pressman and Wildavsky 1984, p. 143), aside from presenting general statements that remind teachers to discuss these topics in lessons. Unfortunately, the lack of guidance in this area suggests that, politically, England is not entirely comfortable with an all-inclusive policy, which would also explain the lack of focus on translating policy to practice.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the current national guidance on sex education, the local guidance covering the area where this research was conducted and policies from three schools that cater to a wide range of young people. In general, the national guidance (and local authority guidance, which are both a decade out-dated) provides a framework in which subsequent documents are to be created; however, this leaves the possibility for extensive variability and for local authorities and schools to exclude components necessary if schools are to provide a truly holistic programme. This varied comprehensiveness seen in the local policy and guidance documents suggests that there is a need for a higher-level document to provide continuity across schools. As Green (1998) posits that,

> . . . a consensus on what sex education should be provided at different ages would help establish an educational entitlement for young people and provide an agreed framework within which schools could work with greater confidence. (p. 71)

Fortunately, in this geographical area, some schools have demonstrated the ability to keep their sex education policy up-to-date and relevant, although this does not counter the fact that some individuals are still calling for the national guidance to be rewritten (NCB 2013).

This argument can also be applied to the local authority discussed in this chapter. While two of the school policies discussed demonstrated the components necessary for a successful holistic sex education programme, the third policy demonstrated the need for more up-to-date national guidance as this was the referenced piece for understanding the requirements of sex education.

In the next chapter, I continue with setting the context by moving into the classroom and by collating and disseminating a selection of available teaching resources for sex education. This will then conclude the contextual research aspect of this thesis, which proceeds onto the empirical methodology and findings chapters.

Chapter 5: Brief Account of Locally Recommended (Optional) Materials

5.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to provide a brief overview of materials that have been constructed for supplemental use in the classroom. From this brief overview, it will become evident that sex education materials are plentiful and are produced in a variety of formats, from a variety of sources. In general, this literature is commonly produced by government organisations such as The Department for Education, non-government organisations (NGO) such as the National Children's Bureau, Brook, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and private individuals such as Justin Hancock at BishUK. These resources are generally assumed to be expert-led in their construction as the involvement of young people is not evident.

I have opted to structure the chapter as follows: First, I have organised the material by the level of schooling (e.g. secondary and primary) that the materials are intended for. Secondly, the materials are grouped into social versus biological topics, although I spend more time describing the exercises on the social components as much of the biological topics are required under the National Curriculum and will most likely be presented via other mediums, such as science textbooks.

All of the material discussed within this chapter was taken from the local school portal websites to which all schools have access, as these websites are a commonly acknowledged platform for sharing and obtaining materials for a variety of subjects. These websites were brought to my attention by multiple teachers and an outreach worker with area schools. This is important because the materials are easily accessed through websites that were specifically designed for a coherent local strategy. These materials consist of examples from the classroom and for use in 'other' school settings, such as the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Project (TP3)[20] and are typically (where the secondary materials were a mix of both types of supplemental material) more related to the social aspects of relationships.

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[20] 'TP3 is a small, single-sex, group work programme aimed at improving the sexual health of and reducing conceptions in vulnerable young people in Key Stage 4. TP3 is seen as an enrichment to sex and relationship education delivered as part of Personal, Social, Health, and Economic (PSHE) Education.' (Pier 2 peer)

All of the examples described are free and accessible to all schools under the remit of the localities from which my empirical data has been obtained, although these resources may not be used in every year or every school. This is in contrast to the recommended resources, leaflets and book suggestions that are available for purchase. However, the free resources were chosen as it was recognised that there was less of a barrier to teachers acquiring these materials.

Finally, it is important to remind the reader that this chapter, while describing a sample of materials in detail, is useful in providing a setting in which to look at the subsequent empirical chapters. While this material may at times be repetitive, the point is to demonstrate that the topics being excluded in the reports of young people are available for use through these learning platforms. This exposure is at the discretion of the individual schools, but nonetheless exists to assist with topics that may be perceived as being difficult to teach. This difficulty will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

5.2 Method of Materials Selection and Analysis

For this thesis, it was important to counterpoise the information that students were reporting to the information made available in the area that the students were educated. Thus, it was necessary to include a brief chapter on the materials that are made available, free, to the schools in the geographical area studied. While the materials included within this chapter is only a selection, care was taken to include a sample from many of the topics listed on the school portal websites, especially in relation to social sex education topics as this is where there is an identified weakness which will become evident in the subsequent chapters.

The analysis provided in this chapter is not an analysis in the strictest sense of the term, but rather an evaluation. This evaluation still utilises a critical analysis and keyword search, as in the previous chapter focusing on terms used in conjunction with holistic sex education. However, the aim of this chapter is to further contextualise sex education as a whole and provide an additional facet that is often overlooked in sex education research. Additionally, the material discussed is only a selection of available resources and not necessarily those that were used in the classroom when the young people who participated in the empirical data collection were in secondary school, hence the limited analysis, but it provides contextual significance for progressing sex education.

5.3 Secondary School Sex Education Materials

Materials that are used to educate young people in England, aged 11 to 16 in Key Stages 3 and 4[21], on sex education are plentiful and varied. As sex education is expected to begin in secondary school as per the national guidance, this set of materials is the most pertinent to open this review and is most likely to have been encountered by the young people who participated in this research.

Since this research is focused on a specific geographical area of the country, the materials selected for this chapter are those that are recommended and developed or compiled for teachers in the area. These materials have been obtained by access to the local governments' school portal websites. I have opted to group the material into two overarching themes; social sex education and biological sex education, with the latter typically being mandated by the National Curriculum (although within this thesis, further examples will be used).

5.3.1 Materials for Secondary School Social Sex Education

All of the material reviewed in this section is classed as *Social Sex Education*. These resources are varied, but all focus on social aspects of sex education, such as identity, sexual orientation, self-esteem, relationships, etc.

5.3.1.1 All of Us (2011)

All of Us (2011) is an updated resource from Allsorts Youth Project (a youth group focusing on empowerment for LGBTU[22] young people) that seeks to further educate students about LGBT young people and topics that are relevant to their lives. As noted in the introduction, this resource is not intended to replace the original version from several years prior but rather supplement it. The new *All of Us* includes a variety of new exercises grouped together in overarching themes as follows:

- Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes;
- Gender Identity and Transgender Identities;

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[21] Key Stage 3 included years 7-9 (ages 11-14), while Key Stage 4 includes years 10-11 (ages 14-16).
[22] U represents those who are unsure of their identity

- Challenging Gender Stereotypes of LGBT People;
- Bisexuality and Biphobia;
- Challenging Myths and Stereotypes of LGBT People;
- The Impact of LGBT Name-calling.

Each of these themes has several exercises, detailed briefly below.

Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes

Under this theme, there are three exercises that seek to inform young people about terminology and then go on to discuss perceptions of gender roles. In the first exercise, students are asked to do a match the following terms and definitions to gain a better understanding of these important aspects of identity.

Biological Sex - The alleged physiological and anatomical characteristics of maleness and femaleness with which a person is born.

Gender Identity - The individual's sense of masculinity or femininity or the gender to which one feels one belongs.

Gender Role - The different expectations of behaviour for men and women as determined by society and culture.

The second two exercises in this section look at gender roles and stereotypes. Students are to be placed in four same gender groups in which they are instructed to come up with a definition for the word they are assigned, either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. On completion, the teacher reviews the definition with the class and then instructs students to use these terms as endpoints on a gender spectrum. Students are then asked to set activities along this spectrum, considering differences in perceived masculine activities versus feminine versus gender neutral. Finally, when each exercise has concluded, the teacher should facilitate a discussion about the selections presented and whether there is pressure to conform to these ideals.

The third exercise, which is a continuation of the second, goes a step further and looks at gender roles and sexual orientation. Students are now given a list of statements and a sexual orientation continuum and asked to rate the statements on this new continuum, with a reminder to reflect on the previous activity in which they discussed masculine versus feminine activities. Once they have assigned all of the statements to the *Spectrum of Sexual Orientation*, a class discussion should ensue examining the sentiments that were expressed by students as

to whether activities could be gay versus straight in some way. This method also relates to the notion of social constructionism, which provides a simplified way of helping students break away from inherently binary beliefs.

Gender Identity and Transgender Identities

In this lesson plan, students are introduced to transgender identities through two exercises while teachers are asked to clarify any confusion surrounding the consideration of other identities that may be difficult for the students to understand (p. 7). Students, split into small groups, are given terminology cards and definition cards and are asked to match these appropriately. On completion, the teacher should check for correctness and address any questions raised by students.

The second exercise is a case study (p. 9). Students are again to be split into groups, assigned the case study and subsequently asked to consider and answer a series of questions that are included with the activity.

Challenging Gender Stereotypes of LGBT People

Reiterating the idea of gender stereotypes, this lesson challenges stereotypes of LGBT people. In the first part of this lesson, students are to provide examples of what type of things they have heard about gays or lesbians. The teacher charts the responses with the respective headings of 'gay man' and 'lesbian'. After the lists have been generated, students are asked to discuss whether any of these stereotypes are true. To assist in the debate, teachers are asked to show a clip about Welsh rugby player Gareth Thomas. Students are then asked if he fits any of the stereotypes listed on the chart. Following this, teachers can continue the discussion by asking what the situation might be like if he was a footballer and also why might there be others athletes who are gay that have not come out.

For the second exercise, students again are to use the *Spectrum of Sexual Orientation*. Students are asked to place photos of celebrities along this continuum. This exercise is useful in promoting a discussion on the fluidity and constructed views of sexual orientation throughout the life course.

Bisexuality and Biphobia

As this resource is aimed at educating students on non-heterosexual identities, it is important that the major identities are covered, thus the necessity of this section on bisexuality. Broken into three exercises, the first one is similar to the previous introductions

and serves the purpose of addressing and clarifying what bisexuality is through defining the term (p. 12). As a class, students are asked to define words like bisexuality and biphobia while challenging myths surrounding this identity.

The second exercise seeks to further dispel myths and challenge stereotypes by getting the students out of their seats and actively engaging in the activity (p. 14). One side of the room is labelled the agreement side, the other is the disagreement and the middle is for those unsure of the answer. The teacher gives a series of statements and allows the students to move to the appropriate side of the room that match their opinion. After each statement, a short discussion about the correct answer is necessary to make sure everyone understands the facts.

In similarity with the lesson plan on trans identities, the third exercise is a case study. The class is divided into small groups to discuss the case study presented to them (p. 15). Students are asked to discuss the pre-determined list of questions, which are then discussed as the class is brought back together.

Challenging Myths and Stereotypes of LGBT People

Most of this resource is aimed at informing students about LGBT identities and the myths and stereotypes associated with them (p. 16). In this lesson, there are two exercises that seek to build on dispelling myths and stereotypes that may not have been covered in previous lessons. Exercise one is a short quiz that students are asked to complete in small groups. Each question is then addressed by the teacher to answer any questions that students may have.

The second exercise is identical to the exercise in the bisexual/biphobia section. The teacher provides a series of statements - this time about all LGBT identities - in which the students are to move to the desired side of the room, or the middle if unsure, that matches their agreement or lack thereof to the statement.

The Impact of LGBT Name-calling

In the final three exercise theme of the revised *All of Us* resource, students are expected to learn the effects of name-calling. This section provides lessons on how LGBT people might feel after an occurrence of verbal bullying. The first exercise is designed to use examples of situations in which LGBT people might be subjected to indirect bullying. Students watch a short clip (from a DVD titled *Fear and Loving*) about a young person called Rhys. They

are then split into small groups and discuss the problems that Rhys faced in the video (p. 18). The teacher then asks a series of questions about Rhys' emotional state and students are asked to describe what his feelings may be. This is to encourage empathy among the students.

Exercise two then instructs for students to be shown a picture of two individuals, one representing a straight person and the other an LGBT identified person. Students are then asked to write positive and negative words to describe these individuals on colour coded post-it notes (e.g. green = positive, yellow = negative). The post-it notes are then placed around (green post-its) or on (yellow post-its) the image. The teacher is then instructed to lead the class in a discussion about how these individuals might feel and how it might impact on their life.

The third and final exercise in this resource asks students to consider how they would react in different scenarios (p. 21). In small groups, students are given a scenario where an individual is being insulted. They are then prompted to discuss, in their groups, how they would handle or respond to the situation. After several minutes, teachers are to debrief the entire class and promote discussion on ways in which to challenge the use of potentially hurtful comments.

As many of the generic resources have limited information on the topics presented in this resource, *All of Us* ensures that there is an LGBT friendly resource in circulation for teachers of sex education.

5.3.1.2 Fantasy vs Reality

The other resource that I have chosen to cover in this section is a resource created by a local health promotion specialist and an individual from the Health Schools Team titled *Fantasy vs Reality.* This resource includes four lessons for Key Stage 3 and five lessons for Key Stage 4, each with several activities per lesson. Thus, I have selected two from each Key Stage to demonstrate the content within.

Key Stage 3 Lesson 1: The media and body image

The first lesson of this resource of Key Stage 3 involves educating on the effects that the media has on body image (pp. 18-21). As young people are exposed to media every day, this lesson seeks to cover common attitudes towards body image, and also stereotyping and sexualisation. The first activity is to make 'graffiti sheets' using a selection of questions from

those provided. The questions within cover aspects of fashion and magazines, to appearance, and the food we choose to eat. For instance, one question asks if advertising is sexist, while another asks whether the media causes eating disorders. After several questions are chosen and written out, students are to pair up and write something about the question asked as each sheet circulates around the classroom. The sheets should then be discussed as a class to address any concerns or answer any questions that students may have.

The second activity is a PowerPoint on sex and advertising that should be used to enhance students' understanding of how *sex sells*. The third activity then involves providing students with advertisements from magazines or the internet and in pairs addressing a list of questions covering how advertising presents men and women differently and the effects that this has on children.

The fourth activity is designed to instil a positive sense of body image in the students. Students are asked to divide a piece of paper into four sections with a picture of themselves in the centre. In three of the corners, they are to write a positive message about their image that a person close to them has said to them recently. In the final corner, students are to write a comment about themselves, which they can refer to and say to themselves when feeling under-confident. The last two activities involve (1) recapping the session(s) and offering one positive message that could be given to a friend to help them when they are feeling down due to the media's influence on perceptions of body image and (2) a question box which should be used to collect any future questions.

Key Stage 3 Lesson 3: What does a normal body look like?

This lesson also looks at the body but through a biological lens (p. 30). The first activity has students in single gender groups, drawing changes that occur at puberty onto a body image template. The small groups should then discuss which changes cause the most anxiety for both young men and young women. This continues with activity two, which has students writing statements that they may have heard in the media about different parts of the body (e.g. large penis or shaved pubic hair).

The next two activities are designed to help debunk myths and provide factual information for students. They should be shown video clips depicting male and female anatomy, so they can reflect on the previous comments that they wrote on their diagrams with the information provided in the clips.

Finally, students are to think of positive messages that they could give others about body shape and size. Teachers are reminded to use a question box for any queries that may be thought of in the following days or those that students may be embarrassed to ask in front of their classmates.

Key Stage 4 Lesson 3: The Law, sex and the internet

The previous two lessons discussed were from Key Stage 3. Several of the same themes are repeated in the Key Stage 4 lessons, but in more depth. However, I have chosen only to discuss one of these continuation lessons while also choosing one that was exclusive to Key Stage 4. The first, *The Law, sex and the Internet* is a continuation lesson (pp. 42-51).

As with all of the other lessons in this resource, there are several activities covering various aspects of sex and the internet as it relates to law. The first activity introduces pornography. The teacher should ask the students how they define pornography and then write a statement on the board, 'Pornography is _____'. Students are asked to fill in the blank, while observing whether there had been a shift from the previous year's session on the same topic. Students should be reminded of the definition of pornography, also emphasising 'the fact that it is a subjective term used dependent on various factors'.

The next two exercises are a quiz and a scenarios activity. The former is a five question quiz that students are to complete and then discuss as a class, while the latter entails the teacher distributing scenario cards. Each card has a series of questions that the students are to consider relative to the situation.

This set of exercises then concludes with a summary and the question box. The summary allows teachers to make sure every student understands the material presented as well as giving additional time to signpost students to various websites or organisations that they may need now or in the future.

Key Stage 4 Lesson 4: Attitudes to sex and pornography

In this lesson, which is exclusive to Key Stage 4, students delve deeper into their understanding and perception of pornography and other sexually explicit situations (pp. 52-55). In the first exercise, students are to show their level of agreement to a series of statements by standing in a continuum, providing that there is room in the classroom (if not, the resource can be used as a worksheet). The questions are provided. If the perspectives vary,

students should be encouraged to challenge the other views, constructively. A discussion may ensue, for which a PowerPoint has been created to provide further information and statistics.

For the second and third activities, the perceived negative impact of porn on lives and attitudes is discussed. In the second activity, students are asked to brainstorm the negative impacts of porn. Teachers are provided with a few examples to help stimulate the discussion. The third activity seeks to challenge negative sexual attitudes derived from porn. Pairs of students are provided with a statement in which they must think of a way to challenge the idea presented. An example of the statements provided is 'Fiona says, "gay porn is disgusting"'.

All of the resources and materials looked at in this section have addressed the optional social component of sex education. While it is recommended that these, amongst other, topics be discussed with young people, there is no mandate to do so. In the next section, I detail supplementary materials for the compulsory component of sex education, the biological aspects. These resources are not what would be found in science textbooks but are useful in that they delve deeper into their respective topic than the standard textbook and give local context.

5.3.2 STIs and Biological Secondary School Sex Education

In this section, the focus shifts to resources that are typically prominent in sex education, those relating to sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, etc. The resources herein are not the only material used in the classroom on the biological facets of sex education, as science text books will contain much, if not all, of the material necessary to complete the education mandated by the National Curriculum on the topic. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are additional resources available for this part of sex education as well.

The examples on the school portal websites all relate to two topics - STIs and pregnancy. More specifically, the STI resources describe two national programmes that have been deemed important for discussion through the public health sector. These programmes are the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP) and the National HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) Vaccination Campaign. These have been identified as problematic areas (due to the increase in incidence) which may be able to be rectified through education. The first

programme directed document, *The Chlamydia Update*, provides a general overview of the statistics, symptoms, prevention, treatment and where to access sexual health services. This document may be utilised with the local NCSP office during an outreach screening session (Owen and Hume 2013). The second document, the HPV resource, is used to raise awareness for those who are maturing and becoming ready for sex (Health Schools Brighton and Hove n.d.).

The other two examples covering pregnancy related topics include a resource on condom usage and a resource on termination. The condom usage resource provides information about types of condoms and correct usage, and is usually accompanied by a demonstration - using a wooden or synthetic demonstrator - on how to properly use a condom. The termination resource covers facts and myths of termination, sessions on young parenting, and additional information on where to seek advice on sexual health related matters.

From these examples, it is obvious that there is a utility for these resources alongside the textbook as they provide information not usually contained in biology books, as well as localised information. On the whole, these were very good supplementary resources but, as I will demonstrate in chapters 6 and 7, the information is reportedly not used in class or is seemingly not transmitted to students through a teaching/learning barrier.

5.4 Primary School Sex Education Materials

While the majority of sex education takes place in Key Stages 3 and 4, the government's recommendation to start sex education earlier has led to an exorbitant amount of literature being featured on the local learning platform websites. There is a significantly larger portion of material on the learning platform websites dedicated to the younger age groups. Most of this material relates to forming relationships (friendships) and learning to be a social being. This may be due to the perceived caution that must be taken when having discussions classified as sex education with young children. However, this wide selection of material could be viewed as problematic in that it may make it more difficult for teachers to review all of the material and select the best examples for their class.

As secondary school information was discussed previously, this section focuses on the materials recommended for use in primary schools. The same format applies in terms of

separating social and biological topics, with the former being more prevalent in the younger age groups. Examples from each are presented, although a larger section will be dedicated to social sex education.

5.4.1 Materials for Primary School Social Sex Education

In this section topics such as relationships, touching, and growing up will be common with activities focused on keeping the younger audience engaged.

5.4.1.1 SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) Red and Green Set

The SEAL learning sets are a national initiative that took years to develop with the assistance of several hundred schools (DfES 2007). Using a full school approach in terms of learning messages both in and out of sex education/PSHE classes, this resource provides a complete approach to education. Each learning set is identified with a colour and then within the colour there are several topics useful for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classrooms. Those recommended in the locality of this research are the red learning set (foundation level) and green learning set. As each contains several topics, I have sampled two of them, *Getting on and falling out* and *Relationships* from the red set (DfES 2005a) and *Bullying* from the green set (DfES 2005b).

Getting on and falling out

This red set can be used for children as young as 30 months and is recommended for those up through age five. In *Getting on and falling out*, several activities are recommended to introduce children to relationships (friendships) and self-awareness. The activities range from making little fans with faces that represent feelings to assisting with making a classroom poster so everyone is clear on the expectations of behaviour towards one another. There is also a script for a puppet show in which teachers are to play out the situation to help young people become aware of their feelings and how their actions might affect others. Although this is not sex education per se, it is the precursor to developing friendships and more intimate relationships in the future.

Relationships

In this set, students further learn how to handle friendships as well as the feelings that are associated, such as missing someone and fairness. Some of the basic activities are the same, such as a puppet show with a different script, in addition to sharing games where students are expected to demonstrate manners. One different activity in this lesson is a storybook that teachers can use to demonstrate fairness and friendship. Many of the activities in the red SEAL learning set focuses on introducing and reinforcing basic social skills, therefore I will move on to another resource that seeks to cover different aspects of development and in a different manner.

Bullying

Using the same full school method that SEAL embraces, the bullying module in the green SEAL set is progressively used to teach individuals about uniqueness and promote diversity as a positive aspect of life instead of using differences to hurt others. Activities can be used alone or in conjunction with a full year assembly. The activities range from circle games, where a group (e.g. social, ethnic, etc.) of people is called out and if students feel they belong they stand up. Applauding is encouraged to celebrate differences. Unlike in the red set, scenarios are now useful tools. One example activity involves putting students into small groups and giving a scenario in which they need to identify who they think is being bullied. Another exercise has the students creating a scenario and playing it out in front of the class. Finally, there are additional handout activities that should be used to supplement the more interactive approaches.

5.4.1.2 Out for Our Children

As the title suggests, this resource introduces sexual orientation and diversity to young children. Comprised of eleven activities (only a selection will be further mentioned), young people are engaged in learning through information and even symbolism. The first activity is an example of educating through symbolism (pp. 7-9). Students are paired and given a coloured shape or material of some sort with the explanation that they are going to make the room look like a rainbow. Once every pair has a colour, there are several ways to proceed. The options recommended are creating a collage, using a clothesline to make a group rainbow, or play a game where each group selects a colour and asks students holding that colour to come

sit next to them. As the game progresses, everyone gets to move around and actively engage. On conclusion, teachers are to discuss diversity and talk about how much fun it is to have differences.

The second activity relates more to personal creativity, but nonetheless embraces diversity (p. 13). Students are given a body section to draw (e.g. 'the head from a character that swims in the sea'). After having students draw body and leg sections, the teacher can put them together to show how creative one can be and how much fun diversity can be.

The focus of the third activity shifts to the family (p. 14). Students are shown a 'family map' and instructed to make one of their own. Using themselves in the centre, they are instructed to put relatives, friends, etc. on the map and then draw the mode of transportation that they use to visit that person. Once finished, the students can look at other students, as the aim of the exercise is to show that differences in families should be valued.

In the fourth exercise, creativity is enabled in that students are invited to develop their own fairytale family (pp. 15-17). The teacher may begin the exercise role playing as Cinderella's daughter and discussing positive and negative aspects of having a princess for a mother. After this, students are encouraged to use photos of celebrities and cartoon characters to create their imaginary family. If fabric is available, they can also dress up as members of their family. This exercise again reflects the differences in individuals and their families.

Fruit Salad is the name of the next exercise (pp. 18-20). With several recommendations, teachers are provided with options as to how to conduct this exercise. There is a game where students are told to move around the room to a specific spot labelled with apple, pear, orange, etc. Teachers can also assign fruit names to the children and request that they switch places based on the pairing of the fruits called out. Other options include role playing, as well as using real fruit to create fruit salad while asking what other fruits could improve it .

One of the final activities involved teachers using persona dolls (pp. 33-35). These dolls help illustrate situations that students either will face or may have already faced. In line with the diversity emphasis of this exercise, students are introduced to sexual orientation through a doll that may have two mothers or two fathers. Students are encouraged to ask the character questions that can help them better understand situations, in this case having gay or lesbian parents.

Although I have only described six of the eleven activities, the usefulness of this resource should be evident. Although no ages are given on any of the exercises, it is clear that from the first activity discussed to the final, that tasks become more involved, thus better suited to expand the child's ability as they grow.

5.4.2 Material for Primary School Biological Sex Education

In the early years of formal education, the material for biological sex education is light. Although there are resources, most of them only briefly discuss puberty and body parts during the latter years of Key Stage 2. For instance, Channel 4's *Living and Growing* series provides videos and worksheets to introduce young people to their bodies, birth, and ultimately, human development. Topics such as body parts, masturbation and intercourse are all included in the videos. However, due to public opinion, a revised version was released in 2013. The revision is slightly shortened compared to the original in which some of the scenes, such as the intercourse scene, were edited significantly to pacify concerns over appropriateness. In closing, this resource, while contentious, covers all of the material necessary to educate younger children about the biological aspects of sex education.

5.5 Discussion

This chapter has detailed supplementary teaching material that is available and recommended for use in classrooms. These resources were documented as they serve to demonstrate that there are sufficient supplementary resources, which can be used in the classroom to educate on topics that fall outside of the National Curriculum.

As many of these resources are well-written and useful tools, I chose not to critique them individually but rather critique them as a whole. This serves to provide an account of the similarities and differences across the pedagogy employed in the utilisation of the materials. I also comment on the utility of these resources as well as discuss the implications of having these resources in this section.

When examining the materials, there are several teaching and learning approaches in common, with the most recognisable ones being group work, active learning, and the act of challenging current beliefs. Group work is common at all levels of education; this allows young

people to learn from one another, fosters a sense of teamwork and builds communication skills (DfES 2004). However, this might also provide less security for an individual if they possess a strong minority view. Nevertheless, group work is recommended as a valuable tool for use in the classroom, regardless of year in school or university (Meyers and Jones 1993, p. 58; DfES 2004). The examples provided within this chapter demonstrate a plethora of different ways to utilise group learning in the classroom. Activities ranging from poster creation to standing on a human continuum are all useful in the context of most classrooms and require minimal preparation, with the potential for an engaging and educational classroom.

The other key aspect that needs to be considered in group learning is whether the groups (or class as a whole) should be segregated (Strange et al. 2003). In this sense, there was no differentiation reported within many of these supplemental lessons regarding whether the setting should be a single-gender or mixed-gender classroom. While this is a different focus on the way in which 'groups' are being discussed above, it was identified in the focus groups and interviews as an important aspect of learning in sex education with regards to content/material. Many participants reported several instances where genders were segregated for lessons without ever clarifying to the opposing gender what was being taught 'next door'. This is in opposition, in principle, to the results obtained by Strange and colleagues (2003) and suggested by Gurian (2010), who found that young women preferred single-gender classrooms (pp. 207-208). However, I would argue that this is contextual and depends on the topics that are being discussed at the time. While it is important to convey some messages in single-sex groups, the material still needs to be conveyed to both groups. This will be briefly revisited in the subsequent chapters.

Next, the idea of active learning is consistent in the materials discussed. While group learning is an active learning strategy, the examples for active learning extend beyond group work. As previously mentioned, there is a plethora of activities detailed that classify as active learning. The continuum example, done in a group setting to allow students to openly discuss topics, is a way in which to convey knowledge that could not necessarily be done by making a poster. This is also seen in the examples for primary school children, for instance, role-playing and puppet shows. The logic behind active learning relates to staying engaged and increasing motivation, as well as attitude change, among others (McKeachie et al. 1987; Bonwell and Elson 1991; Michel, Carter and Varela 2008). It must be understood that not all education will be active learning. As long as the material is interesting and relevant to the group of students being educated, they will learn. This accounts for the use of media in the classroom.

Shifting the focus now to the utility of the resources reviewed, it has become apparent, that there is a plethora of useful materials on the market to supplement any sex education lesson. Providing these documents on a local website is useful for educators across a geographical area to educate to a similar standard. Nevertheless, this is both useful and problematic. Having students in the same area learning from similar material may reduce inconsistencies if children are to change schools or even progress to a different school from primary to secondary to college. However, the mobility of people is not always this localised, thus the usefulness of the National Curriculum. Unfortunately, sex education being only partially compulsory leads to inconsistencies from region to region and even from one side of a region to the other. This was evident in the surveys, focus groups and interviews. There was much agreement in the reporting of the compulsory topics, but a rapid declination when asked to report on the social topics. This is obviously a policy issue, discussed in the previous chapter. However, even within the same geographical area it was evident that the coverage of topics in sex education varied. This might be because some of the material is written in a local context, which is useful for conveying statistics but would not be useful for other areas borrowing the material.

The other issue that may ensue is the changing emphasis and strategies within local areas. While local initiatives could be useful in areas where there is a particularly high rate of STIs or unwanted pregnancies, this should not diminish the idea that everyone should be educated with a holistic sex education programme. Therefore, it is important to reiterate that while the intention may not always be in the best interest of the students, there is still usefulness in having supplementary material for sex education.

When considering the usefulness of having well-written resources on sex education topics, one reason becomes paramount - teacher comfort. This will be reiterated in chapter 7, but if the materials are written as a pedagogical tool and not as a guide, teachers will be able to focus on conducting the session, rather than creating an environment conducive to learning. This may reduce apprehension that is seemingly experienced by some teachers when talking about the sensitive topics that comprise sex education. From the examples provided within, these resources can and should be used as prescriptive tools in the classroom. The materials are consistent with learning outcomes and the fundamental definitions of holistic sex education programmes (as outlined in chapter 2).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised many of the recommended resources used or fit for use in schools in the geographical area chosen for this thesis. While this is not an all-inclusive list of resources, that task is unpractical as teachers may use some components of these recommended resources but also use pamphlets and booklets from other healthcare or affiliated organisation from which they find useful for their classrooms. However, resources covering both aspects of sex education - the social topics and the more common and partially mandated biological sex education - have been detailed and discussed. While I argue that this social/biological division is not in the best interests of students, this follows the current model in which sex education is perceived and conducted. I return to this notion in the final chapter to discuss ways forward.

Overall, the types of materials in circulation are both plentiful and full of the relevant content to ensure a holistic sex education programme as defined by the WHO (2010). This observation is made by examining the materials of one small region. Thus, with the amount of materials, including many free resources, it may be necessary to further provide additional guidance and possibly a mandate, to ensure that these materials are becoming available in the classroom. However, this is a tremendous task for anyone to review and ultimately select the best tools, thus the utilisation of current groups such as the Sex Education Forum[23], could assist in making a national recommendation to ensure that these materials are accessible to everyone.

As the documentary analysis component of this research has now been discussed, I move onto the empirical part of this research by covering the quantitative and qualitative results in the subsequent two chapters. This shift moves the reader from a contextual standpoint to what young people are saying about their sex education via a survey, focus groups and interviews.

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[23] The Sex Education Forum (SEF) is a registered charity in the UK and is part of the National Children's Bureau.

Chapter 6: Quantitative Data

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical data obtained from the survey with sixth form students. The chapter proceeds in the following manner: First, the demographics of the participants who completed the survey are given to provide an overview of the gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation of the sample. Secondly, the results are presented using descriptive statistics, specifically cross-tabulations, which examine the results of the survey based on the total sample, the school attended, and other key demographics listed above. In addition, these descriptive statistics provide an overview of how recent secondary school students feel about sex education. Finally, non-parametric tests are detailed as these were used to further examine whether the data supports a difference of view based across demographics.

