UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER

The LGBT+ Pupil as the Abject:

An Ethnographic Exploration of Subjectivity and Discourse in UK Secondary Schools.

University of Chester

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For Adam, oh, the places you'll go.

Acknowledgements

The LGBT+ Pupil as the Abject:

Abstract

According to many scholars, schools are the last bastion of permitted homophobia (Beadle, 2009; Grew, 2008; as cited in Formby, 2013). Primarily using the theories of Foucault, Kristeva and Butler, the thesis uses critical theory as a means to both understand and critically analyse the construction of subjectivity within and throughout discourse in the hetero-/cis-normative institution, and how this related to the potential abjection of LGBT+ pupils. Whilst it is agreed in this thesis that LGBT+phobia is still widespread in both schools and wider society, it was found in this research that the impact of direct LGBT+phobic discrimination was less evident. Instead, the discursive spaces where LGBT+phobia had been silenced were filled with hetero-/cis-normative discourse. Concomitantly, the impact of LGBT+ invisibility, the silencing of positive discourse surrounding sexuality and the institutional rejection of performative LGBT+phobia without cultural or organisational change meant there remained a negative impact on LGBT+ young people, despite a reduction in visible LGBT+phobia (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006/2010).

Through the use of short vignettes taken from a period of ethnographic research, I have used discursive reflexivity to offer an alternative discourse surrounding the LGBT+ pupil in the school. In a thesis preoccupied with language, the institutional denial of appropriate language, the lack of positive space for LGBT+ young people to construct their identity and the potential risk of abjection from the hetero-/cis-normative institution are all highlighted as points for discussion. Viewed through a critical theory lens, the exemplars used to illustrate these complex theories are chosen from 72 workshops undertaken in schools with Year Nine pupils over a the 2015 to 2016 academic year in the Merseyside region, and also from self-identified LGBT+ young people (also in Year Nine during the academic year 2015 to 2016), who were part of discussions in an LGBT+ Youth drop in based in Liverpool city centre.

Intertwining academic analysis and philosophical reflection, the research finds that not only is the LGBT+ pupil abject in the school, but this abjection is threefold. It is enacted by the institution, the peer group and by the internalised LGBT+phobia of the abjected pupil. In the conclusion, it is reflected upon how the impact abjection from school continues to affect LGBT+ people into adulthood.

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The LGBT+ Pupil as the Abject:

<u>Introduction</u>

This is a thesis that is preoccupied with language and concerned with the notion of identity crisis in LGBT+ young people, or rather how the language to identify the exact nature of your personal crisis is mediated, silenced and obscured by the institutional discourses of the school. Originally, the culprit was falsely identified homophobia or transphobia or biphobia (or to shorten this to lessen the burden on a heavily laden word count LGBT+phobia), but this was soon aquitted. Indeed, my preliminary research seemed to confirm the ubiquitous affirmation of many scholars that schools are the last bastion of permitted homophobia (Beadle, 2009; Grew, 2008; as cited in Formby, 2013), and, as it is widely acknowledged, in the last 15 years homophobic bullying and a sense of continued discomfort and invisibility has continued in UK schools despite Section 28 2b[1] having been rescinded (Douglas et al, 1999; Formby, 2011a; Greenland and Nunney, 2008, as cited in Formby, 2013). Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged in current academic discourses that a legacy from Section 28 still remains (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Formby, 2013; Greenland and Nunney, 2008) and existing research has identified discriminatory behaviour and attitudes among some teaching staff that is often coupled with inadequate responses to bullying (McNamee, Lloyd and Schubatz, 2008; Warwick, Aggleton and Douglas, 2001). It has also been widely researched and accepted in respected academic circles both in the UK and internationally that, where schools are more supportive, it lessens the potential negative outcomes for lesbian, gay bisexual and trans (LGBT) pupils (Espelage et al, 2008; Rivers and Cowie, 2006; Russel, 2005). However, as I found, to name this LGBT+phobia was simply inadequate, as it is too neat and tidy to simply attempt to eradicate visible prejudice when the system of institutions remain inherently biased. Schools may forbid and penalise the performative iterations of LGBT+phobia, such as hate speech or physical assault, but, in this research, I found the culture of hetero- and cis-centrism is pervasive and, with this normative constraint, the silence surrounding other genders and sexualities (as an unnamed 'other') remains intact (DePalma, 2010).