By the end of this chapter, several shortcomings in the effectiveness of sex education become clear. It is intended that the information that has been gathered will provide evidence as to the current state of sex education, differences that exist between schools, and perceptions of sex education that differ between the general student population and my focal population, LGBT students.

However, before proceeding, it is important to recognise that the results discussed within this chapter only represent the subjective experiences and understandings of the students surveyed, even though the method used is traditionally positivist and the results are presented as statistics (facts). Comprehension of gender, sexual orientation, culture, among others, will all have played a role in the students' responses; therefore, the results need to be considered in a societal context.

6.2 Demographics

This survey was comprised of 294 respondents, aged approximately 16 to 18 years, from sixth form colleges in southeast England. Of these participants, 34 were removed from the sample, as these participants did not meet the attendance criterion of partaking in four of the past six years in English schools. On removal of those participants, the total eligible sample

consisted of 260 students from across six institutions. The institutions have been labelled as College P (n = 26), College WH (n = 8), College B (n = 56), College R (n = 10), College C (n = 113) and College W (n = 47). The response sizes vary according to the size of the college and the level of access that was afforded to individual classrooms. Access to College C was the most complete across the colleges and College R the most restricted. College WH was an alternative education provider for excluded students, so everyone present on the day completed the survey.

6.2.1 Demographics of Total Sample

Table I shows the demographics of the total sample categorised by gender, highlighting ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion.

Table I: Demographics of total sample

Sample size n = 260	Males n = 122 (48%)	Females n = 133 (51%)	Did not respond to gender n = 5 (2%)
Ethnicity			
White	118 (97%)	116 (87%)	0
Black	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	0
Asian (non-specified)	2 (2%)	9 (7%)	0
Mixed (non-specified)	1 (1%)	6 (5%)	0
Did not respond	*0*	0	5 (100%)
Sexual Orientation			
Straight	115 (94%)	116 (87%)	1 (20%)
Gay/Lesbian	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0
Bisexual	3 (3%)	13 (10%)	1 (20%)
Other	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0
Prefer not to answer	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0
Did not respond	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	3 (60%)
Religion			
Christian	20 (16%)	33 (25%)	0
Muslim	0	3 (2%)	0
Hindu	0	2 (2%)	0
Jewish	1 (1%)	0	0

Sample size n = 260	Males n = 122 (48%)	Females n = 133 (51%)	Did not respond to gender n = 5 (2%)
Not religious	96 (79%)	92 (69%)	2 (40%)
Other (non-specified)	5 (4%)	2 (2%)	0
Did not respond	0	1 (1%)	3 (60%)

These data are skewed towards those participants who identified as straight and of white ethnic origin. The sample was fairly equally split between young men and young women, with no transgender participants, or anyone reporting 'other' in the sample.

Religious beliefs were included on the survey, however, I have chosen not to focus on this demographic in depth, as the sample acquired did not provided enough variation in the data to do extensive analysis. However, I did include the raw data to provide a sense of the respondent's affiliation.

Finally, with regards to sexual orientation, I have chosen to refer to those identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) as one group throughout this chapter, which is also consistent with the rest of the dissertation. This brings the representations of LGB people in the sample to just over seven percent. The two participants who identified as 'other' listed heteromantic and asexual as their orientation.

6.2.2 Demographics by Institution

The following six tables break down the demographics of the individual institutions that took part in the survey using gender as the cross-referenced variable.

Table II: Demographics of College P

College P Sample size n = 26	Males n = 13 (50%)	Females n = 13 (50%)
Ethnicity		
White	12 (92%)	13 (10%)
Black	1 (8%)	0
Sexual Orientation		
Straight	12 (92%)	10 (77%)
Bisexual	1 (8%)	3 (23%)

In College P (Table II), a coeducational state funded institution, 26 responses were received out of approximately 30 students asked to take part in the study. The response rate is approximately 25 percent of the total enrolled students reported by Ofsted. The student population that responded to this survey in College P was overwhelmingly white, and had several participants identifying as an alternative sexuality. Thus, those identifying as an alternative sexuality made the representation of the LGB group proportionally higher compared to those identifying as straight in comparison to other colleges in the sample, with 15 percent identifying as bisexual.

Table III: Demographics of College WH

College WH Sample size n = 8	Males n = 3 (38%)	Females n = 5 (63%)
Ethnicity		
White	3 (100%)	4 (80%)
Mixed (non-specified)	0	1 (20%)
Sexual Orientation		
Straight	2 (67%)	4 (80%)
Gay/Lesbian	1 (33%)	0
Bisexual	0	1 (20%)

College WH (Table III) is not a dedicated sixth form educational provider. This is a community intervention project that assists in educating marginalised students and those excluded from mainstream schools. However, everyone that attended this institution fitted all of the criteria to participate in this study. As it is difficult to know how many total students there are, as many may only come for a day or week and then never return, I was able to survey every student in attendance on the day that data was collected. Although a small sample, the demographics mirror those of many of the other institutions in this geographical region, in that the greater majority of the students are white, with a couple of participants identifying with alternative sexualities, as seen in Table III above.

Table IV: Demographics of College B

College B Sample size n = 56	Males n = 24 (42.9%)	Females n = 32 (57.1%)
Ethnicity		
White	21 (87.5%)	25 (78.1%)

College B Sample size n = 56	Males n = 24 (42.9%)	Females n = 32 (57.1%)
Black	0	1 (3.1%)
Asian (non-specified)	2 (8.3%)	5 (15.6%)
Mixed (non-specified)	1 (4.2%)	1 (3.1%)
Sexual Orientation		
Straight	23 (95.8%)	30 (93.8%)
Gay/Lesbian	0	1 (3.1%)
Bisexual	0	1 (3.1%)
Did not respond	1 (4.2%)	0

College B (Table IV) is a mid-sized independent sixth form with a student population numbers just under 400, making my sample size approximately 15 percent of the student population. Again, the majority of the students were white and predominately straight.

Table V: Demographics of College R

College R Sample size n = 10	Females n = 10 (100%)
Ethnicity	
White	5 (50%)
Black	1 (10%)
Asian (non-specified)	3 (30%)
Mixed (non-specified)	1 (10%)
Sexual Orientation	
Straight	9 (90%)
Bisexual	1 (10%)

College R (Table V) is a single-sex, independent college, with a total population of just under 200 students in the sixth form. The uptake rate was approximately six percent. In this small sample, there was more diversity in ethnicity, compared to the rest of the colleges in this study.

Table VI: Demographics of College C

College C Sample size n = 113	Males n = 55 (49%)	Females n = 54 (48%)	Did not respond n = 4 (4%)
Ethnicity			
White	55 (100%)	53 (98%)	0
Mixed (non-specified)	0	1 (2%)	0
Did not respond	0	0	4 (100%)
Sexual Orientation			
Straight	51 (93%)	48 (89%)	0
Bisexual	2 (4%)	4 (7%)	1 (25%)
Other	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	0
Prefer not to answer	1 (2%)	0	0
Did not respond	0	1 (2%)	3 (75%)

College C (Table VI), a rural state-funded institution, provided the largest contribution of any of the institutions (n = 113). Approximately 97 percent of the students in the sixth form responded. As the largest single sample, it is interesting to see the results of the demographics. While nearly the entire sample was white, the school's population provided a significant number of participants identifying with alternative sexualities.

Table VII: Demographics of College W

College W Sample size n = 47	Males n = 27 (57%)	Females n = 19 (40%)	Did not respond n = 1 (2%)
Ethnicity			
White	27 (100%)	16 (84%)	0
Asian (non-specified)	0	1 (5%)	0
Mixed (non-specified)	0	2 (11%)	0
Did not respond	*0*	0	1 (100%)
Sexual Orientation			
Straight	27 (100%)	15 (79%)	1 (100%)
Bisexual	0	3 (16%)	0
Prefer not to answer	0	1 (5%)	0

The final college, College W (Table VII), a state-funded institution, provided a rather sizeable sample (n = 47), compared with the other institutions. Of the total students in the

sixth form college, approximately one-third was surveyed. In similarity to the other colleges, the majority of the students were white and straight. However, the few that did not identify with these demographic categories enhanced the dataset from the minority groups (e.g. alternative sexualities).

6.3 Survey Responses

Each of the following sections examines the results based on demographics. They are ordered like the survey, with the first section looking at the scale based importance/agreement questions[24], followed by questions regarding the appropriateness of topics, and then concluding with the third section, which examine the frequency of discussion of topics in sex education.

The reporting of results depends on the type of question. If a question requires a selection on a five-point agreement/disagreement scale, I group the responses of agree and strongly agree together as well as disagree and strongly disagree, and report the general sentiment of agreement/disagreement. However, salient results (i.e. those referring to sexual orientation and heteronormativity) are reported in more detail.

6.3.1 Survey Responses: Total Sample

In this section, a summary of all of the questions and the reported descriptive statistics relative to the total sample is discussed.

6.3.1.1 Perceptions of Importance of Various Aspects of Sex Education: Total Sample

The first question on the survey asked students about the importance of sex education. The overwhelming majority, 86 percent, reported that it was either rather or extremely important. The next two questions asked the level of agreement as to whether biological topics (e.g. anatomy and physiology) and medical topics (sexually transmitted infections and conditions such as premature ejaculation) were important and should be

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[24] Question 30: *Which of the following three statements is closest to your view about the best way to teach Sex Education?* will be included in this section as it a perception based question.

discussed in school. Respectively, 72 percent and 92 percent responded with some degree of importance.

When participants were asked about the importance of discussions about relationships or LGBT topics in school, the rates dropped, with approximately 61 percent and 68 percent, respectively, responding with agreement. This latter statistic is surprising due to the campaigns that are in place to promote inclusivity, but this will be addressed in the discussion.

Next, students were asked whether receiving information about condoms would (a) encourage earlier sexual intercourse and (b) whether it would promote *safer sex*. In response to the first question based on the common myth that talking about condoms leads to earlier sexual activity (PPFA 2011, p. 1), the majority of the respondents fell in the middle of the distribution with 22 percent agreeing, 26 percent indifferent and 27 percent disagreeing. However, for the second question regarding information promoting *safer sex*, the results were significantly more positive with 82 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing that providing condoms would promote *safer sex*.

The next two questions pertained to equity in sex education. When asked if sex education was important for both straight and LGBT participants, 97 percent agreed. However, when asked whether it was important to discuss safe sex for both LGBT and straight participants the percentage of agreement dropped to 92 percent. There are numerous possibilities as to why this may have occurred. For instance, this could be due to the young people disregarding the LGBT aspect of the question, or possibly the perception that *safer sex* only refers to a reduction in pregnancy or STIs. While it is impossible to be sure, it is interesting that there is a discrepancy.

Subsequently, the next and one of the most important questions in the survey asked whether sex education focused more on straight couples than LGBT couples. As this question was used to assess heteronormativity, this will be revisited in nearly every section of this chapter. The results showed that overall, 65 percent agreed to some extent that this was the case.

Students were asked whether they thought that sex education should be a required part of schooling. Most participants, 82 percent, agreed that sex education should be compulsory, While 59 percent of students disagreed that sex education should be optional, with a further 19 percent responding as indifferent. Interestingly, there was a rather even split

across gender and sexual orientation for this question, but I further address these differences later in the chapter.

Two questions were included to assess both religious and family values and whether these affected adolescents' sexual decision-making. Both scored comparatively low with only 15 percent agreeing that religion influenced their decisions and a further 23 percent agreed that family values affected their decisions. The latter question was phrased as a negative, but the results were unsurprising in that a high percentage agreed with the statement. These will be explored more in the discussion, as it may be that these sentiments create a barrier for effective sex education in the home (Ingham and Carrera 1998; Feldman and Rosenthal 2000; Renold 2005).

The last two questions concerned bullying in regards to sexual orientation and sexual decisions. Few individuals in the survey reported being bullied, with six percent reporting being bullied over their sexual orientation and just under four percent over their sexual decisions. These topics are revisited in the later demographic sections to ascertain any patterns.

The final question on the survey polled general beliefs about how sex education is perceived by students. There were three options, representing the traditional Abstinence Only programme, Abstinence Plus[25], and Comprehensive sex education programmes. Over half of the sample (59%) agreed with the statement corresponding to the commonly held convictions of the comprehensive programmes, which emphasises that students should be educated about sex and sexual health to promote a healthy, sexual being. The other two programmes received zero percent[26] (Abstinence Only) and 35 percent (Abstinence Plus), with a further six percent responding with multiple answers or not responding at all.

6.3.1.2 Acceptable Age and Perceived Appropriateness of Topics for Sex Education: Total Sample

In this section of the survey, students were asked to circle the Key Stage/age range in which they felt the topics could be appropriately discussed in the classroom. Students were asked to circle all that apply, but considering the lifelong process of learning and the push for

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[25] Abstinence Plus programmes provide limited information about condoms, pregnancy and STIs in the context of a heavy abstinence message

[26] Abstinence Only did receive one response, which equates to a negligible 0.4 percent.

earlier sex education, only the earliest selected Key Stage was reported to ascertain when young people felt the discussion of the individual topics could begin. There were twelve topics included on the survey.

Chart I shows the general age/education period for perceived appropriateness in the classroom as selected by the participants. For most topics, the majority selected Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) as the appropriate beginning age for the respective discussion. Perceived appropriateness of anal sex was reported most frequently in Key Stage 4 (ages 14-18) with a further one-fifth reporting that it is not appropriate at all in school. In addition to anal sex being considered a problematic topic, termination of pregnancies and oral sex both saw a large proportion of students suggesting that educators wait until Key Stage 4. These topics also had a higher regularity (excluding termination) of being reported as not appropriate for discussion in school at all.

Chart I: Appropriateness of topics: total sample
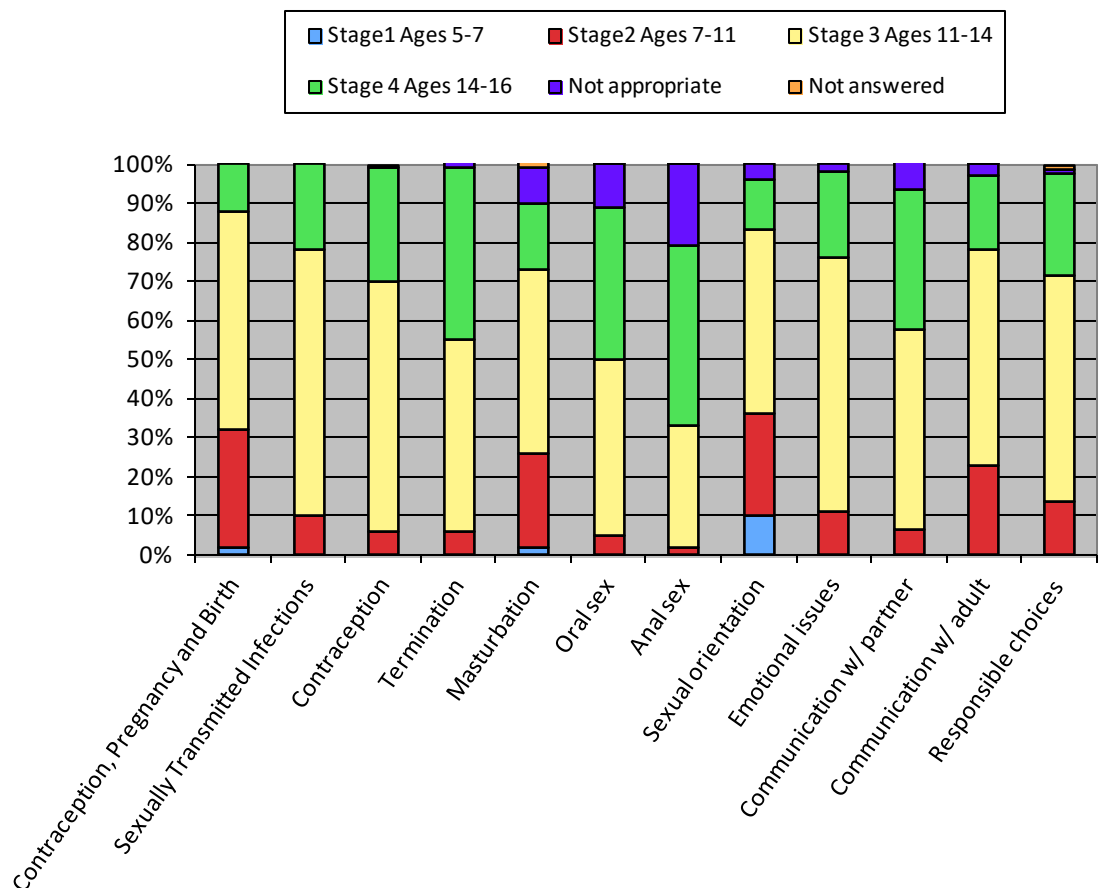
This will need to be examined in future research as I question whether these acts are considered taboo in some ways, or whether there is some connection with sexual identity that

lends to the desired exclusion of these topics. This especially relates to anal sex, as people seemingly fixate on this topic and equate it to gay sex.

The final topic that warrants attention is masturbation. While many students viewed masturbation as appropriate for discussion in school, the topic also received the third highest response rate for not being appropriate (9%). In addition to this, masturbation was the topic that was most prevalently left unanswered at two percent, though this is a small percentage.

6.3.1.3 Topics Discussed in Sex Education: Total Sample

The final section of quantitative data collection on the survey, asked students whether they could recall discussing the listed topics in class. The results are presented in Chart II.

Chart II: Topics discussed in sex education: total sample
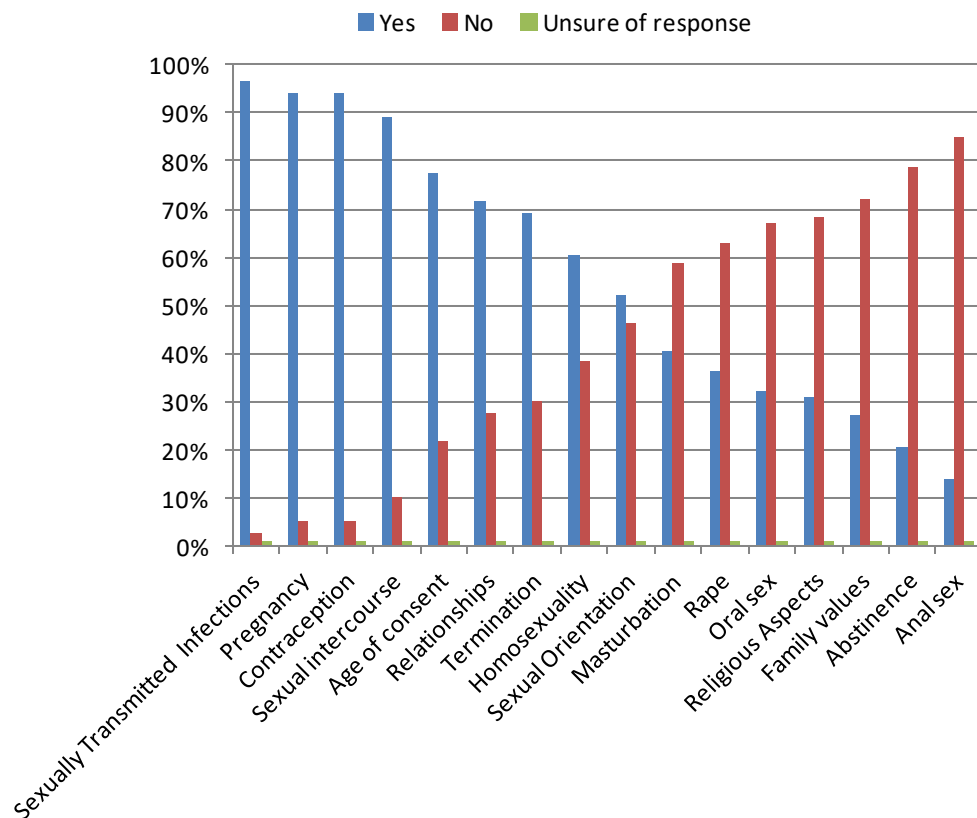
Many of these topics follow the current PSHE/SRE requirements and seem logical in view of the medical discourse that typically guides health-based education. Additionally, they are similar, albeit slightly higher, than previous findings relating to topics discussed in the

classroom (Strange et al. 2006 p. 39). However, two results were unexpected. Sixty percent of students said that they had discussed homosexuality at some point during their sex education with a further 52 percent stating that they had talked about sexual orientation. It is necessary to break these results down by other demographics factors to look for trends, as this response rate seems much higher than the frequency reported in the subsequent focus group data (discussed in chapter 7).

6.3.2 Survey Response: by Gender

This section and all subsequent demographics sections will follow the same format, however, only key results or those that seem contradictory to existing beliefs and information will be examined in depth.

6.3.2.1 Perceptions of Importance of Various Aspects of Sex Education: by Gender

In this section, results are presented by gender. Recall that in this sample, 48 percent identified as male and 52 perfect as female. This is the opposite ratio in comparison to the most recent census statistics (ONS 2011) but should not pose any concerns as this sample still provides an even split.

When looking at the results by gender, there are only a few notable results relevant to the aims of this thesis. The first relates to the importance of discussing LGBT topics. In this instance, 81 percent of young women said this topic was important, whereas only 55 percent of young men reported the same. Similarly, young women (96%) responded slightly more favourably than young men (89%) in response to the statement regarding the importance of sex education for both straight and LGBT relationships. Finally, in relation to questions on LGBT topics in sex education, participants were asked whether they thought that sex education focused more on straight couples than LGBT couples; 64 percent of young men agreed compared with 67 percent of young women.

When asked whether sex education affected choices, 39 percent of young men versus 31 percent of young women thought that sex education encouraged sex at a younger age. This was followed by both genders responding - with just over 80 percent agreement - that sex education made it more likely that young people would partake in *safer sex* now or in the future.

The final two questions of this section, regarding bullying, saw quite low figures overall. When asked if they were bullied over a sexual decision, seven percent of young men said they had (with four percent responding with indifference) with a further six percent of young women (eight percent indifferent). On the question asking whether the individual was ever bullied over their sexual orientation, nearly two percent of young men agreed compared to five percent of young women.

In approaching this aspect of the sample, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to check for significant differences between genders on each of the questions. Four questions were found to show a significant difference between young men and young women. The first question asked about the importance of sex education ($U(255) = 6925$, $Z = -2.206$, $p < .05$). The second and third questions asked whether discussing safe sex was important for both young men and young women ($U(254) = 7189$, $Z = -2.049$, $p < .05$) and for both straight and LGBT participants ($U(254) = 6463$, $Z = -3.286$, $p < .01$). The fourth question examined the importance of discussing LGBT topics in sex education ($U(255) = 5479.5$, $Z = -4.715$, $p < .001$). All of these results demonstrate a significant difference between young men and young women, with young women placing more emphasis on the importance of discussing these topics.

6.3.2.2 Acceptable Age and Perceived Appropriateness of Topics for Sex Education: by Gender

As previously discussed, the second section of the survey asked questions regarding participant's opinions of at what Key Stage/age ranges they felt topics could be appropriately taught. Chart III shows the responses of the males and Chart IV shows the responses of the females.

In these descriptive statistics, there were several interesting findings, with the first relating to termination of pregnancy. Males typically reported that they would feel comfortable with termination being discussed in the classroom earlier than young women. In this sample young men responded more frequently with Key Stages 1 through 3, while young women selected Key Stage 4. This trend was also seen for the topic of masturbation. One-third of young men said that masturbation was an appropriate topic in Key Stage 1 or 2, whereas less than one-fifth of young women said it was appropriate in Key Stage 2, with the majority saying it was more appropriate to wait until Key Stage 3.

The next interesting finding was on the topic of anal sex. Moderately high rates of both young men and young women felt that the topic was only appropriate in later years with 44 percent of young men and 47 percent of young women wanting to wait until Key Stage 4. This question also saw the highest rate of 'Not appropriate' responses with 22 percent and 20 percent of young men and young women respectively. For young women, oral sex and masturbation also saw double digit percentages in the 'Not appropriate' category. This, however, was not seen in young men's responses. While there may be several reasons for these discrepancies, one plausible explanation, at least for the topic of masturbation may be linked to the idea that young men masturbate earlier and more frequently than young women, thus potentially leading to the notion of female masturbation being taboo (Robbins et al. 2011).

Chart III: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: total sample male
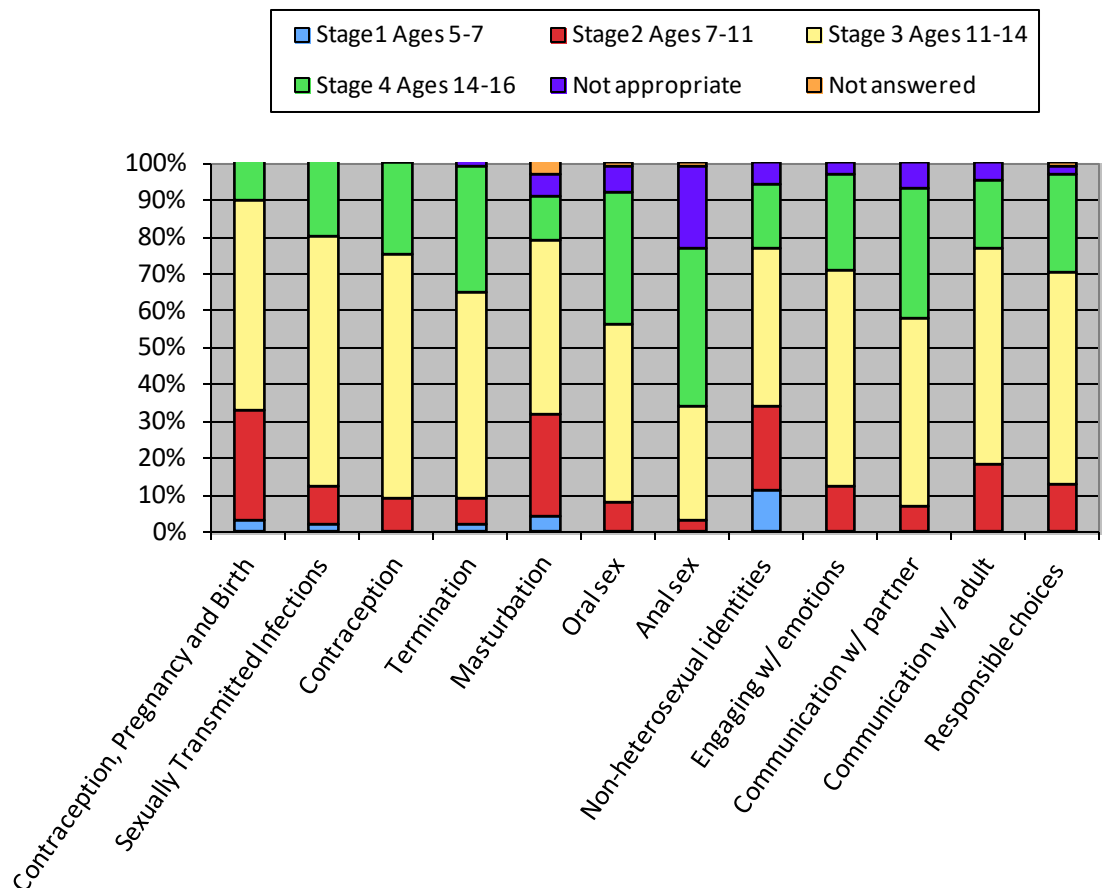
Finally, on the question of appropriateness of discussing non-heterosexual identities, the majority of young men and young women said it was appropriate to wait until Key Stage 3. However, 11 percent of young men and eight percent of young women responded with Key

Stage 1 and a further six percent of young men and two percent of young women responding with 'Not appropriate'.

Differences between the genders' responses were found in the appropriateness of discussing contraception (U(252) = 7020.5, Z = -2.090, p < .05), termination (U(252) = 6440, Z = -3.077, p < .01), masturbation (U(247) = 5987.5, Z = -3.285, p< .001), and oral sex (U(252) = 6774, Z = -2.368, p < .05). In these instances, young men were more likely to report that topics were appropriate for the classroom and they generally felt that these topics should be discussed earlier than their female counterparts responded. This may relate to the results that support young women preferring a single-sex classroom (Strange et al. 2003).

Chart IV: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: total sample female
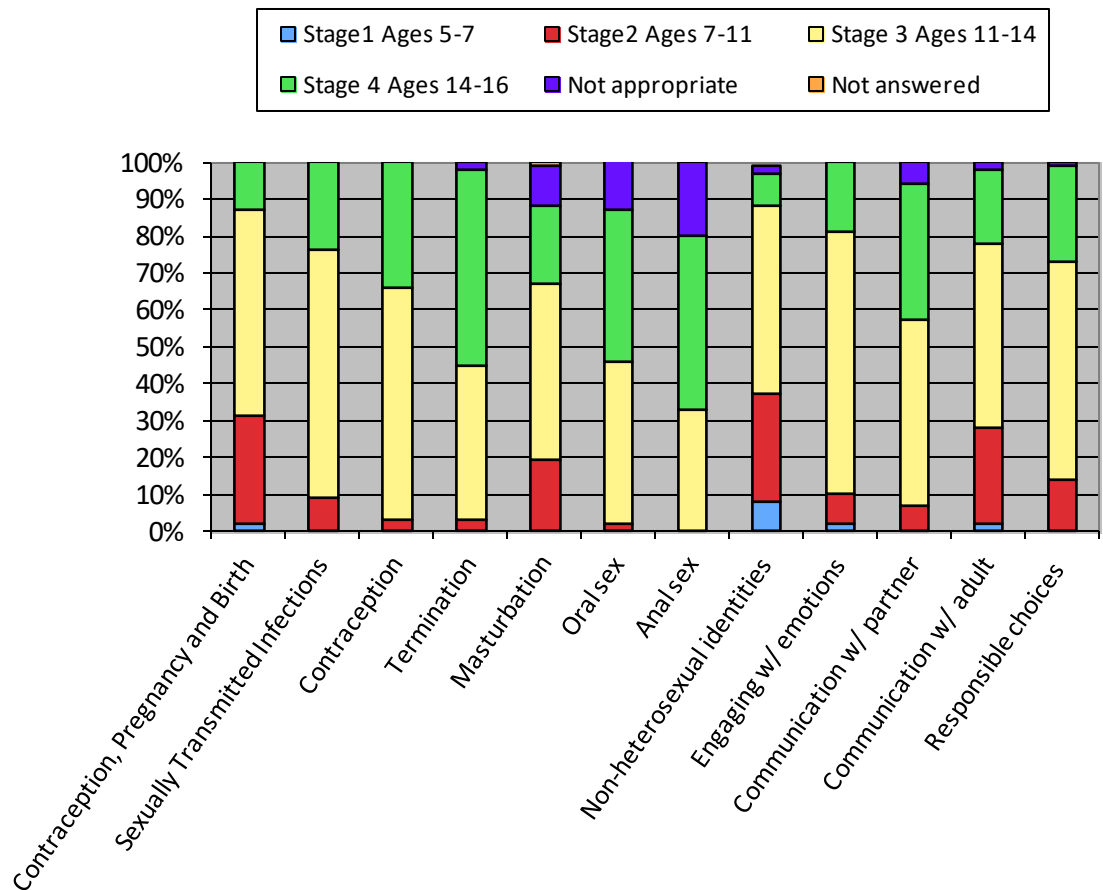
6.3.2.3 Topics Discussed in Sex Education: by Gender

In the final section of the survey, participants were asked if they recalled having discussions in the classroom on the list of topics provided. In Chart V, only the percentages that corresponded with 'Yes' responses are presented. This allows for comparison between young men and young women.

This survey did not ask for length or content of discussion on any given topic, but only whether topics were discussed at some point during their sex education. Typically, young men more frequently reported discussing topics in their sex education classes, the only exceptions being age of consent, contraception, family values, and anal sex. This is interesting in that Herlitz and Rehnman (2008) showed that verbal-episodic memory slightly favours young women, which could suggest an element of uncertainty in male's responses, but could also reinforce the idea of what is taught to the students versus what is shown (often in passing) to the students.

Chart V: Topics discussed in sex education: total sample by gender (yes responses only)
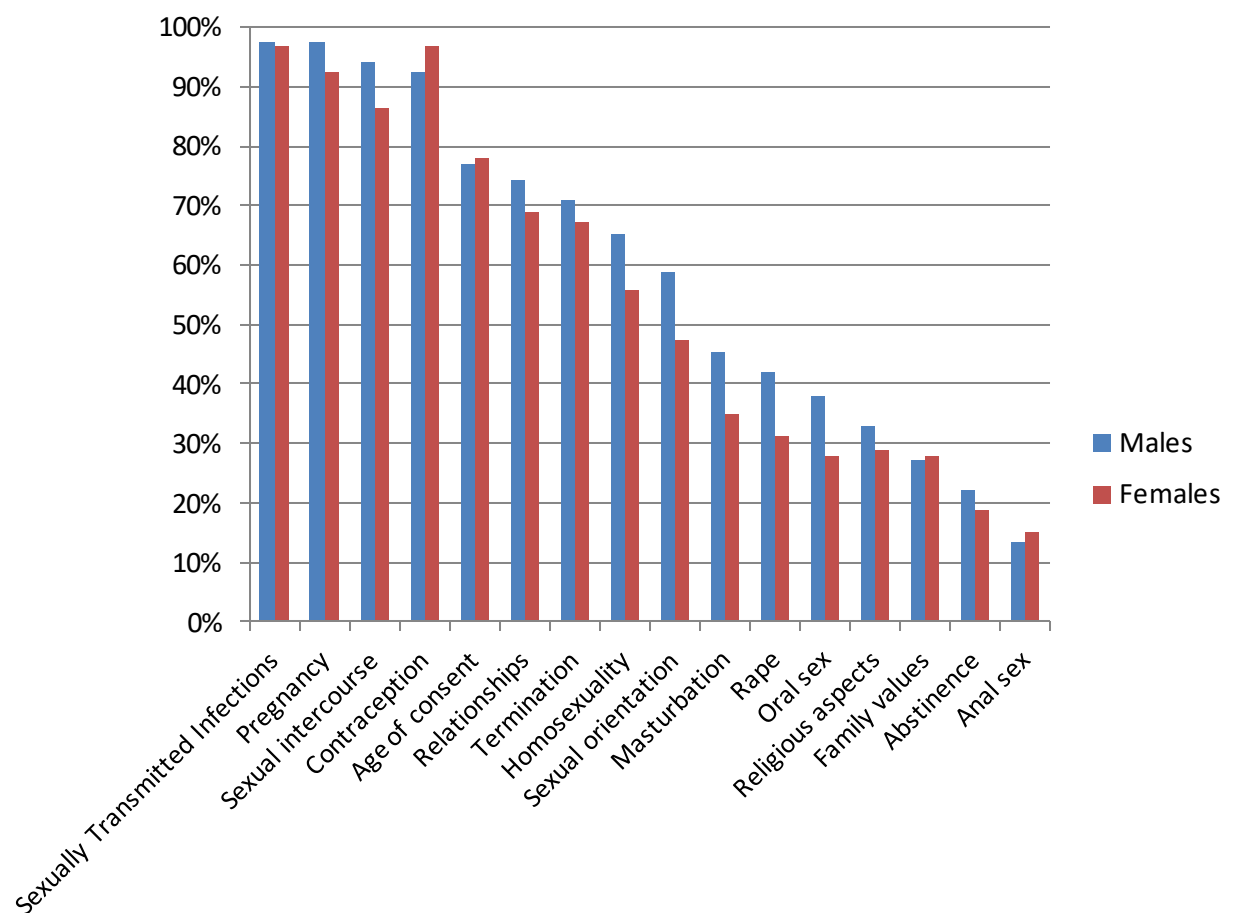
The more captivating statistics, however, revolve around the discussion of homosexuality, oral sex, age of consent, termination, anal sex, sexual orientation, and masturbation. For the topics of homosexuality and sexual orientation, approximately half of the respondents reported discussing both of these topics. This number is seemingly quite low when considering that the policy and guidance documents called for inclusive education.

However, as this is one of the key facets of this research, I will return to these results later. For the other topics mentioned, while not such a low number reported discussing them in class compared to sexual orientation and homosexuality, the coverage rates are still quite low (e.g. approximately 77% reported discussing age of consent, approximately 70% reported discussing termination and 14% reported discussing anal sex). This supports the information presented earlier in this thesis when the policies and materials that guide classroom learning were examined. While these topics were mentioned as important, they are not included in the National Curriculum and only termination and sexual orientation were present in the supplementary materials reviewed.

6.3.3 Survey Responses: by Sexual Orientation

For the majority of the statistics thus far, I have combined the 'rather important' and 'extremely important' responses into a single category. However, in this section, since the focus is on comparing LGB and straight individual's responses, a more thorough examination of each question is necessary. It is important to reiterate that only 19 participants identified as LGB, five did not answer this demographic question, two responded as 'other' and two responded with 'prefer not to answer'. While the sample of LGBT participants is smaller than ideal for a comparison, the corresponding percentage is consistent to data relating to same-sex experiences (Natsal-3, 2013), and listed as a reasonable estimate by the Stonewall (2014).

6.3.3.1 Perceptions of Importance of Various Aspects of Sex Education: by Sexual Orientation

The first question related to the perceived importance of sex education. The results were significantly different ($U(249) = 1506$, $Z = -2.514$, $p < .05$), with 87 percent of straight participants and 86 percent of LGB participants responding that sex education was important. This significance is attributed to a much larger difference in the degree of importance with 44 percent of straight participants compared with 79 percent of LGB participants responding that sex education is extremely important.

Table VIII: Importance of sex education: total sample results by sexual orientation

How important is sex education	Not important	Not really important	Indifferent	Rather important	Extremely important
Sexual orientation					
Not answered	0	0	20%	20%	60%
Straight	0	1%	13%	43%	44%
LGB	0	5%	5%	11%	79%
Other	0	0	50%	50%	0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	50%	0	50%

This perceived difference in the level of importance occurred on all of the importance-based questions, with LGB participants more likely to respond more favourably.

Another question assessing the importance of sex education in the curriculum, asked whether sex education should be compulsory. The reported differences were found to be statistically significant between the two groups (U(249) = 1607.5, Z = -2.120, p < .05). This is not only attributed to a higher level of importance overall from the LGB group but a much higher level of LGB participants responding with 'extremely important'.

Table IX: Importance of sex education: total sample results by sexual orientation

Sex education should be compulsory	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly agree
Sexual orientation					
Not answered	0	0	20%	40%	40%
Straight	4%	3%	10%	40%	43%
LGB	0	5%	11%	11%	74%
Other	0	0	0	50%	50%
Prefer not to answer	0	0	50%	0	50%

Similar to the last statistic, when asked about the importance of LGBT topics in sex education, the LGB group responded with 'extremely important' much more frequently (U(249) = 1430, Z =-2.679, p < .01). As Table X shows, 68 percent of straight participants responded with some degree of importance (25% being extremely important), while LGB participants responded with 79 percent and 63 percent respectively.

Table X: Importance of LGBT topics: total sample results by sexual orientation

Importance of LGBT topics	Not important	Not really important	Indifferent	Rather important	Extremely important
Sexual orientation					
Not answered	0	0	20%	60%	20%
Straight	6%	7%	20%	43%	25%
LGB	5%	0	16%	16%	63%
Other	0	0	0	50%	50%
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	50%	50%

The next two questions that relate to LGB young people were those that asked if discussing safe sex was important for both LGBT and straight young people and whether sex education focused more on straight young people than LGBT young people. As seen in Table XI, for the first question regarding the importance of safe sex for both LGBT young people and straight young people, all LGB participants either 'agree[d]' or 'strongly agree[d]', whereas 91 percent of straight participants did so (U(248) = 1656, Z = -2.162, p < .05). It is also worth noting that six straight participants either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with a further 13 responding as indifferent. This may suggest a heteronormative undertone for these 19 participants.

Table XI: Importance of discussing safe sex LGBT/straight: total sample results by sexual orientation

Safe sex LGBT/straight	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly agree
Sexual orientation					
Not answered	0	0	20%	40%	40%
Straight	1%	1%	6%	26%	66%
LGB	0	0	0	11%	90%
Other	0	0	0	50%	50%
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0	100%

For the question asking whether sex education focused more on straight couples than LGBT couples (Table XII), 68 percent of LGB participants agreed to some extent compared to 64 percent of straight respondents (U(249) = 2049, Z = -.536, n.s.). Interestingly, 21 percent of LGB participants disagreed, with the majority 'strongly disagree(ing)' compared with 10 percent of straight respondents. Both the 'other' group along with the 'prefer not to answer' group

completely agreed. This may suggest something about the type of school or even more so, the individual school that the participants attended.

Table XII: Sex Education is heteronormative: total sample results by sexual orientation

Sex education is heteronormative	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly agree
Sexual orientation					
Not answered	20%	0	0	40%	40%
Straight	3%	7%	26%	41%	23%
LGB	11%	11%	11%	32%	37%
Other	0	0	0	0	100%
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0	100%

The next significant result (Table XIII) concerns the question surrounding religious views affecting sexual decisions. LGB identified young people responded with 32 percent agreement versus only 14 percent of straight participants. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether there is a strong connection to identifying with a religion, as there was little variability on this demographic.

Table XIII: Religious values affect sexual decisions: total sample results by sexual orientation

Religious values and decisions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly agree
Sexual orientation					
Not answered	80%	0	20%	0	0
Straight	61%	12%	13%	7%	7%
LGB	53%	5%	11%	21%	11%
Other	100%	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	0	100%	0	0	0

As shown in Chart VI, there was a significant difference found between the straight group and the LGB group in that nearly a quarter of LGB respondents, 24 percent, indicated that they had been bullied, versus one percent of straight participants ($U(246) = 1187$, $Z = -5.576$, $p < .001$). There were also respondents from the 'other' (n = 1) and 'prefer not to answer' (n = 1) groups that reported being bullied. For the question regarding being bullied over sexual decisions, 14 percent of LGB participants agreed compared to five percent of straight participants ($U(246) = 1625.5$, $Z = -2.614$, $p < .01$).

Chart VI: Bullying over sexual decisions and orientation
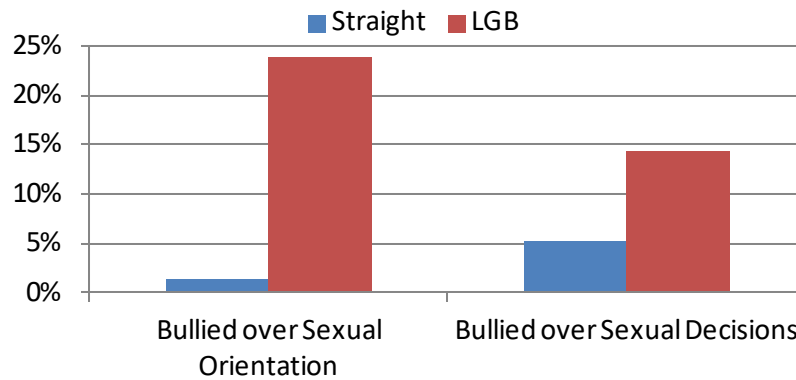
6.3.3.2 Acceptable Age and Perceived Appropriateness of Topics for Sex Education: by Sexual Orientation

Moving now to the second section of the survey, the appropriateness of discussing topics in the classroom, LGB participants typically reported that topics were appropriate at lower ages compared to their straight peers and were less likely to say that topics were inappropriate.

As seen in the charts VII and VIII, the majority of participants felt that most topics were appropriate by Key Stage 3, with only a handful of participants reporting that some topics were inappropriate.

Additionally, there was one interesting finding in the comparison between straight and LGB respondents. For the question relating to discussing non-heterosexual identities, 32 percent of LGB students replied that this could be discussed in Key Stage 1, with a further 37 percent in Key Stage 2, 26 percent in Key Stage 3 and five percent in Key Stage 4. Their straight identified counterparts were skewed to a slightly higher age bracket with the corresponding appropriateness ratings being eight percent, 26 percent, 49 percent, and 13 percent for Key Stages 1 through 4 ($U(251) = 1269$, $Z = -3.287$, $p < .01$). However, a further four percent ($n = 10$) of straight participants reported that they felt that the topic was completely inappropriate in this forum.

Chart VII: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: total sample straight responses only
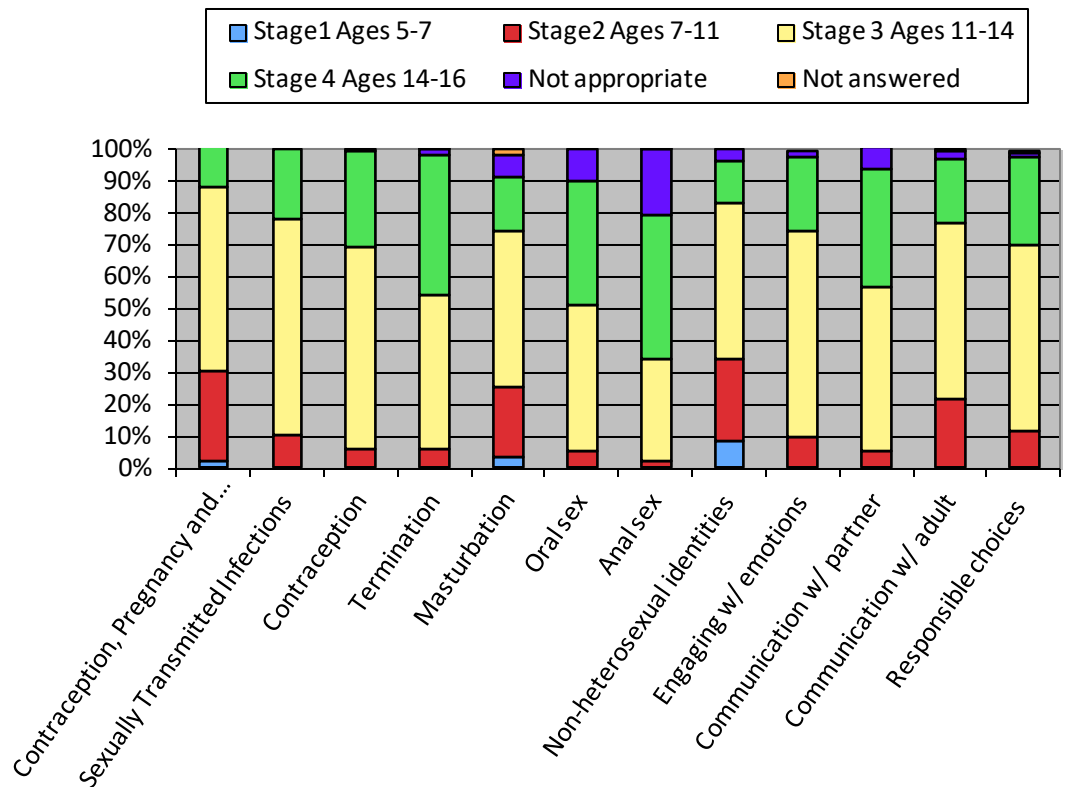
Chart VIII: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: total sample LGB responses only
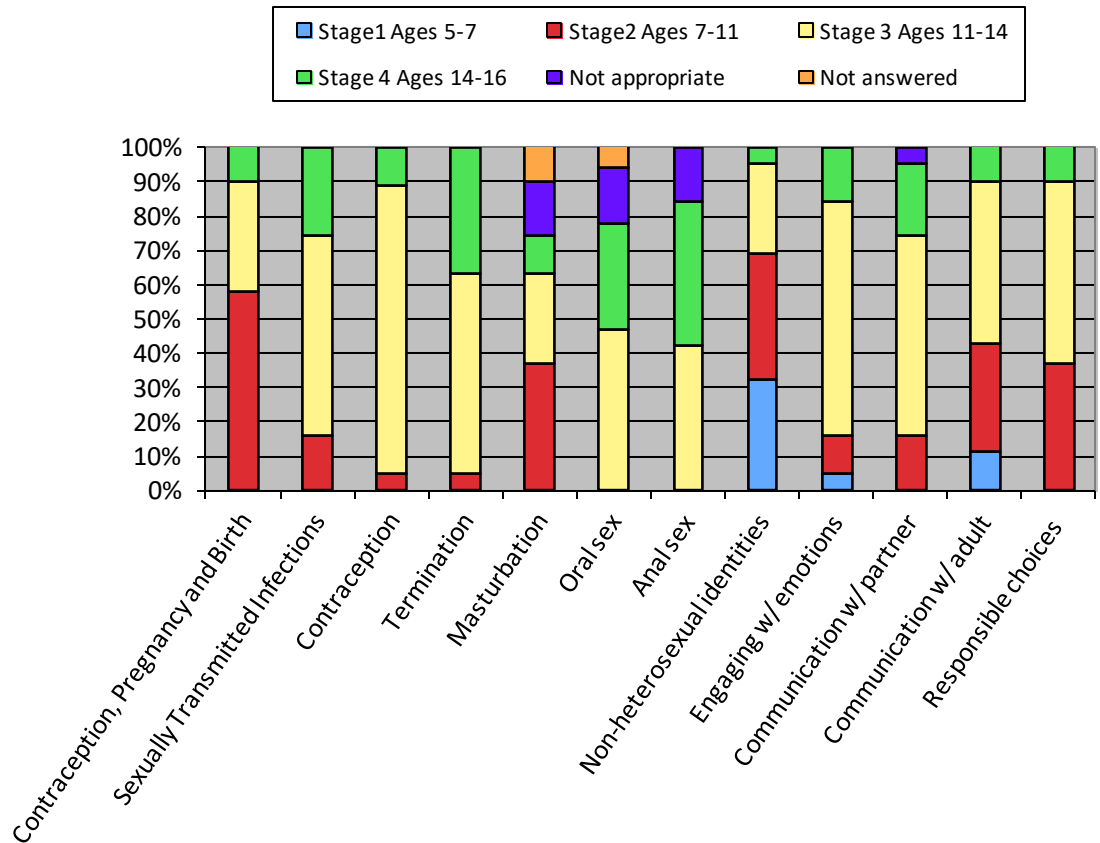
6.3.3.3 Topics Discussed in Sex Education: by Sexual Orientation

For the final section of the survey, LGB participants generally reported discussing more of the queried topics during sex education as shown below in Chart IX. It is evident that the majority of the topics included, with the exception of the biological topics, were recalled by less than 75 percent of the young people, with anal sex being the least reported topic by straight respondents and religious aspects and abstinence tying for the least discussed topics reported by LGB respondents. However, when considering homosexuality and sexual orientation, the results are higher than Palmer's (1994) findings, possibly suggesting progress in the classroom, but not to the standard expected for holistic sex education as set out earlier in this thesis.

Chart IX: Topics discussed in sex education: total sample by sexual orientation (yes responses only)
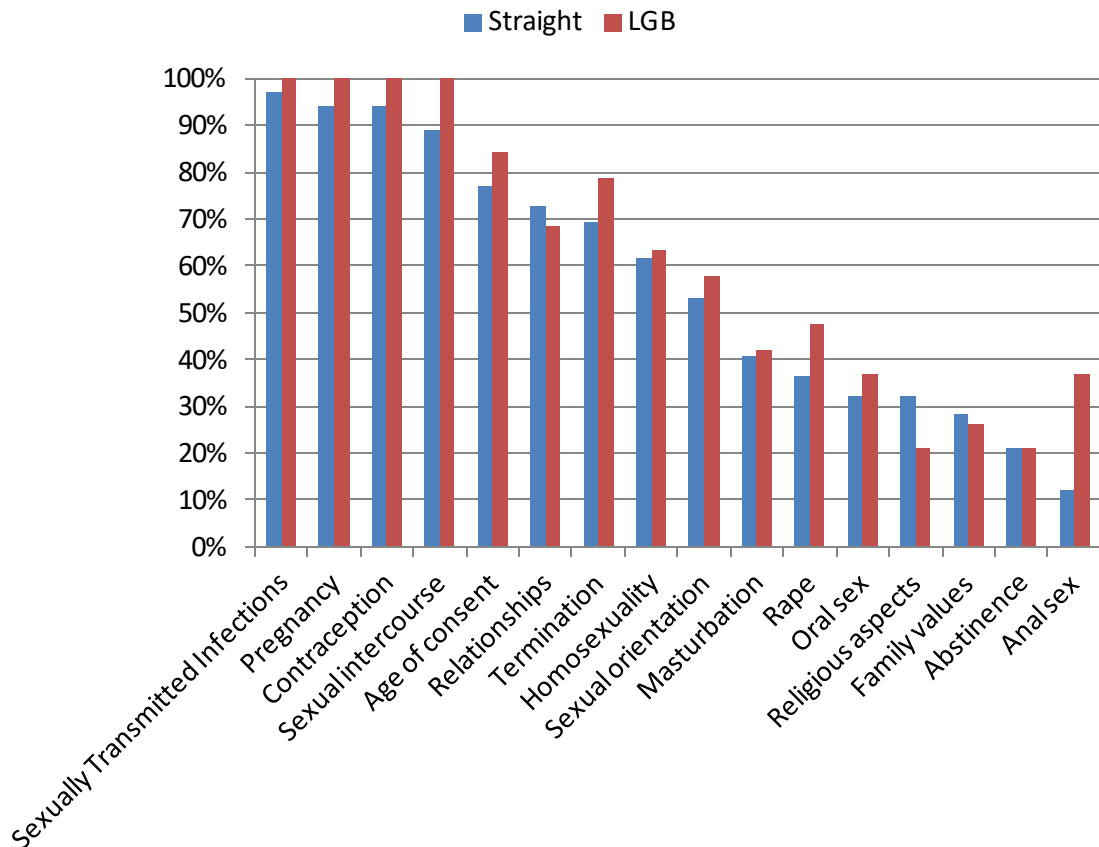
6.3.4 Survey Responses: by Institution

Education in state schools must follow the National Curriculum outlined earlier in this thesis, whereas public schools are exempt from this requirement. In the following sections, results are compared across the six schools, where three are state funded (P, C, and W), two

are public (B and R), and one is an alternative education provider (WH), to ascertain whether there are any key differences between these specific schools. To accomplish this, I do not focus so much on the demographic breakdown as the specific schools, with the exception of sexual orientation.

6.3.4.1 Perceptions of Importance of Various Aspects of Sex Education: by Institution

As this section of the survey focused on obtaining student's opinions, I present them as each school successively. This allows for a better understanding of any outliers that may be present in a specific school sample.

College P

In this school, sex education was viewed as an important part of education by the PSHE lead. Only one individual (4%) was indifferent, whereas everyone else felt that sex education was either 'rather' or 'extremely' important. This was the highest percentage of reported importance found within the six institutions surveyed. However, when asked about whether sex education should be compulsory, 81 percent agreed, placing this school next to last, only behind the alternative education provider.

The other questions that assessed feelings of homophobia and heteronormativity saw rather high levels of agreement. When asked about the importance of discussing LGBT topics in class, 89 percent responded that it was important while eight percent felt that it was not. This question was set alongside the question assessing whether discussing safe sex was important for both LGBT participants as well as straight participants. This was one of the only colleges to have 100 percent agreement, with 92 percent strongly agreeing. The final question relevant here was whether sex education focused more on straight couples than LGBT couples. While there was a high level of indifference across the schools, 65 percent of students agreed and eight percent disagreed, with this latter statistic being the second lowest in the sample of schools.

Finally, the two questions on bullying showed only one individual responding 'strongly agree' that they had been bullied and one further individual reporting indifference. These results corresponded to low percentages but still raise questions surrounding homophobic bullying in schools.

College WH

As the only alternative education provider and the smallest sample from an institution, the results are important as they relate to those who are often not in mainstream schools. First, 75 percent said that sex education was important but only 50 percent said that sex education should be compulsory. This was the lowest percentage supporting compulsory sex education in the sample.

In response to the questions relating to sexual orientation in sex education, 50 percent thought it was important to discuss LGBT topics in sex education, 63 percent agreed that discussing safe sex was important for straight participants as well as LGBT participants, and only 38 percent felt that sex education was heteronormative. These rank the lowest across all schools.

In addition, like several other colleges in the sample, there were no reports of bullying from the participants in the survey. Two did report indifference, which makes for the highest percentage in the sample, but this can be construed in many ways.

Finally, it is important to note again that these young people have been excluded from mainstream education. Therefore, the results must be read in context, as these young people are likely have a different relationship with education when compared to the rest of the young people surveyed.

College B

As the most prestigious[27] independent college in the sample, the results here are interesting in that the National Curriculum does not fully apply. Compared to the other colleges in the sample, this college placed mid-range on most of the questions. For instance, when asked about the importance of sex education, 82 percent felt that it was important with the remaining respondents indifferent. When asked whether sex education should be compulsory, 88 percent agreed. This was the second highest after the other private school in the sample.

This college had the second highest percentage (72%) of students stressing the importance of discussing LGBT topics in the classroom. A further 93 percent felt that sex education was important for both LGBT and straight participants and 68 percent felt that sex

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[27] Based on the 2013 GCSE League Tables collected by the Independent Schools Council and compiled into a database by The Telegraph

education was heteronormative. Both of these results place this college in the top half of the sample.

Finally, like half of the colleges in this sample, there were zero reports of bullying identified in the survey. Two reported indifference, but as previously mentioned, this can be interpreted in multiple ways.

College R

As the second private school in the sample and the only single-sex school, the results might be able to provide information on the schooling that is not evident in the state education system. However, it is important to reiterate that the sample from this school is small (n = 10).

Of the mainstream education providers, this college placed last with only 80 percent reporting that sex education is important, though 90 percent (the highest in the sample) agreed that sex education should be compulsory. In relation to the sexual orientation aspects of sex education, the statistics fluctuated significantly in agreement/importance. Sixty percent felt that it was important to discuss LGBT topics, though 100 percent agreed that discussing safe sex was important for both straight and LGBT young people. Following this, 70 percent said that sex education placed more focus on straight couples. These numbers are difficult to interpret but there appears to be a degree of heteronormativity perceived and presented. Lastly, on the two bullying questions, all respondents 'strongly disagreed'. This was the only college that had unanimous results for these questions.

College C

This college provided the largest number of research participants, comprising just under half of the total sample. This is also one of the two schools that fell outside of a major urban area in this study. In general, sex education was viewed as important by 87 percent of the students. However, this was one of only two schools that had any students respond with 'not important'. In this case, only one student responded as such. This is followed up by 83 percent of students agreeing that sex education should be made compulsory.

With regards to the sexual orientation questions, 70 percent felt LGBT topics were important, 93 percent agreed that safe sex discussions were important regardless of orientation and 65 percent felt that sex education was heteronormative, placing this college

near the bottom on this final question, which suggests that this school does place some emphasis on holistic sex education.

This was one of three schools where bullying was reported. Eight students responded that they had been bullied over their sexual decisions (7%) and five students bullied over their sexual orientation (4%). This school also saw the highest number of 'indifferent' responses to these questions, with nine and five respectively.

College W

This was the final college in which surveys were distributed, and was the other college that fell outside of a major urban area. In this college, a high percentage of students (87%) reported that sex education was important, although percentages dropped slightly when asked whether it should be compulsory; 81 percent agreed. The former statistic placed this college in the top half for the corresponding question, whereas the college fell to the bottom half for the latter statistic.

This school showed some conservative tendencies in the responses to the questions on sexual orientation. Only 60 percent of students felt that LGBT topics were important to discuss. A further 89 percent agreed that safe sex discussions were important for both straight and LGBT students. Lastly, 68 percent agreed that sex education was heteronormative. The first two statistics placed the college last among the mainstream schools and the third statistic placed it second.

Finally, three participants reported being bullied in each of the questions covering the subject. This corresponds to six percent reporting bullying, the second highest in the sample after College C.

6.3.4.2 Acceptable Age and Perceived Appropriateness of Topics for Sex Education: by Institution

This section compares the perceived appropriateness across each of the colleges in the sample. Although it would be possible to create charts to compare each college on each topic, this may give a false sense of the data as the sample sizes are quite varied. Thus, each set of results is presented by college to make it easier to identify any pertinent themes.

College P was neither the most conservative nor most liberal in terms of assessing appropriateness of topics for the classroom. While it was clear that the majority felt that Key Stage 3 was the ideal starting point for many of these topics in the classroom, there was some support for earlier sex education as seen by the percentages in the Key Stage 2 column. The most interesting finding from this sample was the lack of support for contraception being broached sooner in the classroom. This suggests that there may be some uncertainty about the age of first sexual intercourse.

Chart X: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: College P sample
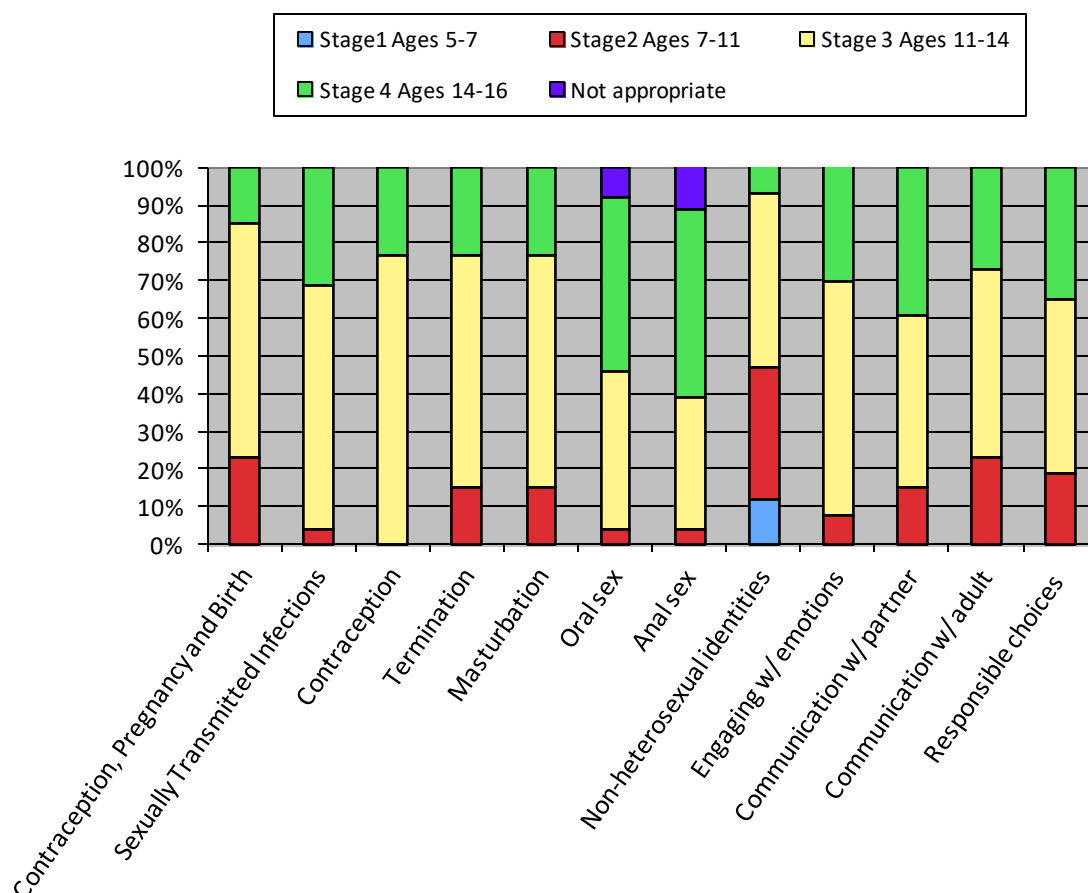
Only one topic was felt appropriate for younger students, non-heterosexual identities, with a further two topics, oral and anal sex, being labelled as not appropriate by a few students. These results fall in line with current practice in that Key Stage 3 is the point in which compulsory components of sex education enter the curriculum.