The articles mentioned above often cited negative outcomes, which are precipitated by poor mental health, as LGBT+ young people report higher instances of self-harm, depression

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[1] Section 28 2b was a piece of legislation that prohibited the discussion of homosexuality in schools and ran between 1988 and 2001.

and/ or attempted suicide compared to their heterosexual counterparts both in adolescence and adulthood (Almeida et al, 2009; McNamee, Lloyd and Schubatz, 2008; Robinson and Espelage, 2011). Another antecedent for the negative outcomes (such as lower academic attainment, lower levels of employment, homelessness, shorter life expectancy or diminished life quality) is the impact of poorer physical health due to higher instances of tobacco use, alcohol dependency and other substance misuse which are related to their experiences of wider society (Espelage et al, 2008; Rivers and Noret, 2008). According to accepted academic thought and as illustrated in a wide variety of research studies, these wider determinants have a direct impact on educational attainment and mental health or emotional well-being in both adolescents and adults (Ryan and Rivers, 2003; Robinson and Espelage, 2011). However, a small number of researchers have requested in their own work that this information should be read with the caveat that there is a danger of creating a victim narrative, of overstating risk and of research becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy as the researcher seeks to investigate an area of assumed academic fact (such as alcohol misuse in lesbian women) sometimes serves to normalise this behaviour or disproportionality represents this populations alcohol consumption as dangerous (See Cover, 2012 on 'Queer Suicides' and see Russell, 2005 regarding resilience). Whilst it is agreed in this thesis that LGBT+phobia is still widespread in both schools and wider society, I found that the impact of direct LGBT+phobic discrimination was less evident, but that the effect of LGBT+ invisibility, the silencing of positive discourse surrounding sexuality and the institutional rejection of performative LGBT+phobia without cultural or organisational change meant these negative determinants were still a risk factor for some LGBT+ young people.

During this review of the academic field it was evident that there remains an issue not only in schools but also in society more generally surrounding homophobia and concomitantly transphobia and biphobia. It is also evident from the scope of the issue, the abundance of academic thought and the many intersectional arguments surrounding LGBT+ identities that only a particular section or idea can be explored in this thesis. During my information gathering and reviewing the literature of the academic field surrounding LGBT+ identity, I found very little work that explored the notion of the LGBT+ pupil as abject, with much of the scholarship looking at LGBT+phobic attitudes more generally, assessing risk of harm or

assessing barriers to services based upon empirical evidence. In terms of critical theory being used as a tool to investigate LGBT+ pupils in education, I found very few articles during my searches. Together with the events outlined in the next chapter, this led to the decision to explore both the construction of the LGBT+ subject and then the potential for the LGBT+ young person to become the abject in mainstream secondary schools through a critical theory and psycho-analytical lens. This is an alternative approach to much of the academic work I have read related to LGBT+ young people, as it seeks to problematize the institution rather than to present the LGBT+ pupil as a victim. This thesis seeks to subvert the often problematic assumption that LGBT+ pupils experience difficulties because they are LGBT+, rather than LGBT+ pupils experience difficulties because people, institutions and other structures are LGBT+ phobic or in the case of this thesis hetero-/cis-normative.