As the only alternative education provider (College W), it is important to examine the findings, but it is also important to understand the sample. As many of these participants may be different from their peers in mainstream education in behaviour and decision making

abilities, both of which are relevant when discussing anything related to sex, there could be many anomalies, which are difficult to assess in a small sample. Therefore, it is interesting to see some of the differences when compared to the other colleges.

Chart XI: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: College W sample
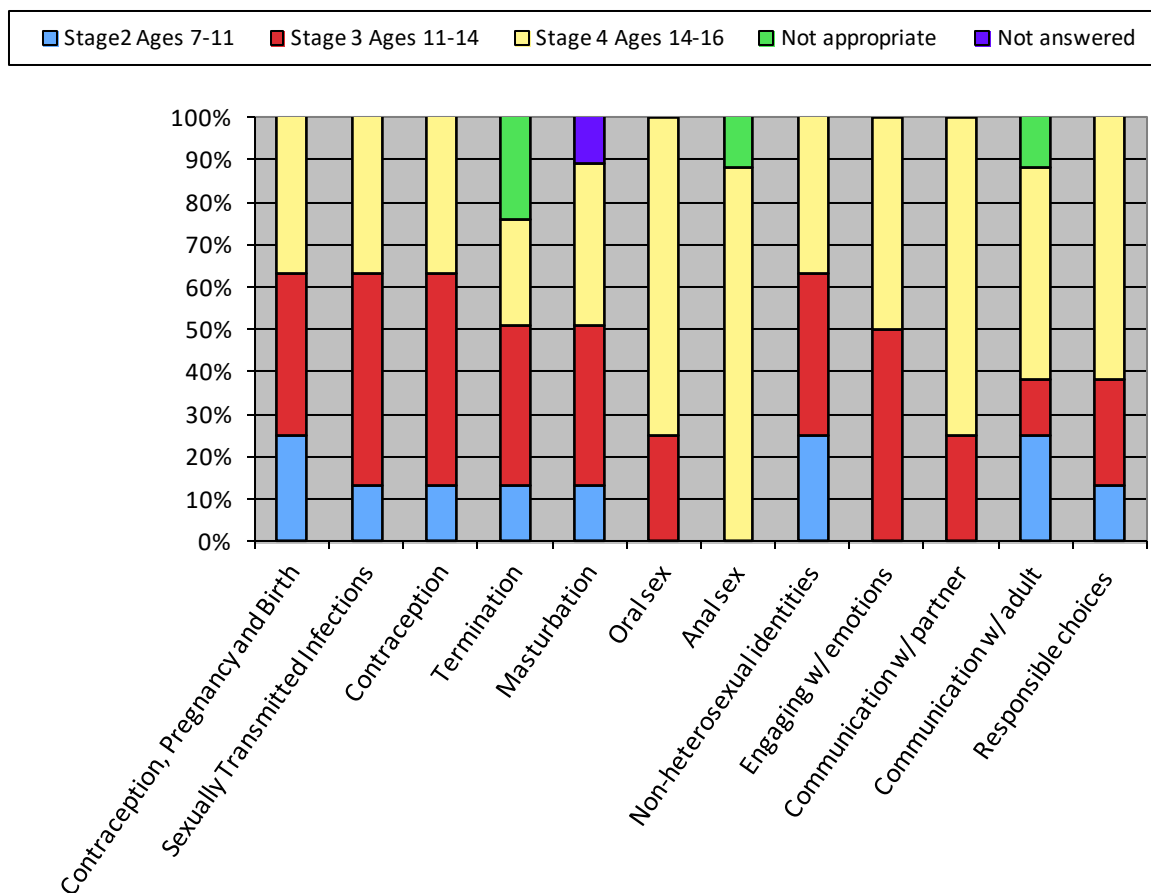
As seen in Chart XI, Key Stage 4 was most frequently selected as the appropriate level for topic inclusion in four cases, with a further four topics tying with Key Stage 3. This suggests reservations which, when considering that these participants are statistically more likely than their more well-off peers to become pregnant or contract an STI at a younger age or not seek appropriate help for sexual health, leads to the question of how sex education can be effectively pitched to this audience.

College B (Chart XII) showed a mix of perceptions, which may characterise the uncertainty of sex education within society. While there were respondents who clearly thought that sex education could begin in the early years of primary school, there were some who felt that there was a limit to what was appropriate for the classroom. As seen across the

colleges, Key Stage 3 is still the most frequent level listed for many of these topics. In addition, we see that oral and anal sex are the two topics most frequently felt inappropriate.

Chart XII: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: College B sample
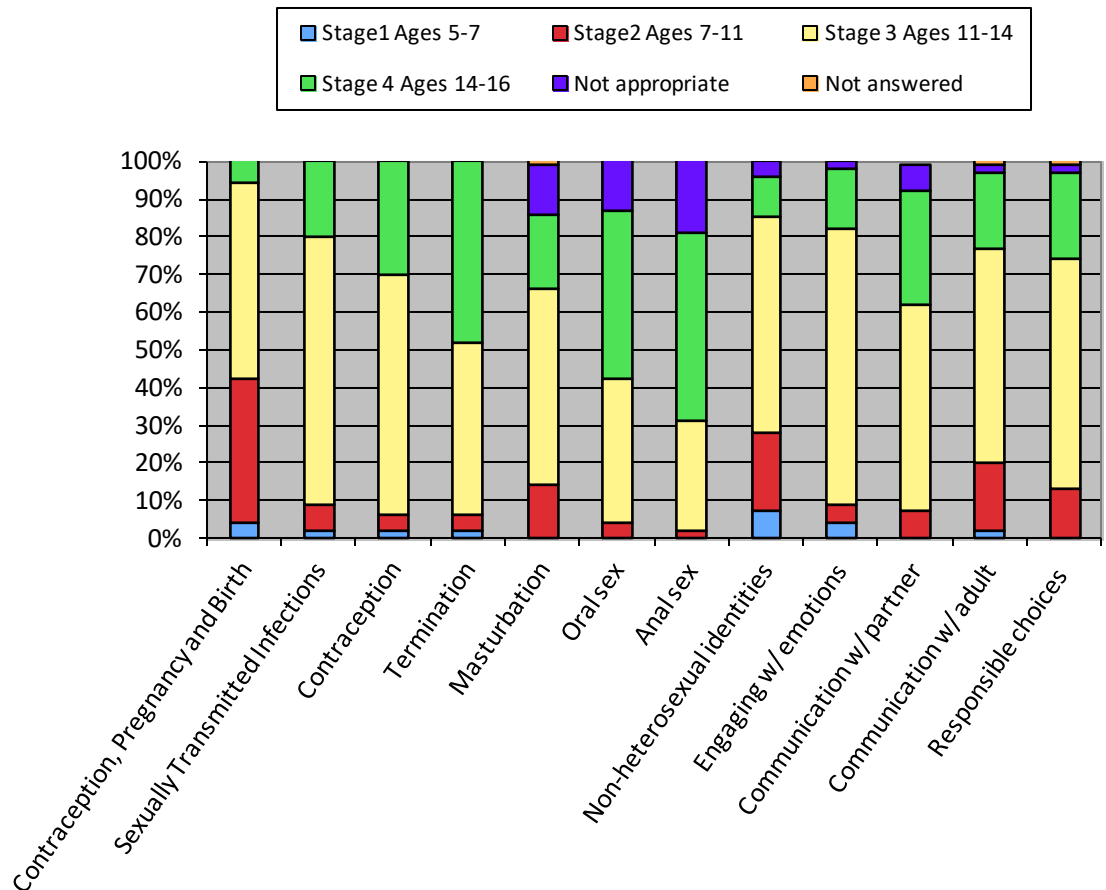
There is one other key result that requires mentioning here, and that relates to the perceived appropriateness of non-heterosexual identities. While only two individuals ticked that it was inappropriate, this could be an indication of the degree of which ignorance or homophobia still exists in society. As this is a recurring theme in these findings, this result will be revisited in the discussion.

Recalling that College R (Chart XIII) was a single-sex college, it is interesting to see the reservations in talking about sex. Nearly every topic was only deemed appropriate starting in Key Stage 3. This is coupled with many respondents feeling that several topics were inappropriate at any age. It is unsurprising to see anal and oral sex, as these have generally been deemed inappropriate in several of the colleges. However, to see masturbation, engaging with emotions, and communication with partners and parents/health care providers as inappropriate topics leads to the question of why these young people would not want to talk

about this in class. Considering that this is a single-sex college (young women), in the case of masturbation, there may be a gendered hesitation to want to discuss the topic, especially if the instructor is male. For the other topics, it is possible that these statistics are an anomaly and may simply reflect a very small sample size.

Chart XIII: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: College R sample
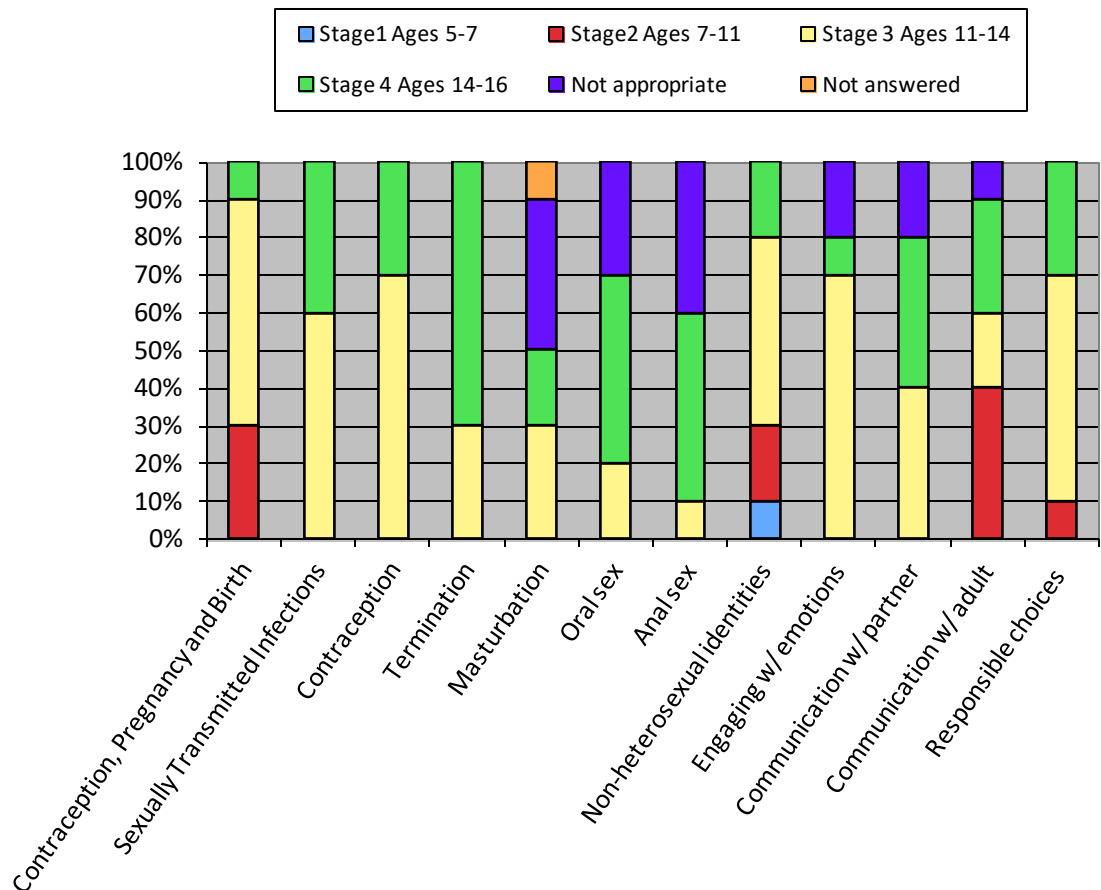
In the college with the largest participation, College C (Chart XIV), there is an all-encompassing spread of responses. As noted multiple times thus far, oral and anal sex were deemed inappropriate by several students, yet there are students at this college that realistically think that sex education could start in primary school. Again, there are some respondents saying that education on how to talk with partners and parents/health professionals is not appropriate for the curriculum.

It is also important to note that this is only one of two schools in the sample that had participants responding that non-heterosexual identities as a topic was inappropriate for school. In this instance, the rate of disapproval was highest of all of the colleges. As with College B, I will revisit this in the discussion chapter as this phenomenon has occurred in two

colleges that fall on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of academic achievement and geographical location.

Chart XIV: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: College C sample
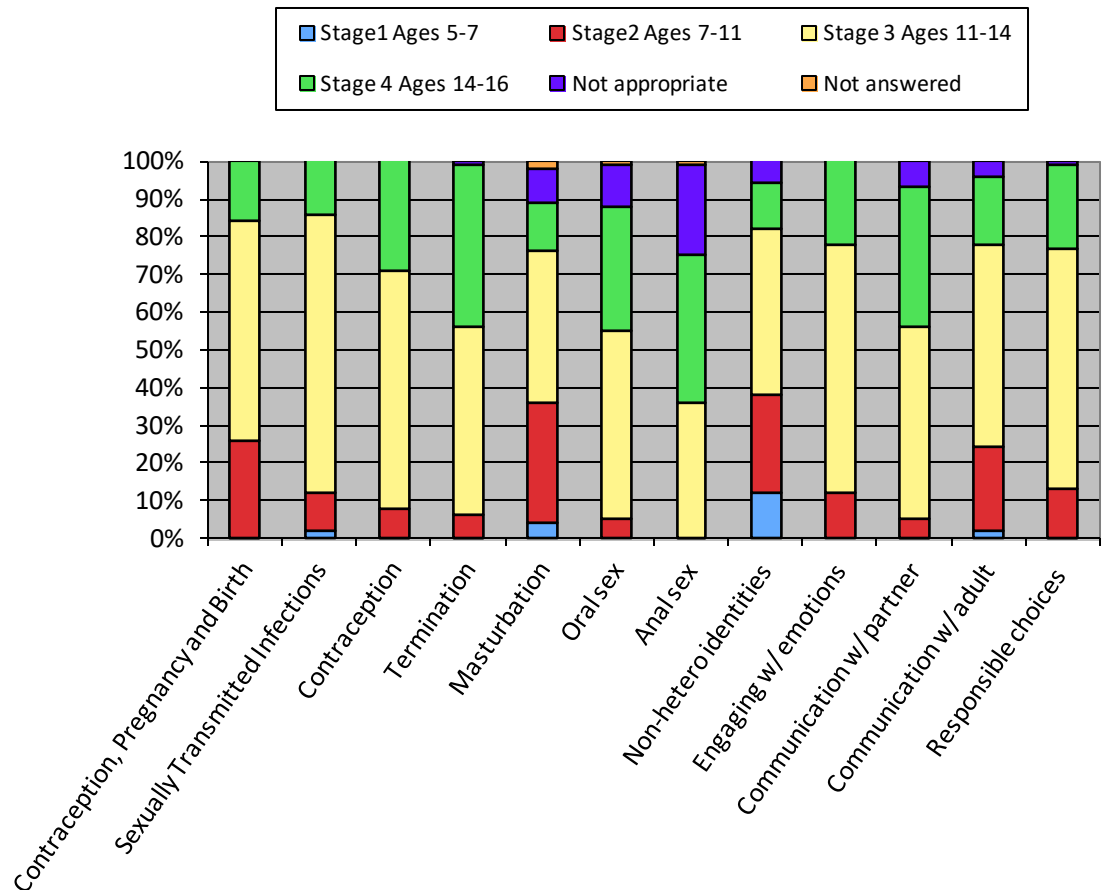
College WH (Chart XV) followed the trends of many of the other schools. Key Stage 2 was deemed appropriate for the beginning of sex education, although the majority of the students in this education provider still responded that Key Stage 3 was most appropriate for all of these topics to be introduced into the classroom. However, non-heterosexual identities, one of the focal topics of this research, was deemed appropriate as early as Key Stage 2 by a tenth of the sample. While this is not an overly high percentage, it does demonstrate that there is support for early education on sexual identities, which corroborates the data provided in the next chapter.

Chart XV: Appropriateness for sex education at varying levels: College WH sample
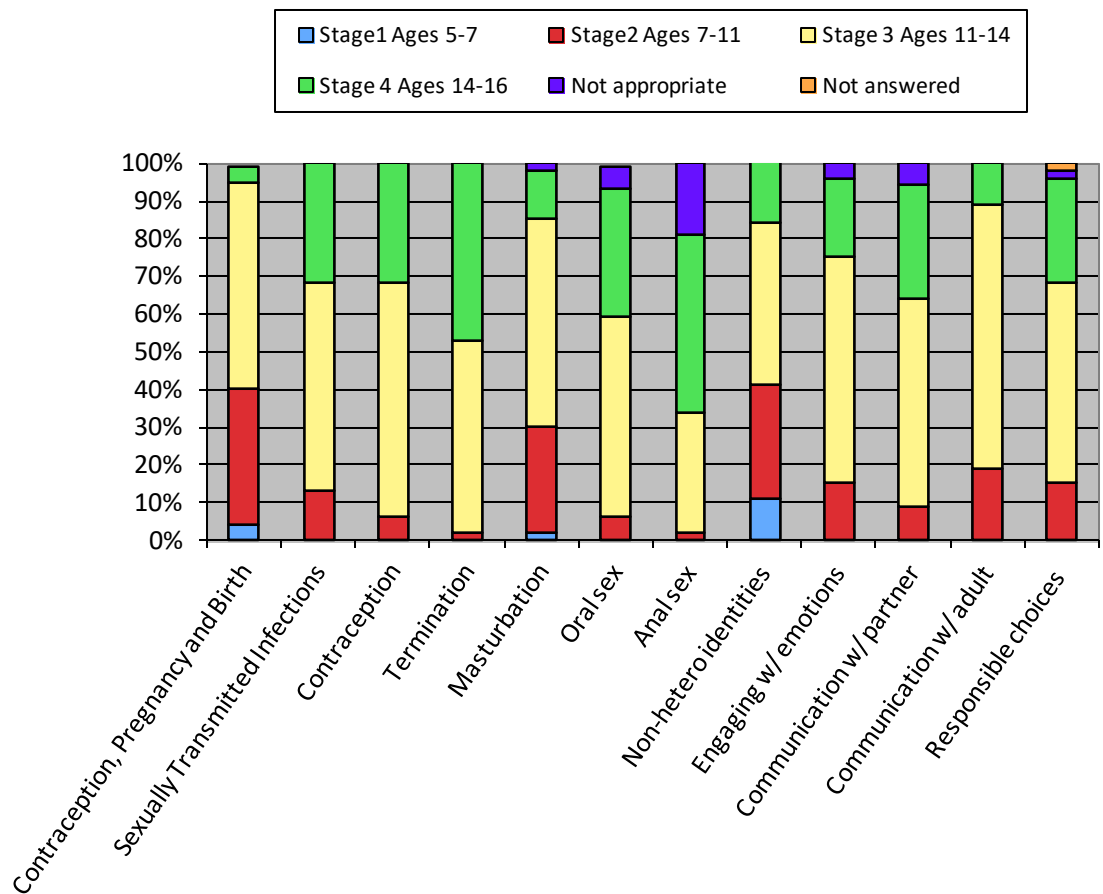
6.3.4.3 Topics Discussed in Sex Education: by Institution

Unlike the previous two sections where individual college data was examined independently, in this section, student's responses on discussed topics from every institution are presented as Table XIV for comparison. It is important to note that these results may not be indicative of the secondary schools attached to these colleges, as some students will have come from other secondary schools, especially the public schools that are more selective and competitive.

Table XIV: Topics discussed in sex education: total sample by college (yes responses only)

Topic Yes responses only	College P	College WH	College B	College R	College C	College W
STIs	100%	88%	95%	100%	98%	98%
Relationships	54%	88%	66%	50%	92%	45%
Sexual intercourse	100%	63%	86%	80%	92%	92%

Topic Yes responses only	College P	College WH	College B	College R	College C	College W
Rape	15%	75%	35%	10%	46%	26%
Pregnancy	96%	88%	89%	100%	96%	98%
Homosexuality	44%	88%	60%	60%	71%	45%
Oral sex	50%	50%	38%	10%	27%	32%
Age of consent	65%	75%	64%	80%	90%	72%
Contraception	96%	75%	91%	100%	98%	94%
Family values	8%	63%	33%	50%	29%	19%
Anal sex	28%	50%	13%	10%	13%	4%
Religious aspects	12%	75%	29%	30%	38%	19%
Termination	54%	75%	67%	30%	80%	66%
Sexual orientation	48%	50%	53%	70%	61%	34%
Abstinence	4%	50%	24%	40%	23%	11%
Masturbation	31%	75%	24%	0	46%	55%

In this table, the same general trends span the colleges. Typically, biological/medical topics are covered and social topics (e.g. relationships, rape, homosexuality, etc.) are mentioned only in moderation. Aside from this, a few results stand out: First, college C typically had a higher percentage of students reporting that questioned topics are covered. College WH also reports rather high figures for some topics, which is a bit surprising considering that students that attend this institution do so because they are excluded from mainstream education. Therefore, it may be that this education provider reiterates SRE, as there is a higher prevalence of unwanted/teenage pregnancies and STIs in marginalised groups, with this being one of them.

6.3.4.4 Differences in Type of School Attended

Although it would have been interesting to compare those attending a religious backed institution, I was unable to obtain a sample from that type of institution. However, I have adequate sample numbers to compare the state-funded schools to the independent schools in my sample. This refers to my third research question which seeks to find out whether there are any differences between the type of school a young person attends and their views (and also recollections) of sex education.

After conducting Mann-Whitney U tests, few significant differences between the two samples were found, and none on any of the aspects relating to sexual orientation. The four questions where significant differences were found were on the importance of discussing medical aspects (STIs) in sex education ($U(249) = 5220.5$, $Z = -2.024$, $p < .05$), religious values affecting sexual decisions ($U(249) = 4770$, $Z = -2.902$, $p < .01$), appropriateness of talking about masturbation ($U(249) = 4199$, $Z = -3.615$, $p < .001$), and appropriateness of talking about oral sex ($U(249) = 4894$, $Z = -2.601$, $p < .01$). For these results, the state schools were more likely to respond with a higher proportion of agreement and strong agreement to discussing biological aspects in sex education, less likely to respond that religious values affected their sexual decisions, and more likely to report that both masturbation and oral sex should be discussed earlier than their independent school peers. While none of these indicates any major difference between these two types of colleges, the idea of differences in schools re-emerges in the next chapter through discussion of the qualitative data.

6.3.5 Relationship between Variables

This section further explores whether there were any additional trends that may have occurred in the data. These trends may give additional insight into how sex education is currently perceived by young people. I also present tests to further assess whether the type of school has an impact and whether sexual orientation in itself is not the key aspect, instead, whether it is the perceived importance of sexual orientation that affects students' opinions. This last point is followed up with considerations of whether having the discussion about sexual orientation and homosexuality can influence an individual's perception of sex education, or at the very least, the topics that are considered more *taboo*.

6.3.5.1 Additional Trends in the Data

The following subsections detail further analyses that were performed around questions relating to sexual orientation and sexuality in the survey. These questions asked specifically about the importance of discussing LGBT topics, the perceptions of appropriateness of non-heterosexual topics in class, whether individuals were taught about these topics, and finally, one that is socially tangentially related, anal sex, discussed further later in this chapter. This information serves to provide additional evidence of perception

about sex education, more specifically addressing the way in which sexual orientation is affected and has an effect in the classroom.

6.3.5.1.1 Sexual Orientation in the Data

This section discusses my findings on correlation tests that were conducted on levels of importance and appropriateness questions. These were compared for the questions relevant to the research questions that seek to answer how participants feel about sex education and how this affects upon perceptions of sexual orientation in the classroom. I expected to find that participants who are sympathetic to the LGBT questions consistently responded in this manner. This was likely to hold true irrespective of sexual orientation, but prove to be more prominent in the LGB group's responses. Thus, I present the findings of the total sample first (where applicable) and then broken down by sexual orientation group.

When examining the questions specifically aimed at sexual orientation in sex education, there were unexpected: First, there was a moderate correlation between the perceived importance of discussing LGBT topics in the classroom and the agreement level of the question asking about the importance of safe sex irrespective of sexual orientation ($r(257) = .50$, $p < .01$). While this is still moderately strong, I would have expected to see a stronger correlation between those who are in agreement with the importance of discussing LGBT topics would also be in agreement with the notion that sex education is important regardless of one's sexual orientation. However, it is possible that the structure of the measurement scale led to this reduced correlation due to the likelihood that one might select 'very important' versus 'rather important' for the second question, leading to the discrepancy observed here. Second, there was no statistically significant correlation found between the previous two questions and the question pertaining to sex education being heteronormative. This suggests that while it is important to discuss LGBT issues in the classroom, people in this sample do not similarly feel, to the same extent, that sex education is heteronormative.

Next, the groups were split by sexual orientation and the correlations were conducted to ascertain whether this previous data held true across both groups. I found that the moderate correlation found previously only held true with the straight identified group ($r(229) = .516$, $p < .001$) as there was no statistically significant correlation between the importance of discussing LGBT topics and the importance of discussing safe sex irrespective of sexual orientation for LGB individuals.

Several statistically significant weak to moderate correlations were also found concerning the appropriateness of discussing non-heterosexual identities in the classroom. For the straight respondents, this aforementioned variable was negatively correlated to the importance of discussing LGBT topics (r(230) = -.345, p < .001) and the importance of discussing safe sex for LGBT and straight people (r(229) = -.290, p < .001). The appropriateness of non-heterosexual identities was also positively correlated with the appropriateness of anal sex (r(229) = .377, p < .001). For the LGB identified participants, the appropriateness of non-heterosexual identities was moderately correlated to both the importance of discussing LGBT topics (r(17) = -.457, p < .05) and the appropriateness of anal sex (r(17) = .521, p < .05), but not the importance of discussing safe sex for LGBT and straight couples. There was also a moderate negative correlation in the LGB group between the appropriateness of discussing anal sex and the importance of discussing safe sex for LGBT and straight couples (r(17) = -.607, p < .01) which was not found in the straight identified group.

There is one final theme that is more prevalent in the next chapter that merits an introduction at this point - bullying. For both groups, there was a correlation between being bullied over their sexual orientation and being bullied over their sexual decisions. In the straight identified group, there was a moderate positive correlation (r(224) = .621, p < .001). For the LGB identified group, this correlation was stronger (r(17) = .818, p < .001).

6.3.5.1.2 Influence of Education on Perceptions of Sexual Orientation

In this final section of the chapter, I examine whether there is a difference in the population based on whether participants recalled receiving education on homosexuality and sexual orientation in their sex education and whether perceptions of earlier inclusion of non-heterosexual identities might indicate something different about those participants. These specific topics were investigated because there is a relevant question around whether there might be a connection between being exposed to homosexuality and sexual orientation and the perceived importance of other facets of sex education, including whether topics such as these should be discussed earlier in the curriculum.

When Mann-Whitney U tests were run comparing those who reported having been taught about homosexuality and those who reported that they had not received any information, there was a significant difference for the question that assessed whether sex education focused more on straight couples than LGBT couples (heteronormativity),

(U(255) = 5217.0, Z = 17620.0, p < .001). The descriptive statistics indicate a much larger percentage of respondents who were not taught about homosexuality, agreeing with the heteronormative statement.

However, when running the same test comparing those who reported being taught about sexual orientation, versus those that were not, there were four questions that were found to be significantly different, three of which are salient and focus on the prevailing theme of sexual orientation. The first question covered whether participants thought that sex education focused more on straight couples than LGBT couples (U(257) = 6223, Z = -3.539, p < .001). Similarly, to the finding related to discussing homosexuality, participants who did not discuss sexual orientation in the classroom felt that the curriculum was heteronormative. The second relationship dealt with whether participants were bullied over their sexual orientation (U(254) = 7193, Z = -2.376, p < .05). Generally, those who were not taught about sexual orientation reported higher levels of indifference and agreement to being bullied compared to those who reported discussing sexual orientation in the classroom. Finally, the third relationship was then found on the appropriateness of discussing anal sex in sex education (U(256) = 6811, Z = -2.467, p < .05). Counter-intuitively, those who did not talk about sexual orientation were more likely to respond that anal sex was appropriate for the classroom.

In addition to the previous idea that being educated on certain topics surrounding sexual orientation may affect opinions on how these sensitive topics should be approached, it is possible that the key indicator lies in preconceived notions. Regardless of whether sexual orientation was discussed in schools, it is highly probable that everyone will have been exposed to the idea through other learning opportunities and the media (Turnbull et al. 2008). Thus, maybe any embodied opinions formed before or during the onset of sex education, are contributory to one's perceptions about other topics that may be broached in sex education. To look at this specifically, I recoded the question on the appropriateness of teaching non-heterosexual identities in the classroom into three groups, those that feel Key Stage 1 or 2 is appropriate for learning about non-heterosexual identities (early), those that agree with Key Stage 3 or 4 (late) and those who feel that it is completely inappropriate (not appropriate).

When running Mann-Whitney U tests comparing the early versus the late groups, there were several significant differences. There were significant differences for all of the importance-based questions (e.g. discussing safe sex is important for both young men and young women, discussing biological aspects are important, etc.). For most of the opinion-based questions (e.g. Family values do not affect my decisions concerning sex; Giving young

people information about how to obtain and use condoms and other contraception makes it more likely that they will practice safe sex now or in the future, etc.), there were no significant differences except for the questions on whether sex education should be compulsory/optional. Finally, there was a significant difference for all of the questions asking students to rank when (Key Stage/age) they felt the topic was appropriate for the classroom (e.g. STIs, termination, oral sex, etc.).

When comparing the 'early group' with those that responded that sexual orientation was not appropriate to be discussed in school, the results showed significant differences with only half of the questions. Four of the questions assessing heteronormativity in the classroom showed statistical significance. These included: One, the question asking about the importance of discussing LGBT topics (U(104) = 128, Z = -4.036, p < .001), two, the statement relating to the importance of discussing safe sex for both straight and LGBT young people (U(104) = 201, Z = -3.679, p < .001), three, the appropriateness of discussing anal sex in the classroom (U(104) = 147.5, Z = -3.892, p < .001), and four, the appropriateness of discussing non-heterosexual identities in the classroom (U(104) = 0, Z = -6.176, p < .001). In all four of these questions, the early advocates replied more favourably than their late counterparts with higher levels of agreement and more support for earlier teaching of other related topics.

Finally, the third comparison is between the 'late group' and the 'not appropriate' group. This comparison showed similar results, on the same variables, listed in the preceding group comparison. The results were: One, on the question asking about the importance of discussing LGBT topics (U(166) = 345.5, Z = -3.080, p < .01), two, on the statement relating to the importance of discussing safe sex for both straight and LGBT young people (U(166) = 400.5, Z = -3.004, p < .01), and three, on the appropriateness of discussing anal sex in the classroom (U(165) = 512.5, Z = -1.973, p < .05). The results are the same as reported for the previous comparison. The responses of the late group showed the same tendencies when compared to the not appropriate group.