Utilising the primarily the works of Foucault, Kristeva and Butler, but with reference to Althussarian and Lacanian theory, I have drawn exemplars from the ethnographic research undertaken with LGBT+ young people who were in Year Nine during the academic year 2015 to 2016, based in the Merseyside area, both in the classroom setting (through 72 workshops) and in an LGBT+ inclusive Youth Group for this age range based in Liverpool City Centre. Through the use of short vignettes and exemplars from this period of research, I have provided a discursive narrative that offers an alternative view of the LGBT+ pupil in the school, through highlighting the institutional denial of appropriate language, the lack of positive space to construct their identity and the potential risk of abjection from the hetero-/cis-normative institution. Although all young people are represented, it is mainly the experience of the young people who are 'othered' due to their sexuality that are discussed in the main argument of the thesis (however, trans young people are both included and discussed to a lesser extent). This is due to practical reasons such as constraints of word count and coherence of argument. In all honesty, it had originally been my intention to create greater parity of representation in the thesis, however as my knowledge increased the assumptions I had made (regarding a large degree of homogeneity between those who are cis-gendered and experience same sex attraction and those who are represented under the trans- umbrella and experience opposite sex *[to the gender they were assigned at birth]* attraction) were increasingly shown to be incorrect. In this discursive narrative, where the experiences of subjectification and abjection (then latterly melancholia) converge, the

entire LGBT+ categorisation is included. In examples where the experiences or discourses differ, I have chosen not to conflate two independent experiences but have opted to use the examples relating to same sex attraction. This is in no way intended to minimise or disregard trans experiences but instead it is an acknowledgement borne from respect that (although gender and sexuality are intertwined) the trans experience is often unique, distinct and misunderstood when obscured by issues surrounding sexuality. There are also practical reasons for this editorial distinction, as although both Gender and Gender Reassignment are included in the Equality Act 2010 as protected characteristics, both Section 28 2b and much of the academic work in schools relating the LGBT+ young people have centred on sexuality. Academic work on Trans issues and non-binary discourses in schools are (although pioneering) nascent, and I do not feel suitably qualified to steer through such unchartered waters.

There are two ways to view the structure of the thesis. It has been a struggle to fit it neatly into a standard template, so some gentle navigational tips may be useful. The first way to view it is in its most conventional terms is as a piece of research presented as a doctoral thesis. The thesis is split into five chapters. The first chapter is an exploration of how a thesis that was going to be a rather anodyne (and safe) analysis of the business case for LGBT+ equality in Higher Education by an equality practitioner became a personal and philosophical ethnographic exploration of subjectivity, discourse and abjection. Chapter Two is the most conventional chapter and includes a research narrative, methodology, ethics and positionality. Chapter Three is as close to a discussion of findings or data analysis as I could write, and offers a brief journey through the critical theories I used to analyse the observations I recorded in the ethnographic research components in both schools and the LGBT+ inclusive youth group. This is used to form a narrative that unpacks how institutional discourses, performative utterances and interpellative actors in the school all interact to construct their own subjectivity. This is a thesis concerned with discourse, with words spoken (and unspoken) and how the utterances we are able to make construct us as subjects (and how the utterances we are unable to make therefore deny us subjectivity). Chapter Four provides the results section, which answers the key question of this research thesis "Is the LGBT+ pupil abject in schools?" Now not to ruin the ending of this thesis (and to use the modern vernacular *spoilers ahead*), the answer is a resounding yes. As is often

the case in this thesis, it is not a simple yes/no binary answer, and subsequently this chapter centres upon the breakdown of abjection into three categories: abjection by the institution; peer-led abjection and abjection by the self. As is convention, just as it began with the introduction, the thesis ends with the conclusion and, at this point, the often muddied ideas presented in the thesis are distilled into a more universal discussion.

The second way of viewing the structure of the thesis is more personal to me, the writer. It is a story in three acts. Somewhere in the midst of writing the many thousands of discarded words that led to this remaining copy, one of my supervisors said (to paraphrase), "Remember you are writing a story that needs to engage your reader and it needs a beginning, a middle and an end." Should they read these words, then they would be permitted a moment of regret as the majority of their further comments were regarding writing to a structure and in a style in-keeping with academic convention (which did not appear to resonate quite so clearly). Perhaps it was using Julia Kristeva's work or having studied Literature for my undergraduate degree, but this thesis is not only a report of research undertaken but also a story. In this narrative, the protagonist has a moment of personal crisis (chapter one), then as they seek to find out why this crisis occurred go on an explorative quest(chapter 2, 3 and 4) and end with a moment of clarity or epiphany that completes the research journey (conclusion). It is a personal inquiry, as well as a professional research project, and, within the thesis, there are moments of reflection upon where these two approaches converge.