6.4 Discussion

Overall, these data demonstrate many similarities to other research examining sex education (see Alldred and David 2007); however, there are some interesting results that need further discussion. I begin by looking at broad themes that emerged and then look at some of the more intricate relationships that were, or in some cases were not, found to be significant.

In general, the majority of students felt that sex education was important and the listed topics were all important to cover in the classroom. Of these topics, the largest consensus was on the inclusion of STIs but this may have been influenced by the fact that students are inundated with public health messages in educational settings, evidenced by the content required in the National Curriculum and the results discussed within. This is also reflected in the social topics included, as relationships and LGBT topics saw a higher proportion of students responding with indifference or 'not important' to some degree, which may suggest a heteronormative attitude towards sex education, as these views were more prevalent in the straight identified group. These views were also more prevalent in those that said discussing non-heterosexual identities should occur later or not at all in the curriculum suggesting that those who wish to see non-heterosexual identities discussed in Key Stages 1 and 2 are generally more receptive to the idea that sexual orientation has a place in the classroom. This may be because they themselves were educated earlier on the subject, but unfortunately, this was not asked in this survey. It cannot be assumed that students viewed these topics, especially the question on LGBT topics, unfavourably because predominately this was not the case. However, this does reinforce the notion that biology still prevails in sex education and is similar to the results obtained by a YouGov poll orchestrated with The Sun (2011) for the public. Nevertheless, we must be cautious in describing these results as proof of the current content of the curriculum as there are alternative possibilities ranging from a lack of recall, to personal constructions of topics being inconsistent in research.

Students also responded that sex education should be compulsory and inclusive of everyone irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. However, there was a discrepancy between the results of two questions that examined similar topics. Young people agreed that it was important to educate LGBT young people about safe sex, yet significantly less responded that it was important to discuss LGBT topics. My only explanations for this are that some students may not perceive LGBT 'issues' as an academic concern, but rather a socio-political concern in that gay rights fall outside the realm of education - or possibly a misunderstanding of the question - but these are speculations.

Additionally, it was surprising to find that many participants felt that giving information on sex encourages sex at a younger age. This has been refuted in the past (Baldo et al. 1993; Walker 2001, p. 133; Goldman 2008, p. 421) but the myth prevails in the classroom, suggesting that young people are never actually informed why sex education is important, except for the public health messages that are conveyed.

Next, it was interesting to find the number of participants who did not feel that family values affected their decisions on sex. As discussed in Chapter 3, parents are to be actively involved in the implementation of sex education in schools though consultation on the curriculum. This leads to the question of why is this necessary inclusion when students reportedly do not care about their family's values. One answer to this question lies in the amount of literature that suggests many young people do learn family values in terms of relationships and expectations from their parents (Jaccard and Dittus 2000; Dittus and Jaccard 2000; Davis and Friel 2001; Mcneely et al. 2002; Fingerson 2005). Each of these studies demonstrate varying levels of influence but generally there is a link between the level of communication and expectations from the parents on the debut of sexual activity, though Wellings and colleagues (2001, p. 1847) contest that those who learn sex education from school were less likely to partake in underage sex than those whose main source of information was from family or friends. While this literature is useful in understanding the relationship between parents and their children, it is important to recall the discrepancy reported by young people regarding their parents' level of interaction regarding sex (Walker 2001, p. 135). This again is problematic when policies suggest that sex education should start and continue in the home, especially if parents lack the appropriate knowledge.

The second part of the survey contained information on the appropriateness of discussing a selection of topics in sex education. Generally, students felt that many topics could be taught earlier than currently mandated under the National Curriculum[28], with LGB identified people typically leading the vote for earlier inclusion. This confirms previous findings (Woodcock, Stenner and Ingham 1992, p. 523; Measor et al. 2000, p. 159; Buston and Wight 2002, p. 240; Buston and Wight 2006, p. 142; Blake 2008, p. 37). This is deduced from the idea that many of the topics listed on the survey are included in Key Stages 3 and 4 where compulsory sex education begins. Interestingly, the one topic that had the highest percentage of young people identifying it as suitable in the first two Key Stages of education was the topic of non-heterosexual identities. This is consistent with the general shift in societal views, as LGBT identified people are gaining equality (e.g. Marriage Act 2013), emphasised by the latest release by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe) (2014) in which the UK scored the highest on legal and human rights policy progression towards equality.

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[28] The new National Curriculum took effect for the 2014-2015 school year. The information in the current consultation document is nearly identical to that presented earlier in this thesis (DfE 2013). Please refer to p. 72-73 in this thesis for a general overview of the information contained in the curriculum.

In the survey section on the appropriateness of topics in the classroom, it was found that young women and straight identified participants tended to be more conservative with slightly more participants selecting the higher age ranges as being more appropriate, the only exception being on the appropriateness of discussing non-heterosexual identities. I cannot explain this finding except that it may relate to either the notion of individuals holding different views, or possibly the environment in which these students were educated influencing the responses. For instance, young women may have issues with immature boys during lessons, thus preferring to have lessons later in school. This would be corroborated with the findings of Strange and colleagues (2003), and Alldred and David (2007) who both identified that girls would typically prefer to have their sex education in a single-sex classroom. However, as this study included an all-girls school, and their responses indicated later education on most topics, this hypothesis is not supported in this instance. This admittedly, could be due to the limited sample in this study.

Talking about masturbation was another topic with a higher proportion of responses indicating the desire for earlier education on the topic. Conversely, nearly a tenth of the participants declared this topic unsuitable for the classroom. This was one of only two topics (the other being oral sex) where a statistical difference was found between the type of school attended, with state school participants more likely to support the teaching of these topics in the classroom. In general, it was found that the view of masturbation being unsuitable for the classroom was predominantly expressed by non-religious, white young women. This may be explained by the proportion of young women that choose to integrate masturbation into their sexual development being lower than their male counterparts (Robbins et al. 2011), but it could be a result of the classroom setting in which they were educated, as discussed previously (see Strange et al. 2003).

The other contentious topic included in the 'appropriateness' section was anal sex. The reason why this topic was chosen and ultimately discussed relates to the perception that anal sex is a core activity for gay men, demonstrated by the statistics that ten percent of straight couple engage in anal sex, while two-thirds of gay men engage in the practice (Bell 1999, pp. 453-454). However, in the most recent British National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3) data (2013), nearly 20 percent of young people have tried opposite sex anal sex. Considering this, I chose to see how young people, including those who identified as LGB, would view anal sex. I found that a large number of participants (one-fifth of the sample, evenly distributed across all demographics except sexual orientation) felt that this topic was not appropriate for the classroom. Three participants who identified as bisexual (n = 19 for LGB

participants) were amongst those that listed anal sex as inappropriate, which proportionately is about the same as the sample as a whole. However, this is likely to be a misleading statistic and hard to compare as the straight identified sample is nearly 20 times larger.

The final section of the survey, which asked about whether topics were covered in sex education yielded mostly predictable results, though there are several worth dissecting. Three of these relate to a lower than I would expect affirmation that they were discussed in the classroom. These were rape, age of consent, and family values. Both rape and age of consent are child protection matters that are heavily discussed in many of the policies. It is interesting that this did not translate to the recollection of teaching on these topics. Similarly, family values were not reportedly discussed, yet in the policies, parents are perceived as instrumental in teaching children about sex and relationships. However, this is also consistent with the sentiment that family values do not influence the sexual decisions of young people, as discussed.

Further, in this section on topics covered, two additional statistics that bear importance on this research are noteworthy. These are on the topics of sexual orientation and homosexuality. Each of these topics was reportedly discussed by just over half of the participants. This refutes the guidance put forth by the national guidance document and even more so from the local guidance document. These topics are supposed to be included in an effort to make sure no child is uncared for through sex education but these statistics suggest that there is a lapse between the local guidance and ultimately what is taught in the classroom. This may be due to a lapse in recalling the material or possibly missing the lesson where it was discussed (the latter possibility will be discussed in the next chapter concerning the frequency of sex education) but in either event, it suggests that there is very little information or support in sex education for those sexualities that are not heterosexuality.

Finally, it is also important to note here that it can be assumed that at least 97 percent of participants in this sample had some type of sex education, or what the young person deemed as sex education. This is evident in the reporting of the discussion on STIs by this percentage of young people. Now, this may have been the only component covered, but seeing as sex education has roots in the National Curriculum, it can be assumed that everyone will have taken part in the programme to some degree.

6.5 Conclusion

As expected, due to the requirements of the National Curriculum, most young people in this sample reported having some form of sex education. Through the results presented in this chapter, it can be seen where there are shortcomings (e.g. percentage of students recalling a topic versus the agreement that such a topic should be discussed and the age at which students feel topics can be taught versus the National Curriculum requirements) and how young people generally felt about the prospect of having sex education as part of the curriculum. Most young people welcomed the prospect, indicating that it is an integral part of their schooling.

Not only do these results indicate the state of sex education, but they also provide other important thoughts for consideration. As students reportedly received little teaching on some topics, it is hard to be sure whether this is because they were never taught about those topics, because they were not taught adequately or whether poor recall plays a factor. The idea of adequate teaching refers to teaching material superficially where students may not fully understand or comprehend, leaving much of the information to be forgotten over a short period of time. It also suggests that while there is some consistency across schools, this consistency can and needs to be improved upon. This is of particular importance when considering LGBT students in the classroom.

Finally, the majority of students, irrespective of gender, religion, and sexual orientation, felt that sex education should be all-inclusive and comprehensive, so as to provide a well-rounded education for all. However, it can also be seen that a significant number of these participants have not learned about sexual orientation and homosexuality in the classroom. This is further be examined in the next chapter, where I discuss the findings from focus groups and interviews that were conducted with LGBT young people about their experiences in the sex education classroom.

Chapter 7: Qualitative Data

7.1 Introduction

Young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, questioning, etc. have traditionally been marginalised in school sex education programmes, both in England and abroad. This is exemplified by policies such as Section 28 in the United Kingdom and results from educational research, conducted in several countries around the world, which examines young LGBT sex education experiences (see Hillier et al. 2008; Formby 2011). This chapter examines first-hand accounts of LGBT young people's experiences of and attitudes towards[29] the sex education that they received as part of the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) or Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) curricula in school. These responses help assess the current level of heteronormativity in the classroom, in addition to providing evidence on the perceived differences in the way in which sexual orientation is constructed, presented and accepted in a variety of educational settings. This includes factors that may not actually be present in the classroom, but impact upon them as students (i.e. identity construction, learning, etc.), and on classrooms from the outside (e.g. parents, societal influences, etc.). In addition, I seek to understand the way in which sex education has affected these young people's lives through content and conduct of the curriculum, as well as through any issues that these LGBT young people may have faced (e.g. bullying). It will also become apparent that there is a persistent heteronormativity present throughout the response of these young people. In some cases, the participants astutely recognised the heteronormativity within sex education, school, and even society in general, while in other cases, it became apparent through the information that they provided. As this is central to this thesis, I make specific note of these instances as the chapter progresses.

As the focus of this research was on student's experience in the classroom, it became evident that social aspects of student's learning also present challenges to the institution of education. Thus, as I proceed with my findings surrounding sex education in the classroom, I endeavour to give voice to these LGBT young people and share some of the stories documenting their experience in sex education. In addition, they also indicated several other factors on a macro level, such as societal concerns and religion, that they felt impacted upon their experience as both LGBT and students. These stories ultimately serve to provide a body

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[29] These attitudes, in part, form what is known in as sexual culture (Wilson 2009, p. 298)

of knowledge from this marginalised group in sex education while also providing additional support for the lack of quality sex education.

Finally, it is important to briefly reiterate a statement made earlier in the thesis concerning the style of the chapter. Both the previous chapter and this chapter have been written in the tradition of the applied method, thus it may seem that a shift in style has occurred. The decision to ultimately split these chapters, as opposed to presenting the data as thematically concurrent, allows for a better understanding of the two separate methods employed and for the strengths of each method to be understood in context, as each of these chapters were informed by slightly different populations.

7.2 Results

The sample that participated in both focus groups and interviews (n = 15 and n = 7 respectively[30]) were all participants at a local youth group that was created as a safe space for LGBT young people. This group was selected because of its recognition in the community as being one of the best places for LGBT young people to gather and interact in a safe environment. While the ages of the people in the youth group ranged from late teens to mid-twenties, only those up to 21 were allowed to participate (which was assessed by a show of hands for those who were interested, aged 21 or younger). I wanted to reduce recall bias, as much as possible, from those young people even further removed from their compulsory education. Each focus group was comprised of mixed-gender participants and consisted of four to six participants. These sessions lasted approximately 60-75 minutes. The interviews, however, were much shorter and were one-to-one sessions lasting between 15 and 30 minutes. Table XXVI provides basic information about each participant and their contribution to this research.

Table XXVI: Information about the participants in the focus groups and interviews

Name	Focus group (FG) or interview	Gender	Ethnicity	Type of School
John	FG 1/Interview	Male	White	Religious
Duncan	FG 1	Male	White	State

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[30] Two individuals took part in both settings, thus total participants is n = 20. Two participants identified as transgendered, one as bisexual and seventeen as gay or lesbian, though it must be noted the fluidity of this concept does not guarantee that this is still the case for any of the young people.

Name	Focus group (FG) or interview	Gender	Ethnicity	Type of School
Ewan	FG 1	Male	White	State
Amy	FG 1	Female	White	State
Jules	FG 1	Male	White	Religious
Alfie	FG 2	Male	White	State (Special Needs)
Laura	FG 2	Female	White	State
Leslie	FG 2	Female	White	State
Imogen	FG 2/Interview	Female	White	State
Jack	FG 3	Male	White	State
Kim	FG 3	Female	White	State
Charlie	FG 3	Female	Black	State and Religious
Andy	FG 3	Male	White	State
Kate	FG 3	Female	White	State
Emma	FG 3	Female	White	State
Becky	Interview	Female	White	State
Ed	Interview	Male	White	State
Hugh	Interview	Male	White	State
Erica	Interview	Female	White	State
Alice	Interview	Female	White	State/Children's Home

The information provided in this chapter has been grouped into overarching themes, which emerged during the coding process. These overarching themes were 'British Society and Cultural Influences on Education', 'Pedagogy in the Classroom', and 'Identity and Emotions'. Each theme is comprised of several sub-themes that emerged from the data (see Diagram I[31]). It is important to clarify, however, that none of these themes or subthemes are disparate, but rather the division employed here made the data manageable and provided for a way to clearly convey the messages discovered. For instance, while education may be an institutionalised collection of pedagogies, curricula, and materials, the inspiration for these will have developed in a societal context, which is not deprived of cultural influences. The same can be said for the identities of these young people. While there is debate as to nature versus

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[31] The diagram depicts the general themes and subthemes present in the data. The headings used in the diagram are condensed versions of the thesis headings for display purposes. They will be presented from right to left in terms of themes and then top to bottom for subthemes.

nurture, it is clear that the way in which their identities (or sexual orientations) are perceived is societal and not exclusive to the pressures of education. This demonstrates a level of circularity in which one notion informs another, and in many cases in both directions, through reinforcement.

Although the data will be discussed in relative seclusion mentioned above, these themes/sub-themes will then be drawn back together in the final chapter, where appropriate, to address the research questions of this thesis. In addition, as this chapter progresses, the flow between the identification of macro to meso to micro level data will be observed. This demonstrates the hierarchical structure of how factors outside the classroom produce an effect that ultimately affects the people in the classroom.

Diagram I: Interrelatedness of Themes and Subthemes
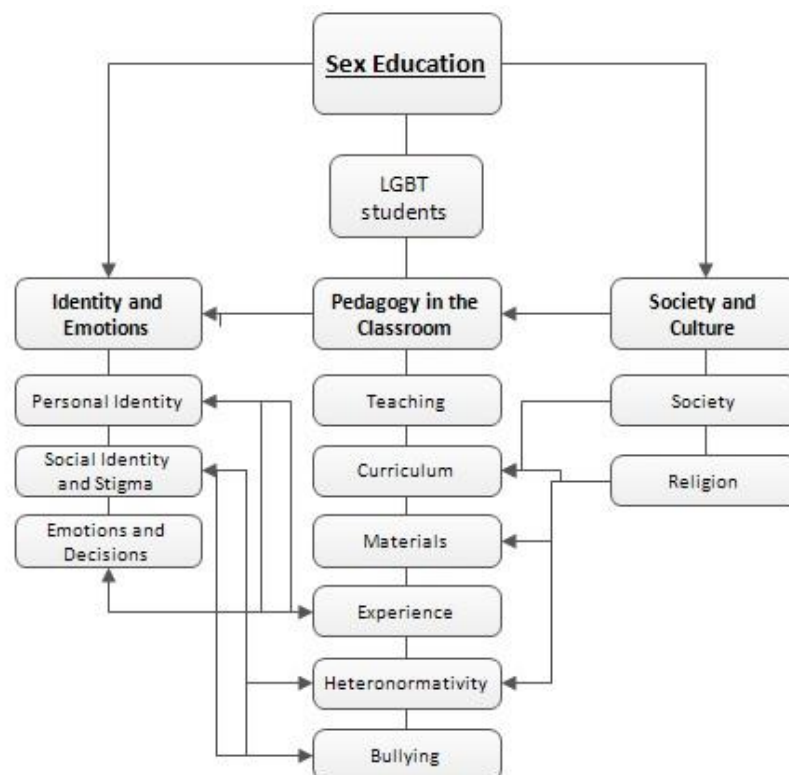
7.2.1 British Society and Cultural Influences on Education

In this first section, two aspects that summarise macro level data found throughout the research, which relate to life both in and out of the classroom, are discussed. Religion and British society were two themes that young people spoke about that impacted upon their lives

as LGBT identified young people within the context of the institution of education, and more specifically with regard to sex education. This recognition demonstrates the participants' understandings of the influence that societal views have on the way that they are taught and subsequently viewed in the classroom. However, not everything presented in this section directly relates to the classroom but link some of the aforementioned sub-themes to developing identities and schooling.

7.2.1.1 Societal Discrimination, an Overt Problem Relating to Sex Education, as Identified by LGBT Young People

In this subsection, the subthemes that emerged during focus groups that discussed the impact that society has on sex education are explored. These are relevant specifically to understanding what the current social climate is in relation to sexual orientation. In relation to the policies discussed in chapter 4, parents are expected to be involved through consultation on sex education in schools. Undoubtedly, these parents' previous experiences will influence their views at present, but so does current society.

One of the best analogies given during the focus groups epitomised the pettiness of discriminating against LGBT people was shared by Ewan.

> *So we live in a society where we all have our own preferences, I'm not discriminated against because I don't like cheese crisps, I don't like cheese at all. I'm not discriminated against because of that. So what if somebody is gay or straight whatever, it doesn't really affect you, in the same way as my dislike of cheese doesn't affect you. So why should I be treated any different*?

Amy added that sexuality is not the only thing that people are discriminated over. As someone with a disability, she felt that her conditions sometimes put her in a position of discrimination.

In another focus group, there was discussion about the effects of immigration on discrimination. While the consensus was that discrimination is discrimination, regardless of the circumstances, Imogen felt that maybe we needed to make allowances for people who are from cultures that do not permit things like homosexuality, but she did not elaborate on why this exception would be acceptable.

It was apparent that these young people found discrimination unacceptable, but they were quick to observe that in terms of sexualisation, society has become tolerant of many practices, even those that are not necessarily worthy of such. Duncan asked why it was so

taboo to talk about sex in schools when on television, sex is a theme that is '*running through all of our television programmes, oh he cheated on him, he cheated on him . . .*'. If television can talk about things such as casual sex and adultery, schools should be able to focus on adequately preparing young people for adulthood; however, participants felt that there was too much reliance on parents.

A second topic that was interwoven throughout the discussions was parental involvement and this was viewed in a variety of ways, especially if parental involvement linked to discrimination. For instance, Duncan actually experienced an unfortunate instance with a peer and his father at his school.

> *Somebody in my class uh who was rather, well he was in my PE* (Physical Education) *class, was rather homophobic, his father was extremely homophobic. He told his father that, well after I came out, and his father went to the school and demanded that I be expelled.*

This excerpt demonstrates that there are still some extreme views that persist in society and those who are outspoken will strive to make their views heard, apparently even in the classroom. Laura attributed experiences and views like this to a '*lack of understanding*', but without early education and exposure, it is difficult to create this understanding.

Other students also felt that parents had an indirect effect on the classroom, commenting that the parents held disproportionate power over sex education in schools. If parents raised concerns about something taught in the classroom, it would be removed or at least reconsidered, especially if it was on a contentious issue. John's response to this idea was as follows:

> *I think it should be a right for everybody to have the access to that kind of information, I think it should be a right. I had a really good pa, mother who taught me everything I know, but unfortunately many people don't have that so I think it should be a right that for everybody to have equal access regardless what their parents say.*

The young people were hopeful that as society became more tolerant, these contentious subjects, specifically sexuality, would become less of an issue. Ewan attributed this to generational change:

> *Change happens slowly, generation to generation. Because if you think about our parents' parents, that was a very religious society, most religions are against it. So they would have taken advice from their parents, it's because we pretty much just learn everything from our parents up 'til a certain age.*

Other participants agreed that this is at least a potential cause for the current state of affairs with sex education, which then led to whether removing a child from the lesson should be

allowed. Emma said she felt that regardless of whether it was something that you agree with or not, you should still be exposed to it. There were varying perspectives on this but the prevailing opinion was disagreement with the current regulation that allowed parents to withdraw students from the non-compulsory component of sex education.

7.2.1.2 Views of the Impact of Religion on Sex Education

Religion can be a contested topic in most conversations. In the focus groups, it was apparent that these young LGBT participants felt that there was a prevailing overtone of religion both in and out of the classroom that influenced their sex education; therefore, it is necessary to briefly cover it here.

For both religious and non-religious schools, religious education (RE) courses were common for the participants. In the Catholic schools, much of the curriculum is centred on the Bible and religion. Both John and Jules, who attended religious schools, spoke of homosexuality being frowned upon according to the Bible. John said that in his one RE class, the teacher went as far as forming a comparison between homosexuality and bestiality and found justification for this through scripture. Amy, who attended a normal state school, also related an experience of being told that alternative sexualities were wrong. She disputed this claim with the knowledge that the Bible says that one should love thy neighbour.

One final participant that spoke of religion in school was Imogen. While none of the schools that she attended was a religious school, there were still religious teachers. On multiple occasions, while not perceived as being threatening or bullying, Imogen's teachers said that they did not agree with being gay because, in their words, that is not how we (humans) were made. Becky, although not experiencing such direct discrimination, as in Imogen's case, felt that religion was partly responsible for the way in which sex education was presented:

> *I think because the people who do the sex ed. are the religious studies teachers and a lot of those people are Christian, so naturally even though they know what they are meant to be teaching us, they don't teach us as well as they could be.*

This view of religion was common throughout the sessions and was one of the reasons identified as to why some groups in society still embrace homophobia. Emily said that she is wary about how her father will respond once she chooses to come out to her parents, but she acknowledges that she will have to face it '*sooner or later*'.

It is difficult to sometimes differentiate the remnants of religious ideology from other reasoning against homosexuality, but these young people felt that it is not moving in the right direction. The next section takes this discussion into the classroom, as the young people felt that this is where injustice occurred the most, then moves on to the running theme of heteronormativity, irrespective of current religious opinion.

7.2.2 Pedagogy in the Classroom

In this section, the findings that relate to the main theme of education are discussed. While many of the aspects relating to education were planned for in the script, the latter sub-themes of homophobia and bullying became evident through individuals' discussion of their experience, not just in sex education but also in school overall. Starting with the foundation of schooling, the curriculum and pedagogy, I provide an account of the young people's views as they relate to the organisation of sex education in the classroom. Then the focus shifts to the resources used for sex education before discussing the young people's views on the quality of the sex education that they received. Finally, I conclude this theme with the more socially defined phenomena of bullying.

7.2.2.1 The Art of Teaching Sex Education in the Classroom

As the major focus of this research was on students' perceptions of sex education, I was interested in finding out what they were being exposed to in the classroom and how this interaction took place. Topics of discussion ranged from teaching methods, examples used in the classroom, etc. Specifically, in the focus groups and interviews with LGBT identified young people, I was looking for experience post-Section 28, as research done before the repeal pointed out that sex education was heteronormative and limiting for those who did not identify as straight (refer to chapter 2). Participants spoke at length on the duration and frequency of their sex education, when the instruction took place (e.g. what classes), the manner in which it was conducted (e.g. lecture, assembly) and the topics that were (or were not) covered in the classroom.

The onset of sex education varied between institutions, with Charlie recalling that sex education was '*definitely covered every year of primary school and same again throughout my secondary education*'. This appeared to be the earliest experience of all of the participants,

with the others recalling secondary school as the time when they first experienced sex education lessons. This is where the real variation occurred within both the curriculum and the participants' experiences.

Sex education in secondary school is not a compulsory subject in itself but there are required components that must be taught under the National Curriculum. From the responses of the participants, the ways in which schools handled these required topics varied immensely, with no consultation with students. John's experience of sex education was recalled as, '*we only touch upon it in year 7 and that was it*', and Andy's recollection, '*ours was uh, I think was one assembly in secondary school that lasted about 3 hours*', to the experience of Charlie, who seemingly had the best sex education in practice and experience of any of the participants. She noted that:

> *There would always be a term that you spent on, a term a year at least, if not more, that you spent on sex education, relationship education and perhaps it was the teacher's directive instead of it actually being a curriculum based directive.*

Others, however, responded that their school(s) fell somewhere between these two extremes, with most participants reporting that they had some form of sex education over multiple years, but not necessarily more than once in those years. Considering the number of possible topics that can be considered appropriate for sex education, it seems impractical that all information could be presented in a day. While this will obviously vary with the amount of age-appropriate material, it can still be presumed that several sessions would be necessary. However, this too could become problematic. For instance, if the information were not reiterated throughout the year, it would be difficult to ensure that all students had access to the material in the instance of absence. This supports the notion of integrating sex education more fully into the curriculum to ensure that young people are getting the support and information that they need for the future (Brady and Kennedy 2003, p. 78; Goldman 2011, p. 530).

Throughout interactions with the young people, it became clear that the medium for sex education also varied from the standard classroom session to class assemblies, to optional modules for those who had sex education offered at later points in their education. The courses in which sex education occurred were identified as Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE), biology courses, and for some who attended religious affiliated institutions, Religious Education (RE) courses. In these courses, a couple of the students described the teaching strategy as '*death by PowerPoint*' (Duncan). Hugh also acknowledged that '*they usually just used PowerPoint presentation and just went*

through them quickly'. Becky responded that while PowerPoint presentations were not the method in her class,

> *. . . they taught us in a pretty standard way, they gave us instructions at the beginning of the class, gave us worksheets, and sometimes we watched a video, but there was never any open discussion, we just always had tasks to do and somehow learn through osmosis, doing these tasks and not talking.*

While this method can be effective for some people, many will not respond to this style of teaching and learning (Schmeck 1988), thus the need for varied approaches that cater for individual needs.

Another point discussed in the focus groups was the practice of gender segregation during sex education, which has been shown to be the desired method for young women (Strange et al. 2003). This was typically practiced in the earlier years but it did have an impact on at least one of the participants:

> *I remember it being a little like the wall of Berlin because the boys never knew what the girls talked about and the girls didn't know what the boys talked about. And the thing is, after that they said you are not allowed to discuss this* [with the other gender]. (Duncan)

This same idea has been researched for other academic subjects (e.g. math, science, etc.) and has shown favourable results for single-sex education, especially benefitting girls (Spielhofer, Benton and Shcagen 2004; Malacova 2007; Feniger 2011).

While there was a wide range of perceptions around the quality of teaching, those with good experiences reported that their teachers were interesting and creative. An example of such creativity centred on question boxes. In order to avoid embarrassment in the classroom with questions, anonymous question boxes were set up for students to discretely ask difficult questions. This method of anonymous question gathering was praised in several of the policies, as well as many of the activities. Undoubtedly, this is one way to allow students to direct their learning in the classroom although, as noted, this was not the norm.

7.2.2.2 What was Learned in Sex Education

In general, the content of sex education courses was focused on a narrow set of issues, or explicit curricula (Eisner 1979). As Duncan recalls, sex education was '*very biological, very sciencey, um, and it was very, it was blunt*'. He went on to say that:

I remember there being a module, I think it was actually called the reproductive system. And it was basically that, it was this is what these bits do, this is what these bits do, this is the pregnancy cycle um and that was it, take an end of unit test, move on to the next thing.

This description was shared by several of the participants, as Jules recounted:

The only sex education we ever got was in bio, would have been biology in sort of the earlier years like your 7, 8 and 9 and they were literally, it was like units like the reproduction system and human biology that only really got covered in that.

As John reiterated this point, he specifically mentioned the idea akin to heteronormative bias that is prevalent in a unit such as this:

Yeah mostly it was just biological and sometimes they did talk about you know how to be with a woman basically, it was never mentioned anything else you know, it was just the biology of it and how to have vaginal sex basically.

Although many of these quotes depict sexual anatomy as the prevailing theme of biology, sexually transmissible infections (STIs) were occasionally mentioned in passing, though this usually brought up a discussion about the lack of factual knowledge about STIs. For instance, Emma said:

See that's another thing they don't say is STIs anywhere else apart from icky bits. Yeah the ugly parts. Also, it wasn't until um my friend got herpes, that cold sores and herpes were very related. I didn't know if you had a cold sore and went down on them that they could get herpes, I didn't know that either.

She then later reiterated her point by saying:

Surely like all STIs don't start off like that (responding to a comment about symptoms) *after like 2 years of having this STI you could look like this. The first 2 years you're gonna be sleeping around and spreading it around. We never got that.*

However, in-depth discussions of STIs were not viewed as necessary by everyone. This may have been because individuals are inundated with public health messages on a regular basis, from magazines, to television adverts, to programmes such as the Chlamydia Screening Programme offering screens in the classroom.

Following from the risk reduction discourse, a strong aspect of the implicit curricula, pregnancy and pregnancy prevention, was also a common theme. Laura gave interesting insight into how her sex education was presented in relation to pregnancy:

It was mainly about the unprotected sex and drunk sex and . . . the whole issue of condoms, morning after pills, although I don't ever remember them telling us about where to get a morning after pill, they just told us about it but they may have, I may have zoned out. But it was, it wasn't really that, it didn't branch out too much.

John recalled what he learned about pregnancy in his religious school:

> *in religious lessons they were like you cannot use condoms, the only form of natural contraception is once a month there is a . . . that thing, that is the only type of contraception you must use. If you get pregnant, you have to go to full term*.

This response exemplifies a moral undertone on the topics of pregnancy, termination, STIs, and casual sex that permeated sex education at this school. In comparison, this example only describes sex as a procreative act, whereas the other examples given on the biological content described risks outside of pregnancy, in relation to what seems like a concession that children are likely to have sex.

While biology is an important facet in holistic sex education, there needs to be a balance with many of the social issues involved with sex, such as relationships, communication, sexual orientation (which I devote a section to shortly), etc. (AVERT 2009; WHO 2010). Some of the young people did reveal that relationships were addressed in part. As seen in this short dialogue on the topic between two participants that went to the same school:

> Laura: '*Yeah I remember they did*'
>
> Lesley: '*They spoke of marriage and that was it*'
>
> Laura: '*No, they talked about relationships. I'm pretty sure they did. About, um kind of, obviously the whole respect issue and the whole don't have sex until you're ready in a relationship type thing*'.

Even as these topics were debated throughout the focus groups, it is important to note that one participant felt that sex education was not necessarily the school's responsibility and did not require this level of inclusion in the curriculum:

> *I don't, I don't really think that the curriculum needs to have that much like, it shouldn't need to tell us that much, I just think they are taking on all this stuff and like yeah we're going to teach your kids about this, I think parents should take more of a role rather than just saying ah it's like it's the state's fault that this is all happening, teenage pregnancy, nobody is saying look well maybe if parents, because a teacher standing at the front of a class is nowhere near like your mum or your auntie or a parental figure or an older brother or sister talking to you about it. It's totally different.* (Kim)

In this instance, it should be observed that Kim was speaking from experience, though she did not speak in-depth about her personal circumstances. This may account for her opinion that if sex were discussed in the home, there would not be the need to focus on it in a less intimate environment such as the classroom. This was not the only participant to talk about their parents' involvement, which is evident throughout this chapter. The notion of acquiring sex

education elsewhere and only needing a few practical pieces of information in the classroom was also found by Bourton (2006, p. 22), which suggests that this could be a viable way of conducting sex education if there was more support outside the classroom.

7.2.2.3 The Resources Used to Teach about Sex and Relationships both In and Out of the Classroom

In this section, the materials that the participants remembered being exposed to during their sex education course(s) are discussed. No prompts were provided when discussing materials, as I wanted to let participants freely explore the materials that were meaningful or memorable to them. I was interested in whether they would identify any specific activities or media examples that had an impact on them and whether they were asked what they would like to be taught. Unfortunately, no one remembered much about the written material but there were some key media examples that emerged in the discussion. It is important to note that some of the materials discussed were utilised in the school setting for some of the participants but not others (although they may have been exposed to these materials at home). However, I chose to include them in this section to provide a fluid account of what young people deem useful that can be brought into the classroom, if they are not already being utilised in that manner. As evidenced throughout this chapter so far, participants commonly recalled only a '*very biological*' sex education. In this section, this theme is still prevalent but is expanded to cover what was used to educate young people about these, among other, topics.

While worksheets, books, and what one participant called '*gory pictures*' of a '*diseased fanny*', are generally used in the classroom and were mentioned by several participants in passing, there has been a shift towards digital media as practical educational options for both inside and outside of the classroom. In this section, since many remember more about the videos and television programmes that were used, I focus on these, alongside discussing ways in which the young people received supplementary information about sex and sexuality, both in and out of school.

Often participants identified that their schools used media to supplement the basic pencil and paper approach to learning. Videos, while not reportedly used in every classroom, were still the most common approach to supplementing sex education for several of the young people. Many of the participants recalled seeing videos in their sex education but most

everyone agreed that these seemed outdated for the new millennium. John recalled that the video that his Catholic school showed was '*terrible*' and '*literally old . . . nothing modern at all. It was pretty shitty, you know from the 1980s*', while Becky called the ones that she was shown '*standard issue*'. Becky went on to recount that the one that she remembers most clearly was:

> *. . . one that was following a woman through her pregnancy and I will never forget that because they showed her giving birth at the end. I think it was too much for me at 13 years old, it wasn't particularly emotionally involved, it was more scientific. You know, this is what's happening at this stage, this is what the foetus looks like, not anything to do with how's the mother feeling, which I think is really important.*

A couple of other participants were also shown similar films on pregnancy, with one also recalling that '*it was quite horrible*' (Hugh).

Aside from the pregnancy videos which were apparently graphic, two other participants noted that they had seen a film that was not graphic and horrible but rather awkward. Kim and Andy recalled a '*creepy*' film on masturbation:

> Kim: '*it was like a cartoon and all I remember was this like really monotone man going, "Sometimes you might get excited" and then this cartoon boy got all excited in his pants and he put a cat on it.*'
>
> Andy: '*And he grabs the cat.*'
>
> Kim: '*Yeah and he put the cat on it, he put the cat on his crotch, and his grandma walked in or something.*'
>
> Andy: '*He sat there, got excited and his gran was about to walk in and his only solution was to put the cat on it. That poor cat, [inaudible] and he just put the cat on his lap to hide this. And it's like "It might feel nice to touch it" or something like that.*'
>
> Kim: '*I just remember this guy going and grabbing the cat.*'

While other participants responded that they had seen videos, only one other participant could recall the specifics of a memorable one. Charlie recalled seeing an awkward video about anatomy and, apparently, ways to be comfortable in your own skin. She elaborated with the following description:

> [It was] *like this is a man, this is a woman, this is the different parts of the woman, this is the different parts of the man and they showed them walking around the house naked with their child naked as well. Everybody was naked! This man just walking around his house just casually naked, everything flying around, but yeah that was kind of shocking, well not shocking but awkward to watch.*

While the use of awkward videos in the classroom may have seemed irrelevant to the students, they left a lasting impression, which is useful in education. This is not to say that the

videos were very good, but is an acknowledgment of the utility of using media in the classroom.

Another source of media material used in the classroom was television, or more precisely, television recordings. A number of participants recalled the effect that television shows had on their sex education. Although there was some general discussion about documentaries and similar television recordings shown in class, *The Sex Education Show* on Channel 4 hosted by Anne Richardson was a favourite of the young people. Those who had seen it in their sex education lessons felt that this was one of the best additions to sex education in recent times. Several students were exposed to this show in the classroom, but even for those who were not, they were still familiar, as they had seen it outside the classroom:

> *I think um the Sex Education show that was on channel 4, um was the best sort of t.v. show I ever learnt about sexuality, growing up, what happens. It taught me the positives and it really taught me the truth about the world of sex and and growing up. And it told me from rumours, to what's right, and you shouldn't worry about what you look like and if I'm normal or if I'm not. When you know in reality you are normal, you're just like every normal, everyday person . . . it did talk a bit about sexuality. It asked, they did this thing where they had all men, all women and they said, they asked all the children depending on which school they visited, and they asked which one of these 5 men is gay and obviously they would try to guess, but then the straight looking one ends up being gay. So it's a, it was kind of talking about deciding about not judging someone by their look just because of their sexuality.* (Alfie)

Alfie proceeded to say that this show was more influential than what he had learned in school:

> *Yeah, I just tend to forget about the sex education I had back in school and just focus on the good sex education I had through the Sex Education show and whatever my mum and dad talked about to me.* (Alfie)

Fortunately, for Amy, another participant in the focus groups, she had the show's experience first-hand when they went into her school. While she recalls knowing some of the material that they presented, she also said that, '*some of it just shows how much school doesn't touch on it*'. However, Laura, while agreeing that the show was informative, felt slightly different about the importance of *The Sex Education Show*. She said:

> *I think The Sex Education show is good for people who haven't been taught properly at school, haven't had their parents kind of explaining things. But then at the same time, people shouldn't have to rely on any kind of show to learn things. They should actually be taught.*

This ambivalence was evident in the discussions with participants, but as many pointed out, it is still a useful tool for the classroom.

Video and television shows were not the end of the discussion on technology in the classroom. Although this next source of information, the internet, was not necessarily included in many sex education curricula, participants across the focus groups and interviews were quick to point out the effect that it has had on learning about sex and sexuality, both in and out of school. In the first focus group, a lengthy discussion ensued around the availability of information on the internet, factual and otherwise. Although none of these individuals recalled using the internet in the classroom, this led to the question of the importance of sex education in addressing the inconsistencies found online, especially to the novice user who is unfamiliar with fact checking and the reputability of certain websites. John asserted, quite possibly due to his lack of quality sex education, that young people *'have to teach [themselves] by the internet these days, that's how we learn'*. All participants in this focus group agreed with this assertion and discussed the pros and cons of doing so. Duncan then pointed out that *'it's much easier to Google something than say it in front of a class of 30 immature idiots'*. Amy agreed with the need to search for answers online because:

> *They don't touch some of the things you want to know in school because they have a set programme, they're not allowed to, but they think they aren't allowed to approach different lifestyles and different types of relationships.*

However, there are several drawbacks to letting young people freely explore the World Wide Web, in search of factual information. In today's online world, anyone can post information to a website, which can be accessed by millions, if not billions of people. This can have unwanted effects, depending on the type of information needed and where someone looks to find it. A short discussion occurred on this specific notion:

> Ewan: *'Its common sense that if you're using a NHS website that's likely to be accurate. If you use fakefacts.org.'*
>
> Amy: *'Or Wikipedia.'*
>
> John: *'Wikipedia is generally* (trails off)*'*
>
> Ewan: *'Cross check it with something else and you'll be fine.'*
>
> John: *'But if you go on urban myths then you'll obviously get the wrong information.'*
>
> Duncan: *'But most of young people today are quite savvy. They know which websites to trust.'*

This excerpt suggests that young people can differentiate between fact and fiction on the internet. As Ewan pointed out, using respected websites is one way to improve the likelihood of accuracy in comparison with a user-edited website like Wikipedia. However, it has been shown that much of the information presented online is not without inaccuracies (Allen et al.

1999). This is also apparent in the number of fact checking websites, which have appeared over the years, such as Snopes. This can be taken one step further when considering that current research suggests that boys are getting some of their sex education from pornography (Crabbe and Corlett 2010; Horvath et al. 2013, p. 7). This is an extreme example of the internet providing unreliable information, even if the intent of the websites is to provide entertainment purposes only. In general, through experiences that I have had speaking on sexual health in schools, there is still a plethora of misinformation that is acquired from various websites. Thus, as Ewan suggests, people should fact check themselves, but it does not appear that this always occurs. In the third focus group, Charlie recalled that:

> *. . . on a Friday afternoon and I went on to the BBC website and on to this particular page where it's got all types of different sex education things that are really quite interesting and quite funny the way you are learning about them and I thought I shouldn't be doing this but I read it anyway and then my friend [turned] me in and I got banned from using the computer. I got told off for going on that site . . . and from that moment on BBC was then banned . . . It was very serious, it was you shouldn't be looking at this sort of thing, you're not old enough to be looking at this . . . I was made to feel so ashamed and I went home that day.*

This point demonstrates that Charlie, while being a curious young person, had her quest for knowledge suppressed by the school. This promotes the opposite of learning; it is more of an example of repression through control over children that the school has. Understandably, the school may have feared retribution from parents due to child protection issues but had these sources been used in sex education, the sole purpose for websites like these, this incident may have never occurred.

Interestingly, in relation to internet usage, although Crabbe and Corlett (2010) and Horvath and colleagues (2013) showed that boys (and some girls) are learning sex education from pornography, this was not a topic that was broached by the participants. Even when discussing the nature of learning from the internet, no one mentioned pornography as being influential in any way. This also reflects that the topic was not discussed in schools, even at a time when internet usage was more mainstream. This may be an area for further research as the teaching materials on pornography and the existing literature suggest that this is where young people are learning about sex and sexuality (Crabbe and Corlett 2010; Horvath et al. 2013, p. 7), therefore the question of why it was not brought up by the participants is inexplicable. Understandably, through a lack of discussion, this exemplifies another deficit in sex education, which at present is under scrutiny (NCB 2012).

7.2.2.4 Quality of the Sex Education Experienced by Young People

Up until this point, data pertaining to the way in which sex education was taught and the sources of information used in the classroom has been presented, but this section serves to address how the participants felt about the quality of sex education schooling they had received. Some of the information mirrors issues raised in some of the previous quotes, but in this section, I will endeavour to share some specifics about how these LGBT identified young people perceived their sex education.

In the first focus group, Ewan commented, '*it really just depended on where you were in the school system, whether it was good or bad*'. This remark referred to which school a young person attended and even what year they may have been enrolled and this was corroborated throughout the other sessions. John was the first person who volunteered his experience by succinctly replying that '*all of it was crap*'. He later enlarged on this statement in an interview where he said:

> *I felt left out, and yeah, that kind of had negative consequences because nobody knew about* [being gay] *so they obviously thought it was a bit weird that it wasn't included so they kind of had negative influences on the years following.*

This quote implies a degree of uneasiness of being out in school because of poor sex education and a lack of knowledge on alternative sexualities. Duncan agreed, stating that '*I found mine rather immature to say the least*'. The first individual went to a Catholic state school, while the second went to a non-religious state school. Interestingly, they had a similar experience, albeit the different affiliations of the schools. Even Kim, who attended multiple schools both in the north of England and in the southeast said that they '*were both pretty bad*'. However, she went on to say that the sex education was of slightly better quality in the north and she felt that it focused more on sex and relationships in the southeast. Other participants had similar experiences, but were not as blunt in calling it *'crap'*. Alfie, for instance, attended a special needs school and was generally disappointed with the lack of education that he received:

> *We didn't quite have a lot of sex education since we only had like possibly 1 or 2 each year, so in my year 7, year 8, year 9, year 10 and possibly year 11, only in the secondaries, we never really learned anything like that in the primary, in primary school. Um, mainly it only talked about puberty, growing up, the changes of the body, never talked about sexuality or like sexual intercourse or what happens. We only talked about, they only really ever talked about obviously puberty and then also about, you know, like having babies and things like that. They never really talked about sexuality much, which for me is a bit annoying because obviously my sexuality. I really wanted them to explain about sexuality 'cause there's not just straight people. There's gays, lesbians, transgenders, bi people . . .*

The latter point regarding the lack of information on sexualities, again describing a heteronormative approach, was common. As Laura pointed out:

> *They um, they never really, when we learned about sexuality it was, well we didn't really learn about it, but they never um, they were never negative about other sexualities. They just didn't go into them. So it wasn't that they were against teaching it, it just didn't happen. And um the sex education it was very, kinda theory work.*

These observations were widespread, but were not the only experiences conveyed. There was one participant who reported a high quality sex education experience and she remembered it quite well. Charlie, who recalled her experience as being good, told me that she thinks past statistics (the hidden curriculum) might be part of the reason for her experience:

> *I was pretty lucky 'cause I reckon it is probably my PSHE teachers taking it on themselves because my school had 40 years before, well 40 years behind my year group. Um, Littlehampton had the highest teenage sex, sex, uh statistics in the UK and so they took it from that, from that year onwards they thought, we really need to educate these children and then, by them doing that, my school was the biggest school in that particular area, um they then, rates really dropped, they dropped dramatically and they saw that that was having an effect, those lessons they were giving were having an effect because you know those two teachers, they they've been at that school for a combination of 50 yrs. Those two, you know they were really really um passionate about what they did, teaching every student who went through that school so, um but they, you know they, I remember one of my teachers talking about gay sex, touched on lesbian sex, I mean she, she got out, she showed all the different types of protections, um got out a dental dam . . .*

In this excerpt, Charlie describes something that the other young people felt was missing, and that was a lack of passion and knowledge about teaching the subject. Her peers who were not as keen on their sex education said that for them, sex education just happened. The other important observation drawn from Charlie's statement was the idea that teachers did talk about those 'tough' topics. Concurrently many of the participants noted that there was still a residual effect from the recently repealed Section 28, thus the null curricula. It is important to note that many of these participants would have started secondary school in the mid-2000s and it is interesting that a policy that was repealed at least three years prior might still have had an effect. This was something that several participants commented on heavily in the first focus group. It is important to also consider those who did report a good experience of sex education typically credited their teachers. It appears that regardless of the material used, if the teacher is interested and presents the information in a confident and convincing manner, students may be more receptive to talking about these sensitive topics in the classroom. This is supported by teacher's responses in other research (Strange et al. 2006, p. 41).

Within the continuum of experiences had by these young people, some were ambivalent about their sex education. This was perpetuated by a variety of reasons, such as the feeling that sex education was not necessary, some were not sure of their identity at that stage, while others felt that the material was not relevant to them. For instance, Hugh said that he was *'quite happy with everything that happened, because you get told the basics and that's all you really need. You can find the rest out yourself'*. Becky similarly responded that:

> *I don't think [what was missing affected me], because you know when I was 13, 14, 15 I wasn't really interested in having sex anyway so I didn't, no I didn't wonder what I should be doing because there wasn't any situation where I felt like I didn't know what to do, if you see what I mean.*

While each of these participants felt that sex education was not necessarily relevant at the time, most did express the importance of sex education, as they realised that not everyone had the same support structure in place that they may have had.

7.2.2.5 Identification of Heteronormativity by the Participants

In this section, heteronormativity is discussed as it pertains to the nuance in the curriculum identified by the young people. Heteronormativity was a word that I did not introduce into the sessions, but rather, the young people often used the word to describe their sex education. Becky succinctly mentioned that, *'they didn't mention, uh, you know any sort of non-heteronormative sexual health issues at all'*. Emma, on the other hand, recalled her sex education and the *'coverage'* of gay relationships and was explicit in her conveyance of the issue::

> *Year 6, I think we got the basic ins and outs of a straight relationship and year 7 basic straight relationship stuff, but nothing about gay relationships at all, ever, even in high school all through my education, um, from year 5 we always had PHSE whatever the classes are called, um, but never any gay or lesbian relationships. I think it would have been also, um, quite helpful to know about transgender, um, although it doesn't really go in with, well it does kind of, into sexual education, but everyone seems to have a naivety towards it and I think that's where a lot of discrimination comes from. So if they could do a little bit more on gay and transgender cause we got loads on stuff for straight relationships, I mean all the STIs, straight relationships can have and I guess it kind of covered gay relationships 'cause it had the whole anal, what you can get from anal, you can get AIDS which turns into HIV.*

The significant aspect of this quote is where Emma conveys that they covered gay relationships by discussing anal sex. This is relevant in two ways: First, it suggests that there is something inherently *gay* about anal sex, which reiterates a point made in the previous chapter. This

suggests that people fixate on anal sex as gay sex and not just a variation of sexual activity. Interestingly, this was pointed out by a gay female who is not likely to participate in the act, yet this portrayal still exemplifies ways in which the action defines the relationship, and in particular, gay relationships. Also, it may suggest that the educator may not be well informed about the commonality of anal sex in heterosexual relationships, which is evidenced by Reinisch, Hill, Sanders and Ziemba-Davis (1995) and the more recent British National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal) (2013) data.

Aside from Emma, the participants were split on their recollection. Some recalled minimal education on same sex couples, while others received none. Of the former, Imogen responded that the teacher spoke directly to her about homosexuality but only because she was persistently questioning about it. The recollection was that the teachers only spoke '*about what the man and the woman do to have sex*'. Amy was one of the participants in the latter group that could not recall anything other than a heteronormative programme. She said, '*I don't think we touched on sexuality at all*' and her reasoning was that '*they think they aren't allowed to approach different lifestyles and different types of relationships*'. This view was expanded on by another participant, Andy, who said:

> *I think teachers are so worried about getting their asses sued and so the school must kind of have that 'don't go into this subject' . . . There are still schools of thought in this country certainly that say it's absolutely fine and absolutely abominable and so for a teacher to take a stand and say I'm going to talk about it openly, is putting them in a very dangerous place, just speaking as I've done some work in a secondary school.*

Again, his view focuses on the legality of approaching the topics of alternative sexualities in the classroom. This view was shared by several others, but not necessarily in legal terms, who said that they thought past legislation (Section 28) still influences policy and practice today. This idea chimes with Alldred and David's (2007) finding that 'teachers are reluctant to take responsibility for . . . issues perceived as risky' (p. 169) in that teachers are perceived to reluctantly discuss sensitive topics if they may be concerned about repercussions from their superiors. Other opinions shared by participants were related to religion, for those who attended religious schools, and teachers not wanting the burden or hassle of dealing with a contentious topic within these contexts.

One of the participants, Alice, shared her experience of being in a children's home after she was excluded from mainstream education. While she said that the care home tried to cover sex education, she considered that it was lacking in one respect, the inclusion of LGBT topics:

Um, it was mainly just in one sense what they would call heterosexual. So a man to woman, having sex and then obviously the woman would be getting pregnant or whatever. They'd go through different things and, but it wasn't no, more talking sense of like, well, if you don't use a condom you can get this, that. It was just mainly bordered on sex.

Overall, participants often recalled homosexuality or sexual orientation being broached in passing, but infrequently the information was reportedly useful and consistent with a truly comprehensive, non-heteronormative curriculum. This may be due to the school ethos/policies, the teacher's personal beliefs or even a lapse in memory of the participant. Nevertheless, considering that this is corroborated by the statistics on the lack of education on sexual orientation and homosexuality presented in the previous chapter, I believe that the first two options are more likely the cause for the situation.

7.2.2.6 Bullying… As a Result of Poor Sex Education

For the participants interviewed, bullying was often prevalent in their school-aged lives. This bullying came from multiple sources such as students, teachers/staff, parents, and even the school, through the lack of adequate (and even explicit refusal of) coverage on LGBT topics in the classroom. I focus on the first two sources in this section, as the final source, the school, has been covered through the curriculum and experiences section.

Even when the teachers knew I was gay, they still never touched on it. It was still a, in fact I remember one teacher saying 'Duncan be quiet for the lesson' as I was walking in cause they know I'm a rather loud mouth. (Duncan)

When I came out in my school, I think I was the only person to come out in school to that point. They took me in a room and told me I'm not allowed to talk about homosexuality in the school . . . I was about 13, 14. (John)

When the first focus group was asked whether students at their school were bullied, they replied that all of the young people who were out in school, as well as those who were suspected to be gay or lesbian, were bullied at one time or another. This is also the reason why some of the participants that I interviewed either refuse or refused to come out in school or college. Four specific stories are shared because they are the ones who chose to speak in-depth about specific occurrences. One of the participants was a transgender female and the second and third participants identified as camp, which had been explained by participants in both the first and second focus groups, as the outward appearance and behavioural characteristics of being '*limp-wristed, pink and fluffy*' and the fourth was an individual that came out in a religious school.

Imogen, the transgender female had an extremely tough time in several schools that she attended. She talked about her experience:

> *I was, I was bullied a lot. I think in some of my places, they* (teachers) *never stepped in and never knew, I don't even think most of them knew what the word homophobic was or like, or like gay and stuff.*

> *When I was getting homophobic bullying nothing was ever done about it. I mean they knew they were being horrible, but they didn't actually know they were actually discriminating I don't think 'cause they just didn't.*

She felt that some of the reason for her being bullied was the lack of knowledge about LGBT people or homophobic bullying. One of her teachers blamed her for the treatment that she was experiencing:

> [Teachers] *always used to blame me for it. Because they thought I was intentionally winding them up. Some of the teachers got really angry with the person, but some just said 'you wind people up and that's why they do it to you'. They never used to have any sympathy for me some of them. Like, they used to just look upon me as if I was the one who was doing the damage . . .*

This experience is unfathomable for an individual trying to find themselves and make sense of the feelings in which they are currently experiencing, but unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident as will be demonstrated by the next two participants. This also reflects back on the idea mentioned previously about the role of teachers. While teachers in sex education have the burden of educating the children on relevant topics, all teachers need to be aware of potential issues and possibly educated further on the potential for homo- (bi-, trans-) phobic bullying. In this case, there was perceived ignorance on the teacher's behalf, with the participant feeling that they did not have an idea about LGBT issues.

The next participant who experienced extensive bullying at the hands of his peers was Alfie. Alfie identified as camp, which was his understanding of his experience. In light of this perception, Alfie described his experience as such:

> *The problem was when I was bullied was because I was different, because I was camp, I mean, someone like me . . . extremely camp, um, I tend to wear different clothes than everyone else and different hair styles so, and obviously boys in my class like to take the mick out of me and uh they were basically, they were vicious to me. I don't really want to go into too much detail cause its, for me, it's not a very nice thing to remember having to grow up with that sort of thing. When, I mean, and obviously the teachers only saw it as normal, everyday bullying and picking on. They never saw it as picking on me because I was, well, well because I was gay.*

At the end of Alfie's statement, he assessed how he thought teachers perceived the bullying. This is similar to Imogen's experience and other participants who said that their parents

approached faculty, but nothing was ever done to those who were the aggressors or to the teachers who condoned the behaviour. Again, this demonstrates ignorance on the part of the teacher.

The third participant who shared his bullying experience in depth was Duncan. Duncan, at the time of the focus group, had just experienced verbal and physical aggression at the hands of students, while the teacher was perceived as the instigator. Duncan was participating in physical education when the teacher made a comment towards him; this instigated his peers into verbally and physically attacking him. Fortunately, Duncan reported this incident to the headmaster and was given a meeting to address his concern, but unfortunately, I did not see Duncan again to hear of the outcome.

Physical education, or rather excelling at activities within physical education, is perceived as masculinising on several levels (Cockburn and Clarke 2002; Hickey 2008). This starts in the changing room and proceeds onto the pitch, field, court, etc. The last story that is shared is of John, who also experienced bullying in this masculinising environment:

> *I was quite lucky in that case 'cause I think they were just as nervous as me in the changing room as I was of them, so then I never got bullied in the changing room, only outside of it, in actual PE. That's when I got bullied not in the changing rooms 'cause I think they were just as scared as me as I was of them, so that was quite a strange experience.*

John points out that the intimate setting of the locker room was not a conducive environment for bullying in his specific instance but unfortunately, once outside, this changed.

These four stories are just the more detailed ones that were shared in the focus groups, although most other participants experienced varied levels of verbal abuse and on occasion physical abuse. Unfortunately, the bullying did not end there. For some of the participants, the teachers were not just passive or inactive participants in bullying, but actively did so to a few of the participants. This was mentioned briefly in Duncan's story where the teacher seemed to instigate and then stood aside while the bullying was taking place. John shared a personal experience of his, which on the surface may not appear to be bullying but the underlying issue is seemingly homophobic:

> *When I came out in my school, I think I was the only person to come out in school at that point. They took me in a room and told me that I was not allowed to talk about homosexuality in the school.*

In the instance of bullying, the data from the survey and the focus groups did not completely coincide as nearly all participants in the focus groups who were perceived to be

out, were bullied, whereas those who identified as LGBT on the survey, did not report rates as high. This could be attributed to several possibilities. For instance, the notion that these young people, while identifying as LGBT on the survey, may not be out, or, society has become more accepting over the past five to eight years. Another possibility may lie with the focus group participants in that this may be a biased sample of young people attending this youth group. This could be due to differing circumstances or experiences with being an LGBT young person, which led them to seek out this youth group. While it is difficult to say with certainty, the first notion is more plausible as there have been a number of LGBT initiatives in recent years (e.g. equality in healthcare, marriage, etc.) that may have changed societal perceptions thus reducing the likelihood of bullying, although not eliminating it.

It is important to recognise that homophobic bullying still occurs regularly in the classroom. This bullying comes in the form of verbal and physical aggression from peers and occasionally verbal aggression from faculty, as described above. These negative experiences have consequences and while fortunately the young people in this study endured the harassment and moved on with their lives, they still recall their experiences back in school.

7.2.3 Identity and Emotions

In this section, participants' views on identity and the emotions involved in navigating a largely heteronormative institution are shared. I look at identity two-fold; the first facet examines how the young people see themselves as individuals and how they place themselves within sex education and society. The focus then shifts to social identity, which covers how they feel others view them and how they feel society and education impacts on them. I then continue to look at the emotions involved in being an LGBT individual in school. Finally, this last section contains some of my reflections on what I experienced with the young people during the focus groups and interviews.

7.2.3.1 Personal Identity

Identifying as an LGBT or other marginalised individual is difficult for school-aged children as evidenced in this research, especially when the anticipation of coming out in school perpetuates visions of bullying, physical aggression and an overwhelmingly difficult time in education. This section looks at some of the points that emerged in context, which are relevant

to identifying as LGBT and subsequently how that identity relates to being a student in sex education.

One topic that was raised in the first focus group was the meaning of sexuality and whether it actually existed. Ewan remarked, '*Um, yes and no. My personal opinion of sexuality, you know Sigmund Freud and all that stuff . . . but my belief is that children are asexual. The way they are brought up determines who they are*'. This notion was similar to Duncan's idea that '*there's a possibility for both, whether it sways to the left a bit or sways to the right a bit, genetic variation, but I don't think there's a definite, this is a gay gene*'. He later added that:

> *It's something very early on that determines it, but I don't think it's genetic. I think it's the way you're brought up, oh this is nature versus nurture, but I think it's, nature, genetics may play a part as to which one you're more likely to be, but it's ultimately your decision, whether subconsciously or not*.

John, conversely, felt that there might be something innate about sexuality and expanded on this with his assertion that there was fluidity to sexuality. He contributed, '*I personally think it's, you know that graph* (drew the normal distribution curve with his hand)*, I think most people* [are] *bisexual . . . actually, less who are straight and gay*.' He went on to then say that he felt that this changed as people grew, which is consistent with Moore and Rosenthal's assumption and discussion (2006, p. 123). This idea of fluidity was approached again in another session, where again, there was uncertainty. The following quotes exemplify the diverse understanding of sexuality:

> *As early as I can remember attraction or being attracted to guys, that's always been to my mind. I may have been born that way or there may have been something before I was sexualised that determined that for me, but either way this is what I know.* (Ewan)

> *I've always felt something wasn't right. And I have been with, I'm bi, but I've been with guys. I haven't been with girls, but I know that I'm not straight.* (Amy)

> *Uh, I sort of, I flip flopped a bit, between, I wasn't really sure, I kept thinking I was this way and then changing my mind and so I never really had a solid idea, but I knew there was something missing that should have been there.* (Becky)

The notion of a nurtured sexuality was slightly more popular than the notion of a natural sexuality. In one instance, this led to a debate over the prospect of finding a *'gay gene'* and the impact that it might have on termination rates. While this is outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that this issue weighed on at least a couple of these LGBT young people's minds.

The last topic of relevance here was a discussion on the benefits of discussing sexuality in school and whether this could have helped these young people as they transitioned into

adulthood. The idea that school age is a time for learning and understanding does not just apply to textbooks and truths but also the subjectivities of humans. Alice said the following in regards to her experience not having any educational guidance:

> *It's like well, who do I look to. I mean, I'm this person, but where do I fit it? You mean, I couldn't fit into anywhere, I was always on my own, so I needed to keep myself to myself. And I suppose that's the problem, I was always keeping to myself, so I didn't know much and I did it myself.*

Erica also said that she may have had a slightly different experience had there been support in education but she also admits that maybe it is simply not feasible as the proportion of LGBT young people are comparably low.

> *I think I would have probably realised slightly earlier that I'm sort of bi, sort of lesbian and not still decided. But I would have realised earlier because I've never had any information so I had to sort of find it on my own and sort of come to terms with it on myself, but I guess not everyone wants to hear about all that because not everyone's, sort of, gay or LGBT.*

Finally, it is important to understand the impact that cannot easily be conveyed in words, such as describing these young people's struggles and successes when 'finding themselves' as gendered and sexualised individuals. The young people who chose to come out in school faced a system that was not conducive to accepting alternative sexualities. As discussed in chapter 2, there are several concerns that could arise during this time or in the future for many LGBT individuals who find themselves in similar predicaments.

7.2.3.2 Social Identity and Stigma

Identity was a key subtheme that appeared during the focus groups and it was important to differentiate between the personal identity of the individual and the identity that was put on display for everyone to see, and at times, stigmatised. In this section, accounts of how these young people felt others viewed them are presented.

In mainstream media, programmes such as Glee have raised the profile of LGBT people. This became a focal point in one of the focus groups that led to a discussion on stereotypes. While several of the participants were happy that there was now a show watched around the world that talked about some of the problems faced by LGBT people, not everyone was entirely happy with the stereotypes conveyed, specifically the camp stereotype. The following dialog took place between opposing views on the matter.