Above all though, this thesis was motivated by the joy of intellectual pursuit, the thrill of seeing the world round the mind bend of critical theory and the gratification of solving a philosophical quandary with a new discursively reflexive narrative.

Chapter One: Who do you think you are (and other research questions)?

1.1 The Confession

"You look at me and you don't see me. You see something else. What do you see? That's what I don't understand… What do you see that makes you so mad when you look at me?" (Arthur Miller, Focus, 1945, p. 186).

Arthur Miller wrote one novel, *Focus* in 1945, and, similar to his plays, it was a political allegory that posed a simple story as a wider commentary on American society. The premise is simple. The protagonist, Lawrence Newman, is an anti-Semite, who lives in an increasingly anti-Semitic area. Through his newly discovered need to wear glasses, his appearance is altered and (to the over active imaginations of his bigoted neighbours and colleagues) he presents with stereotypical Jewish facial features. Newman is complicit to the values of his peers and shares their anti-semitic sentiment, even if it is internalised rather than externalised in acts of violence or vandalism towards Jewish people. However, everything he does to try to convince people he is not secretly Jewish with a false gentile name, nor is he sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish people, only serves to confirm other people's suspicions and endorse their prejudices.

It is a clever book that perfectly encapsulates the Althussarian notion of interpellation: a hugely influential theory which describes the process by which ideology, embodied in major social and political institutions (or as Althusser terms them Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus), constitutes the very nature of individual subjects' identities through the process of "hailing" them in social interactions. For example, the novel's protagonist approaches the police to report anti-Semitic violence against his house, but is only permitted to do this when he allows the police to authenticate his new Jewish identity, as surely he must be Jewish to have such a crime committed against him. By the novels conclusion, he realises that it no longer matters what he thinks he is or how he identifies: it is how others perceive him or hail him that really matters. Therefore, rather than being complicit with his persecutors, he simply accepts his new Jewish identity; his previous

prejudice has evaporated with the misguided belief in the supremacy of his previous gentile identity. It is a theory which not only renegotiates our perceptions of agency and shows how the overlapping spheres of ideologies, in both the public and domestic sphere shape our identities and make us as subjects, but also shows us how we are compelled to cede that identity to the institution. Like all great pieces of literature, this novel's ideas remained with me and began to resonate in my own life a few years ago. In the novel, the glasses the protagonist has begun to wear alter not only how other people perceive him but also become a metaphor for his own altered perceptions, as he begins to recognise bigotry (both his own and other peoples) and becomes determined to fight against it. It had never been my intention to start my thesis with this confession, but I have found myself unable to write it without this chapter, as Geertz stated "all ethnography is part philosophy and a good deal of the rest is confession" (Geertz,1973, p 134). The episode recounted below formed the genesis of this thesis and prompted criticism of the oppressive practices of the institutions I used to represent. It is a tale of gamekeeper turned poacher, or, alternatively, of the events leading to radicalisation.

This confession is not a scintillating tale of homophobic slurs and violence, enacted by individuals, but a story of the heterosexist slow crush of an institution. It is presented with a caveat: this is my *truth*, rather than the ineffable, unachievable monolithic truth. It is my perception that I was the victim of homophobic bullying. It has not been corroborated by a legal ruling or even tried in a court of law, but remains my own experience of a perceived incident of homophobic bullying – and to recount it here in anything but the broadest terms could be potentially libellous. I am unable to rely upon myself to be a neutral narrator, as to return to Althusser (1971), it cannot be told from a position of neutrality outside of ideology. Subsequently, the balancing discourse of the institution is conspicuous in its absence, and would no doubt tell the tale of an organisation protecting the boundaries of its institutional body from infiltration from a person who did not fit within the mainstream culture. To return to dystopian fiction, an alternative version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Kesey, 1963) could depict Nurse Ratched as the narrator and moral barometer of the novel –a hero charged with maintaining categorical order at a threatened institution -rather than the novel's antagonist. Similarly, this introduction would have a very different argument had it been narrated by somebody within the establishment; just as Ken Kesey's

counter-culture fuelling Beat novel would have been a very different book, with an alternative allegorical meaning. This introduction and therefore this thesis are polemic having been written by a radicalised individual outside the institutional mainstream of hetero-/cis-normativity.