> Ewan: '*It's a bad stereotype in my opinion.*'
>
> John: '*So is Glee a better representation of LGBT people?*'
>
> Ewan: '*It's better in that it makes the idea that gay people do suffer sometimes because of their sexuality, but it is perpetuating a somewhat negative stereotype.*'
>
> Duncan: '*What about Blaine? What about Blaine? Blaine!*'
>
> Ewan: '*He's a bit camp too.*'

The figure of the 'camp gay' is a stereotype that seemingly represents a lifestyle that is indicative of all gay people. John however, noted that this notion of camp may not always be on display, but rather is a performance of a type of gay individual:

> *I find that different people, some people kind of are camp in different situation, different levels of camp. Like you know I'll find somebody who's really camp when he's out and about, but when he's talking to me one to one, he'll be quite less camp, but you know, I mean less of the flamboyance, less calm.*

This demonstrates fluidity in the presentation of one's self. Although, these varying levels of acting camp exist, the notion of a camp individual reinforces gay stereotypes, even for those who do not identify as camp. Interestingly, this term is never used for lesbians; instead, stereotypes such as 'butch' are more readily available.

Stereotypes were mentioned in varying contexts throughout multiple focus groups but typically, stereotypes for LGBT people were particularly negative. Imogen talked about her experience being stereotyped because of her mannerisms and way of speaking, which she felt was particularly troublesome. She went on to say:

> *A lot of people stereotype um gay people just by looking at them, and lesbians just by looking at them. Like if they see a man that's really, really feminine, they assume straight away that this person is gay and that's not true at all. You don't know then, you know. Just like they assume um a lesbian, a woman is a lesbian just 'cause she has really short hair and dresses like a man.*

Duncan addresses this type of stereotyping with the idea of labels:

> *It's based on the fact that people see, humans work in a way where everything is defined. If something isn't defined it's very hard to work in that environment. Um, I mean we live in a world where everything has labels and everything has numbers and everything has things. Even the paint on the wall has, yes that's lime 237.*

While he said that he felt that stereotypes were not conducive to friendliness towards LGBT identities, he acknowledged that these stereotypes are in existence as a label. Ewan felt that this was the case '*because we think associatively*', but in essence it is to preserve, through communication, a label for the person that someone is referring. He went on to say that:

We naturally put labels on things and the thing is, you can challenge the stereotype, but however much you challenge the stereotype, the stereotype is still going to be there.

Regardless of whether we consider a label or a stereotype, John felt that these were more often than not harmful and perpetuated by a lack of gay role models:

I find that these stereotypes begin to get labelled for why ever it is given to them, so media is a big thing, or it just happens to be there you know. And they get stereotyped by gossip and general rumours. So most people just kind of make it up and so because you know when you are growing up there's no positive role models out there, there's nothing good to stereotype-ish thing on them, so it gets put to whatever, kind of like um, normally it's like t.v. or rumour, so it's always the negative, well it's not always, but most of the time it's a negative stereotype put on it which, conceptions . . .

Although some would consider Chris Colfer (Kurt on the show Glee) a gay role model, the stereotype of a camp gay was considered an impediment to the presentation of the average gay individual.

Another example of a gay role model that was provided was Christian in EastEnders, played by John Partridge. Although not described as a camp individual himself, his partner on the show was portrayed as such. This again reaffirms a negative stereotype that is already present in society. Nevertheless, Alfie discussed the importance of having such role models as someone who is outwardly gay and proud:

I hope I'm a good gay role model with the students, cause I'm hoping with my sort of role model that I'm showing that, that I may be gay, but I am still the same ol' boy that people knew when I first came to college and there's nothing different about me.

This fits with previous literature that explains that gay role models, specifically teachers, in schools can benefit everyone, not just the LGBT population, as it adds a level of experience in encountering sexuality (Johnston 2004, p. 198).

In this section, stereotypes were the primary representations of a social identity that these young LGBT people were confronted with. Those individuals who were already out wanted to become role models for their identity and possibly change the opinions of others in hope of a more understanding and equal life. The school was identified as a potential location to help build the confidence for these young people, but restrictiveness, a lack of understanding and, in some cases outward aggression, prevented these people from enjoying life and being a valued member of society.

The other finding that warrants attention here is the advocacy of certain media outlets and programmes. As discussed earlier in this chapter. In relation to the *Sex Education Show*,

these programmes are not viewed in a vacuum. The information that is transmitted serves as an educational tool, though as previously argued in relation to stereotypes, care needs to be taken with what is transmitted. Shows that perpetuate stereotypes are likely to reinforce those in society, while programming that combats this, is an appropriate way to inform the masses.

7.2.3.3 Emotions and Decisions as Important Elements of Sex Education

Emotions and decisions are two things that everyone will face growing up. Participants in this study have identified various ways in which these should be educated on and not abused during sex education. Duncan firstly identifies the impact that emotions have on the decision to have sex. He suggests that as a practice it has become just a behaviour, an act, with no emotional commitment.

> *I think there also needs to be a focus on the emotional side of things because it's much more emotional. I think that's why these days, young people are seen to have a much more active sexual preference than an emotional preference.*

This implies that with the addition of emotions within sex education, sex would possibly be seen as less accessible. Duncan continues this line of thought with his opinion of casual sex:

> *That's one phrase, one night stand. It's just, it's just sex. But that's because they haven't been taught that it's an emotional response as well. If they don't know it's an emotional response then how are they going to have a relationship? They're going to think it's a fun activity.*

Regardless of each participant's individual view on the subject, it was quite clear that educating around feelings and emotions in relation to relationships, communication, termination, sex, etc., was something that was lacking in sex education. In one instance, Andy recalls how his educators used emotions as a means of altering a decision:

> *I just remember that they called up 2 people from our year, a boy and a girl, and they said right, um, before you're going to have sex with your partner, and these 2 people were dying of embarrassment, they said this is something that you absolutely need to do this. I remember the woman who was doing it just said, you need to look at your partner, you need to look at each other completely naked and look and actually say is this something I absolutely want to do and everyone burst out laughing, yeah 'cause I can't imagine anything more of a turn off than just, what do ya think? It was that I saw as just like being the most impractical advice in year 9 sex ed. of just before you do anything just stop exactly what you're doing and take 4 steps back from each other and look at each other in the nude and if you're not ready and you don't want to have sex you should stop right there and just you know not do it. And it was like, I can't imagine that ever playing out.*

Educators know that sex is an emotionally charged act but they seem to fail to convey that aspect of the lesson. In this example, the teacher utilised a range of feelings and emotions such as uncertainty and fear, in an attempt to prevent young people from doing something that they are possibly not ready to do. Emma responded to Andy's example by saying that surely everyone's first time involves nervousness, fear, and self-consciousness but standing back and letting someone stare at you naked, would make it worse. Emma also pointed out that communication should be a recurring aspect of a relationship that was to progress to the intimate stages of sex.

Communicating with a partner elicits a range of emotions that will eventually lead to making decisions about the relationship and sex. Without this knowledge, it is difficult for an individual to make an educated and rational decision. One participant commented that because the focus was always on sex, the idea that there were other ways to express one's love for another never entered into the discussion. It was also portrayed that more often than not, when relationships are discussed in sex education, everything seems to be *'formulaic'* as Emma described it. Educators only focused on the endpoint and never discussed the ways in which to alter or at least help young people make an informed decision about whether they were ready for sex. Jack described the impact that this had on him:

> *I never got taught, nobody taught me what to do in a relationship, like I didn't have a father there to tell me what's right and what's wrong. I never got taught, like I had a discussion with some friends who had sex ed. with me. I don't know what to do in a relationship, so with me, I just I get all hesitant and step back when I get into a relationship. I always step back and never forwards 'cause I was never taught what to do in relationships.*

Emma shared a similar perspective to Jack as she had lost her mother and felt that it was too difficult to talk to her father. Through some tears, she explained that it is important that sex education cover these, amongst other, topics for those who do not feel comfortable with the situation that they have at home.

Teaching children how to relate and handle emotions, as well as enhancing their decision-making ability, might be difficult. However, most of these participants felt unprepared for the real world of sex and relationships. This reinforces the idea that even though children may be exposed to material elsewhere, such as the media, there is still a place for education.

7.3 Discussion

It was evident from the start of the first focus group, that the young LGBT participants were keen to share their experiences of sex education. Few positive experiences reported but rather 80 percent of participants expressed ambivalent to negative views of their sex education. The reasons for the negative views varied but two main themes were prevalent - values and pedagogy. Young people felt that the heteronormative tone prevalent throughout sex education was concerning, while others spoke about the narrow scope and the way in which sex education was delivered. This led to several becoming disinterested in sex education because they felt that it was not relevant to them. This mirrors Hillier and colleagues (2007) and Hillier and Mitchell's (2008) findings in Australian schools. However, for those who did report positive experiences, they did so even though their described programmes did not appear to be comprehensive sex education (Allen 2005; Braeken et al. 2006; Strange et al. 2006; Westwood and Mullan 2006). Moreover, regardless of the young people's experiences, their stories demonstrated a wide variation in curricula, which is similar to findings by the UK Youth Parliament (2007, p. 4).

There was no consistency in the duration of sex education programmes and little consistency in the way in which sex education was conducted, including that of the material chosen for the classroom. Similar findings have been found in recent research in Scotland (Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee 2013). This is not surprising as there is nothing in the national or local guidance documents that require any such planning. Most participants recalled receiving short lectures, seminars or assemblies about biological topics, as shown in chapter 6. These were reportedly not overly useful or varied to accommodate different learning styles (Schmeck 1988; Paechter 2006, p. 129). This not only corroborates the data presented in chapter six and previous research (Aggleton and Crewe 2005, p. 303) but also demonstrates that generally the only sex education presented in the classroom, serves to satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum. Moreover, while it is impossible to know what was actually discussed in the classroom, as there may be a discrepancy between what was 'taught' versus what was 'shown', it must be assumed that the information provided is a good indication of the gaps in the curriculum. It is also apparent that a thorough discussion with students to ensure an understanding of the material and the reasoning behind what they were taught was not always employed; even less so with the much preferred active teaching strategies (Bonwell and Elson 1991; Meyers and Jones 1993; Michel et al. 2009).

The organisation of sex education varied between schools, as evidenced by the participants' discussions on the variation in materials used in the classroom. Some participants recalled worksheets and books, while others mentioned the use of audiovisual media. Examples of the latter include a birthing video, *The Sex Education Show*, and a video that discussed (and apparently shamed) masturbation. While paper resources were not recalled, even the media examples show a lack of continuity as to the sources used, as none of these resources were reported by more than four participants. However, *The Sex Education Show* was better known because many watched it outside of the classroom. Thus, it was deemed an influential and important source of teaching for the young people, in part, because it covered more than just biological aspects of sex.

Some participants felt that teachers could have done more in the classroom, while others felt that the teachers were seemingly nervous or unprepared for the discussions and questions that would undoubtedly be present in sex education. For many respondents, the report of negative experiences resulted in part from poor materials and non-engaging teaching strategies but also from the lack of appropriate education on LGBT topics, as noted above. This then led to the school and government ultimately being responsible for a lack of quality sex education. This was perceived to be due to Section 28, which, while several years since repeal, still had lasting effects on the school system. It is difficult to know objectively whether Section 28 had an impact on post-repeal sex education, but homophobic/heteronormative sentiments in the classroom remain.

Even though the majority of the young people had a less than enjoyable experience, not everyone had a negative experience. Those who benefitted from good experiences with sex education explicitly credited their teachers. Regardless of content, the young people who had positive experiences still felt that the teachers were ultimately the ones who made sex education tolerable, if not enjoyable. In these instances, the teachers were credited with being knowledgeable about the topics and comfortable with discussing sexuality with children. This relates to the Ofsted report (2002) in which it is stated, 'SRE should be taught by teachers who have the necessary knowledge and teaching expertise' (p. 33). If all sex education teachers were well versed in the topics that make for successful sex education, the perception of the programme might be enhanced; however, this alone does not ensure that all the necessary topics will be covered by the teacher (as discussed in chapter 2). This again supports the call for better guidance.

Many of these young people felt that poor sex education, as well as the lack of discussion on sexual orientation, contributed to the ignorance about alternative sexualities, and bullying displayed by other young people and even faculty. This fits with the recommendations to take preventative measures by educating on these topics (Warwick et al. 2004, p. 23). Clearly, the national guidance document, which specifically speaks about curtailing bullying, does not have a large impact in the school setting (Guasp 2012, p. 2). Even in the local and school based documents, bullying is understood to be a problem in the classroom and teachers are instructed to take steps to alleviate it but this endeavour has fallen short. Furthermore, consider the implications of when the bullying extends beyond the student body and into the ranks of faculty, as this was the case in multiple instances. Bullying is problematic regardless of the circumstance but even more so in the latter examples of bullying being perpetuated by teachers in the classroom. This is especially pertinent considering that, these individuals are tasked with providing a safe learning environment for all children (DfEE 2000, p. 13; ESCC and BCC 2003, p. 26). Conversely, these occurrences demonstrate ignorance towards LGBT issues and the need for sensitivity training. In short, these teachers need SRE themselves, as this is also an area where many were identified to be lacking adequate skills (Warwick et al. 2004, p. 16).

The second main theme that arose during this part of the data collection deals with identity and subsequent emotions. This refers to the way that these young people identified with being LGBT and the portrayal of LGBT people in society. Some participants spoke extensively about the need for gay role models, which would support the gay community and help normalise the issues surrounding being LGBT. Many of these young people were optimistic that subtle changes in society might provide an additional means of acquiring information about LGBT issues, which could counteract a lack of this in the classroom. Examples of this are the television shows that now regularly portray gay characters, and the call from a prominent figure from the British Broadcasting Corporation, Ben Stephenson, for even more exposure (Brady 2014). Even though there was still some concern about the way in which gay people were portrayed on television, young people felt that these role models, by making alternative sexualities mainstream, had the potential to fill the gap that was lacking in the classroom. While this has potential to generate more attention to the prevalence of LGBT identities, this may prove to be limited in that there may still be a discrepancy between the perceived social identity of LGBT individuals and their personal identity, due to conservative cultural norms and personal values.

The next theme, emotions, was found on both sides of the educational system. In one instance, teachers utilised the idea that sex and relationships are emotionally charged in order to educate the students, although in this example, it proved to be embarrassing to those who were part of the lesson. Despite this, the emotions experienced by the young people in this sample are more relevant to this thesis.

Most participants concurred that emotions were never actually dealt with in sex education. They agreed that they were never taught about the ways in which individuals feel in different circumstances, especially regarding sex and sexuality. While it may seem that this is something that should be covered in the home, it became obvious that some of these young people grew up without someone whom they felt was able to attend to their emotional needs. These emotional needs ranged from support in relationships, to support with developing gender and sexuality, each requiring a set of skills that could be integrated into PSHE (Personal, Social, and Health Education), which encompasses sex education.

The final theme that became apparent involved society at large. Within this theme, participants identified both religion and societal aspects that they felt had affected them as LGBT identified young people and impacted upon the way in which sex education was conceived in England. Moreover, even though these themes could be portrayed as unrelated to sex education, these young people identified a distinct relationship between religion, society, and the classroom.

Religion was a primary component of some of the participants' education, as they attended religious affiliated schools. Participants felt that religious ideology about homosexuals (Yipp 2005) and, for one individual specifically, the justification of such beliefs with scripture was the reason for both the experience in school and the experience of poor sex education. This justification of homophobia through scripture was not just confined to religious institutions however, leading many to believe that religion was a major influence in the way schools handle sex education, demonstrating a possible influence on the policies, the materials, and finally the overarching problems experienced by many of the young people. Furthermore, it does not help with dispelling perceptions of homosexuality within Christianity when esteemed sexologists are writing that it is a sin to act on homosexual desires (Weerakoon 2012, p. 63), even though many religions have accepted LGBT individuals amongst their ranks and even Pope Francis has called for the marginalisation of LGBT people to end.

Finally, discrimination was viewed as problematic regardless of context, in that anyone that does not conform to the societal standard is rejected. In at least one instance, a parent

was identified as someone who discriminated, so this leads to the question as to whether parents should have any input into how sex education is conducted. This demonstrates that homophobia is still prevalent in society and thus not all of society may have the knowledge or experience to provide informed debate on the content of sex education. This relates back to chapter 4 where I discussed the influence that parents could have on sex education. Additionally, it relates to the right to remove a child from non-statutory components of sex education. If parents themselves are unable to educate their children on matters that they do not personally understand, it seems illogical to allow them to withhold that information from the next generation. While there were mixed opinions on this among participants, a significant majority who held the stance that this should not be allowed to occur.

7.4 Conclusion

There was no single factor that led to the disappointment that the young people felt about their sex education. In most cases, a lack of quality materials, inconsistency in the classroom and additional issues surrounding heteronormativity or homophobia, such as bullying and discrimination, all played a role in making sex education difficult for these young people. This was not necessarily in just the sex education classroom, but in the school environment in general.

Overall, sex education was a facet of education that these young people chose to forget, or at least not reflect on, as they became older and more personally and sexually experienced. This is problematic, as society often does not adequately provide any additional support for LGBT people. While this is improving at the time of this thesis, it nevertheless limits their exposure to proper assistance as they integrate into a world, which in many cases, still marginalises alternative sexualities. This is changing in England with the legalisation of gay marriage but what is yet to be seen is whether this will create a more tolerant society towards children who happen to not identify with the norms, in this case heterosexuality.

Moving onto the final chapter, much of the material from this chapter, as well as the proceeding three chapters, is collated to provide a detailed, encompassing, examination of how sex education is viewed by young people, especially those identifying as LGBT, in present-day southeast England. This is then be summarised with recommendations as to the future of sex education.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

This research was conducted to gain insight into how young people, especially those identifying as LGBT, socially construct their sex education experience while focusing on sexuality and sexual orientation as an identity and an educational theme. It was also important to understand the contexts in which these experiences were gained. Before the final discussion, which emphasises the key points from the empirical chapters, recommendations, and an outline for future research, it is important to reiterate the evolving research questions that have guided this work:

(1) How is heteronormativity manifest in historical and contemporary sex education curricula and policies?

(2) What is the content and quality of the materials and policies of sex education in southeast England?

(3) How do students in a variety of educational settings perceive their sex education?

(4) What are the perceived differences in the way in which sexual orientation is presented and accepted in the classroom, in terms of curriculum and from an LGBT young person's perspective?

These questions are discussed and answered within this chapter and contribute an enhanced understanding of the current views held on sex education with regard to sexual orientation.

8.1 Amalgamating the Discussion: The Contribution to the Field

The previous chapters have been organised to demonstrate the flow of information from the government to the schools and ultimately the pupils. This section amalgamates that information in an attempt to add clarity to the current sex education environment, as well as advance knowledge of the needs identified by young people in relation to sex education. However, instead of focusing on the hierarchy of education within this final discussion, the organisation now follows the order of the research questions to provide clarity and conciseness, given the multi-faceted environment that surrounds sex education.

Additionally, this section serves to extend the knowledge base around the issues raised. Each component plays a role in the lack of a holistically designed and implemented sex education programme that leads to a perceived marginalisation of some young people.

8.1.1 Dominance of Heteronormativity in Policy and the Curriculum

Heteronormativity - as discussed in chapter 2 - is an important concept and theoretical underpinning to this thesis. As such, it has played a large role in the methodological approach. More specifically, it was important to address the lack of voice for LGBT young people that was often prevalent in sex education research throughout the literature review. This led to the decision to seek LGBT participants in an attempt to elicit their views on sex education and the educational system in general. These views further allowed the question of whether heteronormativity is prevalent throughout sex education to be answered. In this instance, the answer is undoubtedly yes, and thus is the focus of the most important contribution of this thesis. This is seen to throughout the policy/guidance documents but more so, throughout the curriculum.

As the national guidance was written over a decade ago, it falls short of providing an equal educational experience for all, especially considering that remnants of Section 28 are still in evidence. While the local guidance has taken steps to ensure equality, school policies are still varied on the level in which we can speak to their heteronormative tendencies. Although Dockside's policy is clearly the more progressive and thorough of the two secondary schools, it is likely that there are other schools that have policies that are even less clear than Harbourview, which possesses a weak (neither prescriptive nor holistic) policy. In addition, any of the guidance and policy documents that refer to the national guidance document, lends credibility to its outdated descriptors including the part on Section 28. Without new national guidance, it can be understood why there is difficulty in schools providing a thorough and holistic sex education policy. Thus, it is important to recall Cohen and Ball's (1990) view on policy as political and pragmatic, yet in these instances, it appears that the political overshadows the pragmatism.

When considering the curriculum itself, heteronormativity can easily be identified, both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly it can be observed through the predominant discussion

on pregnancy and contraception[32], versus the much lower rates of discussion surrounding sexual orientation and homosexuality. In addition, heteronormativity was a prevalent topic in the focus groups and interviews when speaking on experiences of the biological classroom. I would also argue that the high rates of respondents reporting that anal sex was not appropriate for discussion in the classroom suggests a level of heteronormativity as anal sex is often attached to being gay. As Emma stated, *'I guess it kind of covered gay relationships 'cause it had the whole anal, what you can get from anal, you can get AIDS which turns into HIV'.* While this topic was not explored in more depth within any of the focus groups or interviews, it appears that there is still a connection between sexual orientation and specific practices of sex.

Lastly, the idea of an explicit heteronormativity (in this instance homophobia) was demonstrated through the prevalence of bullying, which became a topic that many individuals wanted to discuss, even though it was not originally a topic that had been included in the schedule. This shows that the experiences associated with their education more broadly and linked to sex education, shaped the way in which the young people viewed how sexual orientation was perceived in school. These issues were not confined to students however, as discussed by John, Imogen, and Duncan, among others. In some instances, teachers were the instigators or validating bystanders of activity that could be seen as bullying. This demonstrates the need for education to enhance teacher awareness, but also conveys less than ideal attitudes to sexual orientation in the classroom, which could be addressed by a change in policy and teaching materials.

Even though there is a plethora of research on sex education, especially in the past decade, the majority focus on the heteronormative, biological facets of sex education. As discussed in chapter 2, this prioritisation aligns with the public health agenda that has been at the forefront of sex education since its inception. This thesis, however, emphasises heteronormativity as one of the main concerns in the call for action of holistic, all-inclusive sex education.

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[32] Although not explicitly mentioned in this thesis, pregnancy and contraception are topics that are relevant across the gender and sexuality spectrum. However, as seen throughout the policies and results, the way that these topics are presented is the concern (e.g. reducing male/female teenage pregnancies through the use of contraception).

8.1.2 Sex Education Policy and Materials, a Question of Quality

After providing a critical account of the policies, and providing a brief account of additional materials available for use to supplement the National Curriculum, it became clear that the question of content and quality of these aspects is difficult to assess objectively.

The policies and guidance documents that were reviewed could be viewed both positively and negatively. Schools are expected to consistently provide an up-to-date SRE policy and make it available for review for parents or any other interested parties. However, it seems a bit hypocritical to require this from schools when the government does not make an effort to continuously provide current information for schools to base their policies upon.

It is evident that the local government policy was stronger and more inclusive than the national guidance but this was intentional as the national government wanted to allow schools and localities to account for their populations. Although diversity is important, consider that Chlamydia, pregnancy, and especially bullying, can affect anyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. This means that the government is responsible, as long as there is a national curriculum ensuring academic consistency, for providing advice to schools that may not have the knowledge or ability to search out the latest accurate data. In the examples of school policies provided here, that there is a large discrepancy between what is understood to be a part of sex education and what is actually taught within the schools is evident by the quality and content of the policy themselves. Dockside's policy was well written and extremely useful in contextualising sex education but Harbourview's policy was quite weak and disjointed, as it required several other policies for contextualisation, making it difficult to understand as a standalone document. This is a critical issue if we are to expect that the teaching in the classroom is to be as informative as possible on a topic that is widely acknowledged as contentious and one has associated with a plethora of false information permeating society. If the policies themselves are weak, it is difficult to ascertain how sex education is being delivered in the classroom, as there is no real guidance available for faculty.

When reviewing the materials, the quality of the supplementary exercises is acceptable in their depth and holism when compared to the definition of sex education used within this thesis. This leads to the question of why students are still reporting a lack of 'social' sex education. This is quite possibly the most surprising contribution to the field. Again, this suggests that the materials are not the issue but rather that the emphasis on bringing these materials into the classroom should be prominent in efforts to improve sex education and raise the satisfaction that students have about the programme. However, this is seemingly

difficult, as teachers are perceived not to be empowered in their role as educators, hence their not bringing the important material into the classroom. This may also be due to ambivalence on the 'questionable' topics; nevertheless, the lack of initiative to utilise strong materials in order to alleviate injustice in the classroom demonstrates a shortcoming of the profession.

It is imperative to consider that young people are generally without adequate power over policy and their compulsory education. While it is important to understand the necessity of expert guidance though materials and policy, young people need to be consulted in the design of the curriculum and the materials that are used in the classroom. In current practice, topics of sex and sexuality will always conjure up feelings of embarrassment and reluctance. In this instance, it is more than likely that immaturity will permeate the classroom. However, if young people were empowered to make decisions surrounding their health and wellbeing, we may be surprised at the maturity of the decisions that are made. Fortunately, the use of question boxes has been reported and, while a small step forward, it is an important example of empowering young people.

8.1.3 How Students Perceive Sex Education

Nearly all (97%) the young people who participated in this study had experienced sex education and a large percentage (86%) of those participants reported finding sex education to be a necessary part of their schooling. Although this was not unanimous across all young people, the overwhelming support of sex education needs to be recognised by policy makers as an indication of the importance of this subject in the classroom. Yet while this is positive, it unfortunately does not tell the entire story of the utility of this facet of education. Beginning with the perceptions of sex education, the majority (over 80% in the survey) felt that sex education was important and should be compulsory in school. The participants who took part in the focus groups and interviews generally echoed this sentiment. However, the few participants who voiced that they thought sex education in school was not imperative reported that parents needed to play a much larger role in educating their children, as the policy guidance documents suggest. There was overwhelming concurrence with this suggestion and many admitted that they had a good relationship with their parents which made the 'birds and the bees' discussion possible. One participant, who lost her mother when she was younger, felt that this notion was fine if you had that support in the home. She voiced that she felt that her father was not able to adequately assist her, thus felt schools had that obligation. In addition, while the depth of information that parents shared with their children was not

explored, the homophobic example provided by Duncan exemplifies why we may not always be able to trust that parents can provide adequate support and knowledge. This is echoed by Goldman's (2008) and Walker's (2001) research which shows that parents occasionally feel that they are ill prepared to have a discussion with their child and, in addition, may underestimate the role that young people want parents to play in educating them in this instance. This is problematic regardless of whether the focus is on the social versus biological components of sex education.

Next, the majority of participants felt that sex education should not discriminate based on sexual orientation. This was consistent across both samples. However, the degree to which participants felt that sex education was heteronormative did vary between the samples. In the survey, 65 percent responded in a way that suggested their experience of sex education was heteronormative, whereas in the focus groups and interviews, all but one agreed with this. The interesting statistic within this question was that there was no significant difference between LGB identified young people and straight identified young people on the survey. This is attributed to approximately one-third of the participants who identified as bisexual responding with indifference or disagreement to the question of whether sex education focused more on straight couples than LGB relationships.

In addition to the notion of heteronormativity in the curriculum, several of the schools in the sample included young people who responded that sex education should be heteronormative. This can be seen in the statistics where young people deemed sexual orientation and homosexuality as inappropriate for a discussion, at any age, in sex education. This in itself is problematic as it demonstrates that even in a generation of social progressiveness fears of difference are not completely allayed, leading to the question of how this can be addressed if it is not being discussed in a compulsory forum, such as education.

Next, there was considerable variability when comparing LGBT identified young people and straight identified young people on the topic of bullying. Only one percent of straight participants admitted to being subject to bullying over their sexual orientation, whereas a quarter of the LGB survey participants and all of the focus group and interview respondents, who were 'out', were bullied in school. This may suggest that bullies chose obvious targets to direct their action, also likely to be true for straight identified individuals, although instead of being bullied over perceived or actual sexual orientation, they were bullied over features such as attire or hobbies. Bullying emerged as an important theme to the young people in the focus groups and interviews, especially because several of the participants have had negative

experiences in school. These examples are contrary to all of the guidance documents, which emphasise that homophobic bullying cannot be tolerated, and that teachers must take an active role in preventing it. Yet several examples were given where the teachers were the instigating party. This is a concern that needs addressing before any practical guidance can be expected to be enforced on the students, which leads to the discussion on when young people feel that they can be taught about these topics.

Participants had mixed feelings on the lowest age limit for sex education. While the National Curriculum lists some topics that constitute sex education in primary school, the majority fall within Key Stages 3 and 4, which comprise secondary school. Nearly all of the young people in this research agreed that sex education could begin earlier than it is currently offered, although there was variability between the topics in the reported age of appropriateness. Interestingly, the survey showed that 'non-heterosexual identities' was the topic with the highest number of respondents reporting that Key Stage 1 or 2 would be appropriate. This demonstrates that there is support from both LGB and straight identified participants for this earlier inclusion, although a significantly higher proportion of LGB individuals responded in this manner, which increased the overall percentage slightly. In the focus groups and interviews, nearly everyone felt that this was a topic that could be discussed as early as primary schools. The reasoning was that children might have parents or friends who have parents that identify as LGBT. It must be noted that much has changed culturally since these young people were in sex education, so it is likely that there is more tolerance towards the teachings of 'gay' topics in schools, but like most else in the research, this will undoubtedly vary considerably between schools.

Participant responses to the rest of the topics contained in the survey were very consistent in that most topics, including those on biological aspects, should not be taught later than Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14). Again, there was variation between the topics, with anal sex, oral sex, and termination being the three that were most often identified as being more appropriate for Key Stage 4 or not taught in school at all.

Finally, it is important to recall what students remembered learning in sex education. In this study, everyone identified some clear topics that were prevalent throughout sex education, and unsurprisingly, these were mainly biological topics and those relating to medical and risk discourses (e.g. pregnancy and STIs). From the survey, it was found that nearly everyone (approximately 90%) identified pregnancy, STIs, contraception, and sexual intercourse as common topics. These topics were also reported by everyone in the focus

groups and interviews, thus reaffirming that sex education is still a very biological construct, regardless of the guidance documents and supplementary materials that attempt to address the imbalance between biological and social topics.

Of the social topics, relationships were reportedly discussed in approximately 70 percent of classrooms, while sexual orientation and homosexuality were in the middle of the distribution with over half. Other topics, which can be viewed in both social and biological contexts, such as oral sex and anal sex, were discussed less often in the classroom with the sample reporting between 10 and 40 percent having addressed these topics. This is similar to the qualitative results in that very few individuals recalled anything on most of these topics, while those that did, mentioned that they were only discussed in passing and not fully explained or understood. These varying levels in reporting suggest that either teachers have trouble discussing the topics, which is not uncommon (Alldred and David 2007), or they could not see the relevance as these are not accounted for in many of the guidance documents. Even more important is that these findings are generally irrespective of the gender or sexual orientation of the respondent, which lends to the notion that everyone is experiencing insufficient sex education, further problematised by the heteronormative aura that is present throughout the curriculum.

Overall, it is evident that there is a discrepancy between the ideal sex education and what is perceived to be occurring in the classroom. While several studies have identified the benefits of sex education, and the gaps in the UK curriculum, this study further attests to the necessity of a better programme that includes the needs and desires of the young people.

8.1.4 Sexual Orientation: Exclusion and Marginalisation or Misunderstanding?

At the inception of this research, it was difficult to ascertain whether there was a clear marginalisation of LGBT young people, or whether there was a lack of understanding of the sex education classroom. From this research, it became clear that often the marginalisation was caused by a lack of understanding of LGBT young people's needs. In the sample selected for this research, some LGBT identified students were purposefully marginalised as demonstrated by the responses put forth by John, Duncan, and Imogen. However, many of the others felt that schools were not necessarily to blame but rather the government and society as a whole. These perceptions were presented in relation to the material selected for the classroom, the perception of some teachers being closed-minded, punitive measures for those who

challenged the system and, at times, a disregard for the welfare of students through the condoning of bullying.