This opening confession is not a dramatic tale, but rather an infinite catalogue of small acts that sought by design to isolate, undermine, devalue and disempower me in the workplace. Each one on its own can be perceived as innocuous, but together had a death by a thousand cuts impact. Colleagues would covertly warn me about our boss and that she had a two decade long history of bullying her staff but in the next breath warn there was no point going to HR as she was too powerful to be touchable and then list fallen comrades, who had been forced out of the institution or exiled to remote locations and forgotten campuses. Perhaps the power of novels like Orwell's *1984* is not the sheer breadth and depth of the dystopian world he portrayed, but rather that we can recognise its tropes in the mundanity of our own lives, as it provided an expert satire of institutional power with its thought crimes, double-think, rewritten histories and fake news. They made it clear that she had a history of playing the games I was experiencing, and that I was not paranoid, but that she would get bored and I should just to wait it out.

I would go back to my home city, 25 miles away, and tell jokes about my funny workplace, with its time-warp politics, anachronisms and *Big Brother* vibe to my friends. We laughed about the time my boss asked me if I ever flew into uncontrollable rages and whether I domestically abused my wife, resurrecting an archaic stereotype of the aggressive gay woman – my friends would roar with laughter at this, with my wife joking the only violence I enacted on the household was some pretty substandard ukulele playing. It felt good to laugh at the place and humour acted as a panacea. However, my boss's implications were always clear: she thought I was an angry, young lesbian woman. This was not a tenuous supposition on my part, as in fact she even asked me one day whether I thought it was because I was gay that I was so angry, as all lesbians she had met seemed particularly aggressive. We both knew, she could say what she wanted to and about me with little to no recourse, as she was protected by the institution. But as time progressed and the stress of the situation built, her assertions became true – I was absolutely furious.

This is the power of the small violence against the subject or the petty instances that I have described above; as they resonate in the individual and echo personal fears or prejudices they may hold. Each situation that should easily be dismissed as a small prejudice or slight, instead engages with the vulnerable aspects of the self and erode the thin veneer that masks their own internalised prejudices or embedded vulnerabilities. The institutional ethos was entrenched in archaic British systems of class, patriarchal rule and nepotism. It was remarkably similar to the grammar school in which I spent my formative teenage years in a small town/ large village in rural Lancashire. It was only when I moved to the liberal anonymity of a city at the age of 22 years old that I was able to begin to come out as gay and take pride in that part of my identity. To use the theory of Bourdieu (1979), the habitus of both institutions were alienating to my identity as they did not include (except on the margins) any space where my social or cultural capital related to being gay were a currency with any worth. To paraphrase Bourdieu's infamous quote, whilst others moved through the institutions like a fish would swim through water, I could not. I had been returned to an atmosphere where my identity was again compromised, diminished and my individual liberties were suppressed.

In the end, I was a terrible, bad tempered and disillusioned employee. After a ten year hiatus, I started smoking heavily; I listened to Riot Grrl *(sic)* music in my office and met the workplace with a dead eyed stoic resolve not to quit, not to break, not to let my boss or the institution win. I was the truculent teenager, who folds their arms and looks out of the window rather than engaging, just so the world knows just how much they really do not care. Until one day, I woke up, realised I had become everything that my boss had interpellated me as and I quit. As I drove away on my final day, instead of jubilation I felt defeated. In the subsequent weeks I busied myself with our son, with job applications and volunteering on projects I might be interested in. After a few weeks I was offered a job, similar to the one I had just left, but for significantly more money. It was good news and it was the job I had spent the previous few years working to achieve and this should been a happy ending to this tale. But every time the idea of working came to mind, I felt nauseous, panicked and paralysed with fear; I made an excuse and rejected the job offer.

Depression took away a year of my life. It took all my energy every day to get up and take our son to school, then build up enough energy to pick him up afterwards; I was determined

he would not be impacted. I would dread having to interact with people, even at the supermarket checkout. Depression does not just make you feel sad and lethargic; it can depress all your cognitive functions. In that year, I was not as intellectually able to process ideas, indecisive, could not clap in rhythm, catch a ball, or walk and eat simultaneously, could not write coherently or comprehend a long newspaper article or even a long sentence. My head was filled with feelings of shame and humiliation, as doubts had crept in that I deserved this treatment and had in fact inflicted it upon myself. My conviction about my own ontology had been replaced with a dull witted uncertainty. Obsessively, I re-ran scenes of the past to work out how I could have behaved differently, to isolate the wrong decisions and ensure I corrected the intrinsic faults that must exist in me that led to this point.

After the first six months, the anti-depressants started to take effect and I gained a little clarity or perhaps numbness. This was a period in which I started my transformation from being an openly gay woman with a large amount of repressed internalised homophobia and feelings of shame to becoming a radicalised empowered gay woman. For some reason, much like mental health issues, I had thought homophobia was something that happened to other people. No, worse than that, I thought that by being relatively conventional looking I 'got away' with being gay – as I'm not politically queer and do not incorporate any of the culturally recognisable tropes of lesbianism into my appearance -I held the hangover of an internalised homophobia from a small town adolescence. With brutal honesty, I thought I would not experience homophobia because I had largely assimilated and did not *deserve* it; I had submitted to the heteronormative norm and through accepting its mastery did not require abjection. I still struggle now to definitively state what happened in the workplace was homophobia, despite my sexuality being something that was consistently raised when not relevant, was spoken about inappropriately and people regularly expressed implicitly homophobic views. I blamed myself for behaving in a way that displeased other people and for not being able to integrate into the workplace, but to have *achieved* this heteronormative assimilation I would have had to accept a series of values that problematized and 'othered' my identity.

As I started to feel better, I started to formulate a series of research questions. These began as broad reflections such as 'what is homophobia and how is it manifest?' To my knowledge, nobody, in the workplace, ever called me by a homophobic epithet, and nobody ever directly denied me an opportunity by saying I could not do something because I am gay. However, there was a feeling that I was different to other people and therefore posed some sort of threat. Much of the interactions in the office space with my colleagues would epitomise Kristeva's notion of abjection in its most basic form, and this was magnified further through the power and influence of the boss, who in turn was empowered by the institution. According to Julia Kristeva in the Powers of Horror (1982), the abject refers to the human reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other. Simply by being who I am, I caused discomfort and was implicitly subversive towards the hegemonic heteronormativity of the institution— perhaps even more so by looking and dressing like the other women in the office, rather than as a hyperbolic stereotype of a homonormative gay female identity, as to them it appeared to cause a fundamental breakdown between the signifier and signified. To the extent of which, my boss interpellated me as a subject (and it did not matter whether I accepted how I was hailed), I became the legible as the stereotype of aggressive anti-establishment lesbian 'other' that she could understand and then reject from the institution. This enactment of institutional subjectification returned me to thinking about schools and the widespread impact they have on the formation of the LGBT+ subject – or the development of adolescent identity. This produced the first questions to be investigated in this thesis: how is the LGBT+ subject formed in the hetero-/cis-normative institution of the school? Or, in other words, how do institutional discourses form the nascent subject in the school? How do these normative discourses cause difficulty for and potentially problematize the LGBT+ young person? Does the LGBT+ young person always become abject? If so or if not, how and why?