From the investigation of policy and materials used in educating these young people, sexual orientation was never at the forefront of discussion. On occasion, it was superficially mentioned in some sex education lessons but not to the satisfaction of the majority of the young people. This was also evidenced through the survey results, which showed a much lower percentage of students acknowledging a discussion of sexual orientation in the classroom.

The lack of discussion around sexual orientation ultimately prevented a widespread understanding and acceptance of the issues faced by LGBT identified young people. Very few of the young people in this study reported that they were, or would have been, comfortable in coming out while in school. Even at later ages, many of these young people have still not found that family and society is as accepting as they could be of non-straight identities.

8.2 Strengths and Limitations of this Research

Upon completion and reflection on this thesis, several key strengths and limitations became clear which need to be discussed. First, the strengths are e succinctly presented followed by the limitations, as it is this latter set of reflections that will guide future work in this area for both myself and hopefully other researchers.

8.2.1 Strengths

Although the results obtained provided useful information on the current effectiveness of sex education, other factors need to be acknowledged as strengths of this research.

8.2.1.1 A Multi-method Approach

One significant aspect of this research is the comprehensiveness that it entails. Often, studies in sex education employ either quantitative or qualitative approaches but much less frequently both. It is even rarer to see research that also critically examines policy and its

integration into the classroom with respect to national government, local government and school level policies. Each of these methods informed one another in the analysis as each method uncovered a separate, but valuable, component in understanding the totality of sex education and the perceptions of the curriculum by those that had experienced it. In addition, the local policy section, which is the least incorporated component in sex education research, was included in this thesis to provide local context for the data obtained.

8.2.1.2 The Challenges of Accessing Young People for Research

While not necessarily the case in all disciplines, access to the views of young people is generally difficult. This research required young people in a school setting for the survey and LGBT identified young people for the focus groups and interviews. While the latter group was easier to access due to the help of personal contacts, access to schools (specifically sixth form colleges) was quite difficult. In many cases, e-mails and phone calls were exchanged with administrators, heads of SRE or PSHE, and in some cases Head teachers, but the success rate was low.

Subsequently, a survey template was usually requested before gaining approval to conduct the research. This process took weeks for some schools and months for others, with persistence being the driving force to ensure that the survey would make it to the students. In most cases of access to a school being approved, I was able to distribute the surveys directly to the students, but in two instances, it was necessary to allow faculty to distribute and collect the survey. While not ideal, this level of access was better than being declined. Thus, even though the sample size for the survey may be small, the access that was granted required patience and persistence.

8.2.2 Limitations

As each research project will have strengths, it will undoubtedly have limitations. The main limitations of this research are detailed in this section.

8.2.2.1 Limited Sample and Limited Generalisability

The sample for this research was smaller than initially planned but due to the 'contentious' nature of the subject, the support and assistance that was received from some schools was welcomed. Nevertheless, it would have been advantageous to have a larger sample covering the geographical area in question and certainly a larger selection of education providers. This may have been achieved by personally meeting with the Head teacher or SRE/PSHE(E) lead to discuss the research in person, instead of via impersonal methods such as the telephone or via e-mail. While this is no guarantee for a better success rate, it would have allowed for open dialogue to pitch the research and ultimately make a case for the benefits to the school and for the participants.

Considering the generalisability, the above-mentioned strategies would have assisted in ensuring that more diversity would have been included in the study, thus the possibility of being able to better generalise the results. This statement is not to suggest that the results obtained and the recommendations made as a result of this research are not valid however, as the results are consistent with other research that have taken place around the country over the past 15 years.

8.2.2.2 The Selection of the Samples

As previously mentioned the sample size for this study was smaller than anticipated. However, triangulation with the other methods, in part counteracted this limitation, though it is acknowledged that a larger sample would undoubtedly allow for more robust claims to be made. Additionally, the participants that were selected in this study, particularly in the focus groups and interviews, may have decided to participate solely because they had a negative sex education experience. While this cannot be proven, it must be acknowledged that this bias may exist. Unfortunately, students were not asked to rate their sex education experience on the survey, therefore there is no baseline in this instance to compare. As this was a multi-method project, this solution would have provided an indicator with which to compare the qualitative data.

8.2.2.3 Survey and Focus Group /Interview Construction Issues and Reflection

There is inevitably the perception from hindsight that questions could have been chosen, or constructed, in a different manner. The same concerns can be had for both of the in-person data collection methods employed in this research. After conducting the focus groups and surveys, I believe that it would have been advantageous to address several other questions about where else young people receive sex education, if not the classroom, as well as questions on the personal nature of the student's relationship experiences (e.g. previous sexual contact, age at first sexual contact, etc.).

As the existing literature points to several sources of sex education outside of the classroom, it would have been useful to use this information to further evaluate how the school setting could be improved upon, or what other topics may require focus to ensure that adequate and correct information is being conveyed to the developing young people. In addition, acquiring additional knowledge about the student, such as past relationships, sexual experiences, etc., would allow for an analysis on the effectiveness of sex education from a measurable standpoint. However, this latter line of enquiry would be considered higher risk and carry additional ethical issues, thus making the project very difficult to gain approval from both the ethics committee and the schools in which the research would take place, although the data collected would be invaluable.

8.2.2.4 Teachers, the Missing Link

On completion of the primary data collection for this research, I realised that teachers, who are important contributors to the sex education process in schools, were overlooked in this study. When I conceived this project, teachers were not identified as a focal point because I wanted to move the power to the young people. However, after the analysis of the qualitative data, it became evident that a short survey with teachers would fill a gap in the chain of education, which this thesis follows from national policy through student's perceptions. Additionally, teachers were identified as an important factor in how young people perceived their sex education, and more so, their schooling in general. Unfortunately, it was impractical at that stage to add another layer of data.

8.3 Recommendations and Further Research

Moving forward, this thesis has made evident a series of changes that need to occur to ensure holistic sex education for *all* young people. These recommendations are supported by the data presented in this thesis and should be taken as a guide to further our ability to educate and research on sex education.

8.3.1 Sex Education for Parents

As sex education has historically included parents, it does not appear that this is likely to change in the future. Thus, it is important to rectify what was found in studies on parents' effectiveness at sex education (Ingham and Carrera 1998; Feldman and Rosenthal 2000; Renold 2005) and assist parents to begin the discussion on sex and sexuality in the home, but only in a complementary and supportive way to the school's holistic sex education curriculum.

In current policy documents, schools are instructed to liaise with parents to ensure that sex education material is satisfactory; however, this is problematic, as discussed in chapter 4. Instead, this time should be spent educating parents on ways to approach their children with this sensitive subject. Subsequently, it would also be beneficial to provide an update parents with correct information, including the latest evidence in the field, best practice of teaching on the subject, and local statistics from both public health (e.g. STI and pregnancy rates), and social concerns (e.g. teen suicides, bullying, etc.).

While it is understandable that organising a practical education lesson for parents may be difficult and impractical, there are other ways to make sure parents are appropriately informed about the material in which they should be discussing with their children. One example of this is a website produced by the Australian state of Victoria, titled *Sexuality Education for parents*. This website features a plethora of useful information on both biological and social sex education topics, as well as citing useful research that parents can refer to if they are interested (DEECD 2013). This is a pragmatic example of how a government can initiate the discussion with parents through technology at their fingertips. The Canadian province of Alberta also provides a useful website aimed at parents, which includes factsheets, webisodes and recommendations for where parents can access additional support (AHS 2013).

There are undoubtedly other websites aimed at parents that are useful in educating children about sex education. However, it is important that the experts recommend resources,

in order to be reasonably sure that the information is correct and up-to-date. A website similar to the state of Victoria's would be a welcomed addition to the NHS localised websites in the UK, which ultimately focus more on the biological/health topics associated with sex education.

8.3.2 Sex Education for Teachers

The accounts provided by the students on both the lack of comfort in the classroom and even condoning or participating in bullying demonstrated that all teachers need to be aware of sexual health and sexuality concerns, in particular those who are to be providing the SRE curriculum in the classroom. While Alldred and David (2007) touch on many issues associated with the teaching of sex education, the scope of the work did not extend specifically into the realm of situating sexual orientation in the classroom setting and the more troubling result issue raised here, of bullying. This is a significant concern that has been identified throughout this thesis.

As every school provides in-service days over the course of the year, I contend that a session on sex, sexuality and sexual health should be provided to the faculty of schools and colleges. This does not need to be a long process but it should succinctly summarise the expectations of teachers by their schools and the government, as well as the children and parents.

Referring back to the Canadian website that supplies information for parents, there is also a complimentary website that is designed for teachers (AHS 2013). There are some similarities to the school portal websites in existence in the southeast but there are also several differences. In terms of similarities, the Canadian website provides resources and information that is relevant to teaching sex education in the classroom, including recommendations on methods and resources that can be used. Unlike the UK school portal websites, the information presented here is clearly organised into year of schooling and by topic. This makes it easier to explore the materials, as opposed to the standard primary/secondary divide that is currently present on the school portal websites where the much of the data for chapters 4 and 5 has been obtained.

The distinct difference that I want to draw attention to is the availability of online workshops to train and refresh knowledge for teachers of sex education. While it is understandable that in-service days may not be the most conducive time to include additional training, these workshops allow for flexibility and can provide a similar level of engagement for

a working professional. This is a practice that could be beneficial to refreshing teachers of SRE from the comfort of their home or office and would most likely be welcomed by students, parents and teachers alike.

8.3.3 Truly Holistic Sex Education as a Requirement of the National Curriculum

Too often sex education is viewed as a way of transmitting public health concerns. This means that sex education often is not focused on perceptions of healthy adjustments or relationships or on a reduction in homophobic bullying, as well as other inequalities that are present when discussing sex and sexuality. Thus, the lack of a holistic focus is evident in both the curriculum at present, as confirmed via the data obtained for this thesis, and through past studies that have measured sex education in terms of a reduction in pregnancies or STIs (sees Kirby 2008).

The recommendation is not for every topic to be included in a class titled Sex Education, but rather a holistic approach to education where issues surrounding sex and sexuality are introduced in classes other than Science or PSHE, such as English and Social Studies. In this instance, students will be informed of the topics without the necessity to label it as a distinct session that can objectively be critiqued. While this may make outcomes difficult to measure, a reduction in bullying (without specifically targeting bullying), an increase in general sexuality knowledge and a better awareness of factors that impact upon these issues, would be ideal results. Of course, these would be situated parallel to science-based education, which would still examine STIs and pregnancy, among other biological/medical topics.

Airton (2009) supports this comprehensive sex education idea, even though her focus was on a tangential topic. She ascertains that gendering (and the necessity of anti-genderism) leads to problems with sexuality, thus requiring the need to be concerned with gender portrayal in the classroom. This is consistent with my idea of placing more emphasis on other aspects of sex and sexuality in different situations in the classroom.

As noted above, comprehensive, and especially holistic, sex education has consistently been identified as the way forward. Unfortunately, in the past, sex education has not been all-inclusive resulting in the exclusion of social aspects and sexual orientation in particular, even though plenty of resources were in existence to assist with this aspect of sex education. Therefore, in order to achieve equity in the classroom, comprehensive must mean comprehensive on all fronts.

One further point that merits discussion is a way to correct this concern. In general, schools and the government hold the power over the subjects formally discussed in the classroom. While I agree that expert opinions are necessary to help inform practice, we cannot excuse the fact that young people have some ideas of what they need to learn, especially in a subject such as SRE. This knowledge is gathered through home life, society and media. In many instances, young people will not have an insight into everything surrounding sex and relationships that they may need to know, hence the necessity of government oversight through policy. However, if a thorough consultation was completed with users of the service, it would become evident that there are gaps that are often overlooked by the experts. This is apparent through the most recent changes to the national curriculum, making only a small subset of SRE compulsory, regardless of the research that indicates additional requirements. There must be a collaborative effort, between young people and experts, to create the much-needed holistic programme. While there may be a clash between the two developmental styles, through policy, the experts will still have the responsibility for ensuring that young people are educated to a minimum standard, which should be informed by the young people themselves.

8.3.4 Consider the Millennium Declaration in Future Policy Development

In 2007, the World Association for Sexual Health released a comprehensive report that was aimed at influencing the perception of sexual health and rights around the world. This document, 'specifically identifie[d] and examine[d] eight specific goals that together encompass an integrated and comprehensive approach to sexual health promotion' (p. 2). These goals were:

1. Recognize, promote, ensure and protect sexual rights for all;

2. Advance toward gender equality and equity;

3. Condemn, combat, and reduce all forms of sexuality related violence;

4. Provide universal access to comprehensive sexuality education and information;

5. Ensure that reproductive health programs recognize the centrality of sexual health;

6. Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections;

7. Identify, address and treat sexual concerns, dysfunctions and disorders;

8. Achieve recognition of sexual pleasure as a component of holistic health and well-being.

Following on the WHO's definition put forth at the beginning of this thesis, I posit that sex education can and should be the start of change in the rest of the identified areas, although the premise is to see acceptance and promotion by all, including governments, the private sector, academic institutions and even society at large (p. 2).

Understandably, this document was written to ensure the best outcomes of sexual health for individuals, yet much can be taken from it and used in education, which at this point, has not been done in the UK. For instance, each of goals one through three can be addressed in the classroom, thus assisting with an attempt at reducing homophobic bullying which was seen as a major concern for the LGBT identified young people in the focus groups and interviews. Together however, the document stands as a testament to an ideology that ensures sexual needs are elevated to human rights and thus are met for every individual, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Additionally, this is one example of how a public health initiative can coincide with a social sex education initiative.

8.3.5 Further Research Needed

While this thesis presents up-to-date information regarding students' perceptions on sex education, there are a couple of gaps, which continue to be unanswered as they were not practical to include in this research. These are: (1) teacher's views on how the transfer of knowledge is currently being performed in the classroom and (2) an investigation of the classroom environment during sex education lessons as it relates to heteronormativity and bullying. Each of these aspects could bring an additional level of understanding to the complex nature of educating children on a contentious topic.

8.3.5.1 Teachers: The Identified Importance in the Classroom

While there has been research conducted on teachers of sex education (Alldred et al. 2003), there is still a rather limited body of knowledge available when considering the impact that teachers have on the classroom in this context. Participants in the focus groups and interviews were very vocal about the role that teachers had on the way in which they perceived learning, even if it was in a passive sense; for instance, teachers as the evaluator of

power dynamics in instances of bullying in the classroom setting. Some young people accused teachers of refusing to intervene in episodes of bullying, while some young people claimed that these teachers were the perpetrator of the bullying. This is another aspect related to sexual orientation in the classroom that could have been explored had I had the ability to include teachers to conclude the hierarchy from printed national guidance to the users of the system.

Although all of the views presented here are from young people's perspectives, it would be useful to discuss how teachers perceive their role in the classroom, post Section 28 and, in the age of social progressiveness, perceptions of alternative sexualities. It would be useful to question whether teachers still feel restricted due to out-of-date guidance or whether they are constricted due to the perpetuation of a school ethos. This would also be useful in further validating Cohen and Ball's (1990) research in the classroom.

Finally, research with teachers would also advance our knowledge of sex education instruction and provide an account of the 21st century classroom where equality and tolerance should be at the forefront of sex education, which itself should be integrated into the curriculum as a whole, rather than a subset of PSHE, for example. In either instance, further research could clarify the needs and understandings of sex educators in the school system.

8.3.5.2 Power Dynamics in the Classroom

Although we have reports of what is learned and what is taught in the classroom, there is virtually no evidence that has been uncovered during this research that examines the dynamics that exist in the sex education classroom. As noted in the data collected in this study among others (Strange et al. 2003; Alldred and David 2007), we do know that there is a sense of immaturity that can be pervasive in sex education. This is not helped by the covert and overt heteronormalised sex education when we consider bullying.

Bullying is a commonly known example of the exertion of power in the classroom, regardless of intent or cause. In the instance of this research, many individuals reported being bullied while teachers stood idle as it occurred, justifying that it was a part of growing up. We know bullying occurs and we know that homophobia is one cause of that bullying but what would be interesting is to examine how the power structure plays in educational settings, out from school administrators, to the teachers, and to the students, in an observational study that lends to these situations.

In most research, we see reported bullying in schools (Douglas et al. 1999; Warwick et al. 2001; Minton et al. 2008) and there is considerable research on how to tackle this (Warwick and Douglas 2001; Adams et al. 2004; Taylor 2008). However, as demonstrated in this research, bullying still occurs, but in this instance, the bullying is by the teachers. Thus, it would be interesting to examine how the teacher-student relationship works in relation to a topic that can and should be educated about in the classroom. Future research in this area could utilise a participant observation method. This would allow those outside of the classroom to be able to understand the dynamics that both students and teachers report, further providing clarity to accounts, as was undertaken in Cohen and Ball's (1990) research on policy implications in the classroom.

8.3.5.3 Porn, the Other Educator

Although porn was not a focus of this thesis, it was interesting that the prevailing perception of porn as an educator was not broached during the focus groups or interviews. There are several possible explanations for this, ranging from rapport in the room to the structure of the sessions and the question schedule, which may account for the lack of discussion on the topic. However, it is possible that there is something different with those LGBT young people who are searching for their identity and orientation that may make them more indifferent towards porn than their straight identified peers. It may also be possible that the work of Crabbe and Corlett (2010) and Horvath and colleagues (2013) may not be a generalisable reflection of young people everywhere. However, I am more inclined to contend that the setting or questions asked did not lend to a discussion on porn, but regardless of this, it is important that this be further researched to dispel any myths and also verify facts regarding the use of internet porn for sex education.

8.4 Conclusion

The young people who took part in this research were very open in providing information on their experiences and views of sex education and for that, I am thankful that I had the opportunity to make their voices heard. It is through this thesis that support is conveyed to justify the need for action in addressing the shortfalls of current sex education, which is seemingly overlooked by policy makers. Without them, sex education may continue to be taught (or shown) in schools with outcomes indicating that very little has been learned, and

ultimately utilised, by the young people. This is evident by the lack of regression in STI rates and pregnancy rates at the national level to commensurate the effort put forth by public health advocates. Unfortunately, the advocacy camp for the social side of sex education appears to be much smaller, hence the lack of emphasis that is consistently reported, including the results reported in this thesis. While this may be understandable from a financial perspective, this does not achieve equality. This equality is stifled by a lack of progression in areas that are a hindrance to a truly holistic sex education programme, whether it is society, religion or something else. This is why I advocate throughout this thesis that the government needs to take steps to ensure the progression to equality through mandated holistic sex education. Although some may feel that this is not the responsibility of the government, they in fact already place other stipulations on the school, such as healthy eating standards, in which the government dictates what can be served to students. I contend that this is no different from ensuring that a topic that equates to another aspect of health, sexual health, and ultimately citizenship, can be dictated in the same manner. For this, English sex education advocates should consult the recommendations put forth by the World Association for Sexual Health in the Millennium Declaration (2007), as discussed in the previous section.

This thesis set out to (a) review the history of sex education in England, (b) understand the link between government policy and school policies, (c) review sex education material in schools and the subsequent use of these resources, and (d) obtain first-hand accounts from those who are often underrepresented in this type of research. These objectives contributed to the originality of this thesis through this up-to-date examination of a specific marginalised population (LGBT) as mentioned in (d). Further, objectives (b) and (c) add to the novelty of this thesis in that materials, and to a lesser extent policy, are aspects that are usually examined outside of the discussion with participants. I, however, chose to use these resources as contextualisation and to provide a counterpoising facet to the empirical data. Moreover, and even more importantly, it was found that some of these resources were consistent with current ideals of a holistic sex education curriculum, yet this was not identified by the participants.

Finally, it is important to note that while sex education has improved over the years, there is still much needed improvement to realise the potential of a holistic sex education programme. Once sex and sexuality is better understood by everyone in a young person's life (e.g. parents, teachers, etc.), a robust sexual health programme can finally be implemented with hopes of improving both sexual health, but more importantly, the broader social concerns touched on throughout this thesis, including heteronormativity, bullying and LGBT suicide.

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Appendix

Appendix I: Ethics Approval

US
University of Sussex

Social Sciences Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Reference Number:	1011/05/15
School:	LPS
Title of Project	Sex Education and Sexual Orientation; the views of young people.
Principal Investigator: (Supervisor)	David Evans (Fincham/Phipps)
Expected Start Date:*	01/10/11

*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures

This project has been given ethical approval by the Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (C-REC). *Please note the following requirements for approved submissions:*

Amendments to research proposal - Any changes or amendments to the approved proposal, which have ethical implications, must be submitted to the committee for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events - Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Authorised Signature	*Elaine Sharland*
Name of Authorised Signatory (C-REC Chair or nominated deputy)	Dr Elaine Sharland 14 September 2011

Appendix II: Consent Form

University of Sussex

Title of Project: *Sex Education and Sexual Orientation; the views of young people.*

Project Approval Reference: 1011/05/15

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to complete the questionnaire and/or interview given by the researcher.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party, as all information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

If you have any questions concerning this study you may contact the researcher (David Evans) at david.evans@sussex.ac.uk.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

US

University of Sussex

Title of the Research: **Sex Education and Sexual Orientation; the views of young people.**

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a Doctor of Philosophy student project at the University of Sussex. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you in advance for reading this.

What is the aim of the research?

The research examines the policies affecting sex education with regard to sexual orientation in England. In addition to this examination, the researcher is looking to collect data from young people, who have taken part in an English sex education programme, to analyze current views of sexual orientation within these programmes.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as your school has been gracious to allow me entry to ask you the questions in the questionnaire.

Do I have to take part?

It is your choice whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your school marks, assessments, future schooling etc. will also be unaffected whether or not you choose to take part.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

A single questionnaire will be given to you to complete and return at your convenience (within 2 weeks) via the drop box.

What should I do if I want to participate?

To opt-in all you need to do is sign the consent form and complete the questionnaire.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be kept both electronically and as a hard copy, both with restricted use by only individuals authorized by myself that are pertinent members of the research experience, for example my advisors.

How is confidentiality maintained?

No names are used as part of this project. Instead everyone will be issued a number which will be found on the questionnaire. In the discussion of the results, only this number will be used. In presentation form it is highly unlikely that even the number would be used.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without repercussions. You will be asked though to contact the researcher with your number that that the survey can be removed from the data.

What is the duration of the research?

1 questionnaire

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The results will become part of a Doctor of Philosophy dissertation and the topic at conferences and in journal articles. If you want information as to where the information is presented or published, contact the researcher as shown below.

Contact Information

You may contact the researcher (David Evans) for further information at david.evans@sussex.ac.uk or in the case of any questions or concerns over the conduction of the research, his supervisor (Ben Fincham) at B.M.Fincham@sussex.ac.uk.

*This research has been approved by a Social Science Cluster-based Research Ethics

Committee (C-REC) at the University of Sussex

Appendix IV: Focus Group/Interview Information Sheet

US
University of Sussex

Title of the Research: **Sex Education and Sexual Orientation; the views of young people.**

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a Doctor of Philosophy student project at the University of Sussex. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you in advance for reading this.

What is the aim of the research?

The research examines the policies regarding sex education post-2003 (Section 28) in regards to sexual pluralism. In addition to this examination, the researcher is looking to collect data from young people to analyze current views of sexual orientation in sex education. With this data, it may be possible to provide information on sex education and citizenship with regards to changing currency policy to benefit everyone equally.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as your youth group has been gracious to allow me entry to ask you the questions in the questionnaire.

Do I have to take part?

It is your choice whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to take part in a 45-60 minute focus group involving questions regarding you and your participation in a sex education (SRE) course.

What should I do if I want to participate?

To opt-in all you need to do is sign the consent form and sit for the interview.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be kept both electronically (audio) and as a hard copy (transcripts), both with restricted use by only individuals authorized by myself that are pertinent members of the research experience, for example my advisors.

How is confidentiality maintained?

No names are used as part of this project. Instead everyone will be issued a pseudonym which will be used to protect your anonymity. In the discussion of the results, only this name will be used. Also, pseudonyms will be assigned to the locations and groups featured in the research, for an added level of anonymity. Finally, your consent forms will be kept separate from the transcripts and audio recordings to insure confidentiality.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without repercussions.

What is the duration of the research?

 A single 45-60 minute focus group

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The results will become part of a Doctor of Philosophy dissertation and the topic at conferences and in journal articles. If you want information as to where the information is presented or published, contact the researcher as shown below.

Contact Information

You may contact the researcher (David Evans) for further information at david.evans@sussex.ac.uk or in the case of any questions or concerns over the conduction of the research, his supervisor (Ben Fincham) at B.M.Fincham@sussex.ac.uk.

*This research has been approved by a Social Science Cluster-based Research Ethics

Committee (C-REC) at the University of Sussex

Appendix V: Survey

On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not important at all and 5 bring extremely important.

Q01. How important do you think it is to have Sex Education as part of the
school curriculum?

          1   2   3   4   5

Q02. How important is it to discuss biological aspects of human sexuality (i.e. anatomy,
physiology, etc.)?

          1   2   3   4   5

Q03. How important is it to discuss medical aspects of sex (i.e. STIs, conditions such as
premature ejaculation, etc.)?

          1   2   3   4   5

Q04. How important is it to discuss personal aspects such as relationships?

          1   2   3   4   5

Q05. How important do you think it is to discuss gay and bi-sexual topics in sex education?

              1   2   3   4   5

On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

Q06. Sex education should be compulsory for all students.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q07. Giving young people information about how to obtain and use condoms and other
contraception encourages them to have sexual intercourse earlier than they would.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q08. Giving young people information about how to obtain and use condoms and other
contraception makes it more likely that they will practice safe sex now or in the future.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q09. Discussing safe sex is important for both males and females.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q10. Discussing safe sex is important for both straight and LGBT individuals.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q11. Sex education focuses more on straight couples than LGBT couples.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q12. Family values do not affect my decisions concerning sex.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q13. Religious values affect my decisions concerning sex and relationships.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q14. I have been bullied before over my sexual decisions.

          1   2   3   4   5

Q15. I have been bullied before over my sexual orientation.
          1   2   3   4   5

Q16. Sex education should be optional for all students.
          1   2   3   4   5

Are these appropriate topics for sex education, if so for what ages? Circle all that apply.

Q17. The basics of conception, pregnancy and birth
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q18. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q19. How to obtain and use over the counter contraceptives/protection (i.e. condoms) and other methods of preventing pregnancy and STIs
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q20. Termination
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q21. Masturbation
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q22. Oral Sex
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q23. Anal Sex
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q24. Homosexuality and other non-heterosexual identities (i.e. being gay, lesbian or bisexual)
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q25. How to engage with the emotional issues and consequences of being sexually active
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q26. How to talk with a different/same sex partner about "how far to go" sexually
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q27. How to talk with parents or health professionals about sex, gender and relationship issues
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q28. How to make responsible sexual choices based on individual values
Stage 1 (5-7 yrs)   Stage 2 (7-11 yrs)   Stage 3 (11-14 yrs)   Stage 4 (14-16 yrs)   Not Appropriate

Q29. Which of these topics have you discussed in classes involved with sex education?
(tick or circle ALL that apply)

STIs	Pregnancy	Contraception	Termination
Relationships	Homosexuality	Family Values	Sexual Orientation
Sexual Intercourse	Oral Sex	Anal Sex	Abstinence
Rape	Age of Consent	Religious Aspects	Masturbation

Q30. Which of the following three statements is closest to your view about the best way to teach Sex Education?

A1. Abstinence from sexual intercourse is best for young people. Sex Education classes should not provide information on contraception, disease prevention or relationships.

A2. Abstinence from sexual intercourse is best for young people. However, Sex Education classes should also provide relevant information on contraception, disease prevention or relationships.

A3. Abstinence from sexual intercourse is not the most important thing. Sex Education classes should focus on teaching young people how to make responsible decisions about sex and relationships.

Open-Ended Questions: Please provide your personal opinion (continue your answer on the back if necessary).

Q31. Do you think the education system in England is doing everything it can to provide the best possible sex education experience? If so, please explain; if not, why?

Q32. Pregnancy rates in England are the highest in the EU. What do you think can be done to lower the statistic?

Q33. STI rates, especially Chlamydia, are quite high in the UK. What do you think can be done to lower the rates of these infections?

Q34. Do you think that sex education in the UK is hetero-normative (meaning that it promotes a heterosexual lifestyle over a homosexual lifestyle)? Please explain your answer.

Q35. Homophobia or homophobic tendencies (bullying, using derogatory slang towards individuals or in general, etc.) is common in schools around the world, including in the UK. What are your opinions on this?

Demographics:

My sex is: Male   Female   Transgendered   Other _____

My ethnic origin is: White   Black   Asian (please specify) _____   Mixed _____   Other _____

I would describe my sexual orientation as: Straight   Lesbian/Gay   Bisexual   Other _____   Prefer not to answer

I would identify my religious values as: Christian   Muslim   Hindu   Jewish   Not religious   Other _____

I have completed the majority of my schooling (4 out of the past 6 years) in England.
Yes   No   If No, what country_____

Thank you for taking time to complete my questionnaire, your information will contribute to a better understanding of the current views of young people surrounding sex education.

Appendix VI: Focus Group Schedule

Introductory questions around sex education-

I'd like to ask some questions about your experience of sex education in the school curriculum.

Tell me about your experience with sex education in your school?

prompt: As SRE, within PSHE, within citizenship classes, within another science class?

Duration (e.g. one class, spread throughout the year, multiple classes?

What do you think your school's attitude was towards sex education?

prompt: Did faith schools approach sex education differently; did comprehensive, mixed schools teach differently due to a melting pot of religions, cultural views and even gender?

Which topics can you remember discussing in your sex education classes?

prompt: Obvious topics here including pregnancy/child birth, STIs, intimate relationships…what else?

Do you feel that all the topics discussed were appropriate?

prompt: Is age important? Grade level?

Tell me a bit about sexuality and sexual orientation (i.e. being gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or any other) in sex education.

prompt: Why do you think a discussion on sexual orientation was included; were any additional topics such as homophobia and hate crimes approached?

If not included, what do you think influenced the schools decision to exclude discussing sexual orientation?

How do you feel about it being excluded?

How effectively was sex education taught in your school?

prompt: In regards to STIs and pregnancy? What about sexual identities and relationships

Do you think back on your sex education at all at this stage in your life?

Do you have any further recommendations or opinions on sex education in general and more specifically on sexual orientation within the context of sex education?

<u>Appendix VII: Interview Schedule</u>

Tell me about your experience with sex education in your school?
prompt: As SRE, within PSHE, within citizenship classes, within another science class?
Duration (e.g. one class, spread throughout the year, multiple classes)?

What types of materials were used?
prompt: Books, videos, television programmes

What do you think your school's attitude was towards sex education?
prompt: Did faith schools approach sex education differently; did comprehensive, mixed schools teach differently due to a melting pot of religions, cultural views and even gender?

Which topics can you remember discussing in your sex education classes?
prompt: Obvious topics here including pregnancy/child birth, STIs, intimate relationships…what else?

Do you feel that all the topics discussed were appropriate?
prompt: Is age important? Grade level?

Tell me a bit about sexuality and sexual orientation (i.e. being gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or any other) in sex education.
prompt: Why do you think a discussion on sexual orientation was included; were any additional topics such as homophobia and hate crimes approached?
If not included, what do you think influenced the schools decision to exclude discussing sexual orientation?
How do you feel about it being excluded?

What emotions did you experience?

How effectively was sex education taught in your school?
prompt: In regards to STIs and pregnancy? What about sexual identities and relationships

Did you find anything useful about sex education?

Who could you talk to if nothing was useful?* optional if answer isn't clear from another question

Do you think back on your sex education at all at this stage in your life?

Do you have any further recommendations or opinions on sex education in general and more specifically on sexual orientation within the context of sex education?