The most complex part of this introductory story, however, was my own abjection of mys*elf* not only through my mental illness, but also being so easily malleable as a subject that I knowingly became the stereotype of an angry gay woman. The internalised homophobia which I had never acknowledged and had suppressed since coming out 10 years earlier manifested itself, readily. It was awoken when I experienced rejection in the workplace and

it undermined my own identity; it raised the reasons why I secretly took security, a feeling of safety and even a sense of superiority in the idea that I could *pass* as straight. It was because deep down, I thought there was something weird, not normal and second-class about being gay, and I enjoyed receiving affirmation from a heteronormative society that I was part of an exception to that belief, and could through this complicity receive access to societal dividends related to this performance of normative values. Experiencing 'othering' or bullying because of my sexuality destroyed that false security and exposed a deep insecurity about my identity that required it to be validated as being *normal*. I could not be angry at my ex-colleagues for their prejudices, when I held the same values. This presented the secondary research questions on the malleable subject's complicity with the process of subjectification and how this impacts upon ideas of agency or individuality.

The purpose of this chapter is not only to outline the personal experiences that were the catalyst for the problem identified by this thesis, but also to define my positionality and how I am placed within this research. The introduction is also included to illustrate how homophobia can be experienced both externally and internally. Hopefully, it illuminates the transition of my understanding of homophobia, bullying or discrimination from being extremely limited and simplistic to the moment of epiphany that when experienced, homophobia was subtle, entrenched, already present, covert and nuanced in its enactment and far from the kerfuffle of a playground bully that I still well into adulthood would have expected. This experience raised the question that if I experienced this complete breakdown of my reality and fracturing of my identity due to being subjectified and then being categorized as abject by a large organisation then how do LGBT+ young people cope with this in schools? It also raised the question how did this experience destabilise my sense of self so quickly, effectively and catastrophically? And the somewhat rhetorical question, what was the trigger and when was this embedded into my psyche? The answers to these questions, I suspected, would be found in the large heteronormative institution of the school and will be referenced in the conclusion.

1.2 The Research Questions

The overarching question in this research is "Is the LGBT+pupil the abject in schools?" However, it is acknowledged that this is a large question to answer within the confines of this thesis so instead it has been broken down into smaller questions that will provide preliminary discussions or strands that could be developed in future research projects.

In the next chapter, I set out the rationale for my chosen methodology, how I collected data and how I clarified my research questions. This chapter will look at the methodology and methods used to collect the data used to answer the following research questions.

1. How do hetero-/ cis-normative institutional discourses form the nascent subject in the school?
2. Using Kristevan ideas of abjection, how do these normative discourses cause difficulty for and potentially problematize the LGBT+ young person in the hetero-/cis-normative institution?
3. How do ideas of agency or individuality interact with these discussions of subjectivity and abjection?

Chapter Two: Understanding My Research Process

There is a moment of trepidation before disclosing an honest appraisal of the methodology used in this thesis and a mild temptation to apologise. It had been intended that the research process would be iterative, as I planned to conduct interviews on a set of decided themes, triangulate this with existing academic thought, then from this draw a validated conclusion. However, with the benefit of hindsight, this aim seems a little absurd. It displays the naivety with which I embarked upon this research, as I believed a brief study into the exceptionally complex issues of gender, sexuality, adolescence, prejudice and repression in schools would generate a neat thematic analysis and workable outcomes (all in the space of 45,000 words and a time limited research period). Instead, the research undertaken simply allowed me to realise and then relate one of the central issues with LGBT+phobia in schools: the language to discuss it effectively is not made available to pupils in schools and instead they are simply provided with the institutionally compliant narratives of hetero-/cis-normativity. Subsequently, any thematic analysis of the language of the young people interviewed would only generate the parroted institutional discourses and obscure any *truth* through its adherence to hetero-/cis-normativity. Therefore, as this chapter will reveal, the intended methodology was discarded when the data was analysed and the issues with the language used were identified. However, in place of this neat methodology, I have (unapologetically) analysed the data collected with the use of the critical theories of Foucault, Althusser, Kristeva and Butler. Through these theories I have constructed an alternative discourse to the discourse of the institution regarding the LGBT+ pupil as the abject.

2.1 The Narrative

In order to present a coherent research narrative, I have separated the data collection periods of the research into two separate sections, although they ran concurrently. The research narrative presented here performs the function of housekeeping in the thesis, and is simply a description of how I collected the data used to exemplify the critical theory discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Data Collection period 1: schools workshop facilitator

The first stage of research was to visit schools and to deliver anti-LGBT+ phobia[2] workshops in the wider Merseyside area, employed by a LGBT+ youth charity based in the North West of England. Through this role, I would be invited to deliver workshops raising awareness regarding homophobia and transphobia in Secondary schools. As noted earlier, bias is an inherent in qualitative research (Neuman, 2003) and awareness of this was crucial in ensuring any delay in recording data did not lead to manipulation or fabrication of the recorded sessions. After each session, I made a record of any observations, recorded key statements, and made approximations of responses to the statements in order to identify themes, discrepancies, similarities or unusual responses. It was not appropriate to record this information even in note form during the sessions, as it would have disrupted the flow of the discussion. At the beginning of each session, I introduced myself and highlighted both my dual role as a Youth Worker for the charity I represented in schools and also my role in the LGBT+ youth groups in the evenings, with an invitation for any pupil who would like to attend a youth group to contact me. I would also state that I was post-graduate researcher and may use the discussions in future research. The young people or the staff who were present were given the option to state whether they felt uncomfortable with this and offered assurances that all identities, specific locations and private information would remain anonymous. The information would also be stored and then destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. There were no queries or objections raised during any of the workshops I facilitated.

The content of the workshops and its structure was uniform. This had been determined through collaborative work with schools to ensure the charity presented information and prompted discussions that were in keeping with the values, ethos and policies of the school. This meant that the session was not permitted to include sexual health and relationship information, but was centred distinctly upon attitudes towards homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. The content of the workshop was very basic: initially, it offered simple definitions of generic terms for non-heterosexual sexualities and of trans- identities; it then conducted a 'true or false' exercise to explore students' attitudes to sexualities and gender

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[2] LGBT+phobia is used for ease of use and brevity in this thesis. It incorporates homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, but also acknowledges related prejudice that does not fit into these neat categorisations.

representations. The session was time limited to between 45 minutes and 1 hour. Once definitions of key terms were established, the main section of the hour long workshops was designed to encourage participants to be reflective regarding their own attitudes and beliefs. Each pupil would be provided with a green 'yes' card and a red 'no' card, and they would then be asked to hold up a card that best represented their response to a list of statements. This visual aid would be used to prompt discussion and encourage the pupils to express their opinions. Of the 117 hour long workshops delivered, only 93 workshops were in Merseyside schools and 72 of these were for Year 9 students. I have only included findings from the sessions undertaken with Year 9 Pupils. I read out the statements, as the facilitator and edited or omitted statements to fit within the time constraints or to encourage the flow of the discussions in line with the key aims of the charity which provided the workshop.

Dara Collection Period 2: Youth Worker in LGBT+ Youth Groups based in youth centred advisory service.

Alongside this day job, I was working in an LGBT+ youth group based in Liverpool City Centre. The LGBT+ youth drop in celebrated 40 years of service in the year I undertook this study, and this potentially makes it the oldest in both the UK and wider Europe. Over the first three months I was a volunteer and observer at the youth service working on the three LGBT+ sessions per week, across three age categories. As time progressed I realised that the needs, behaviours and experiences of each group were distinct and would require separate analysis not enabled by the word constraints placed upon this thesis. Therefore in order to mirror and complement the research in schools, I have only included findings taken from the Year Nine pupils who attended the sessions in the academic year 2015-2016. The session would run weekly between 16:00 hours ad 18:30 hours. The young people would attend after school and there was a mixture of a core group of regular attendees, those who attended semi regularly, intermittent attendees and those who just came for one or two sessions and then moved on. In each session there would be between 5 and 25 participants. Each young person had to register and have a brief induction at the youth service and would then be assigned an anonymous code, given opportunity to raise any concerns, signposted

to further appropriate services, asked about other agencies they had interacted with and given opportunity to opt out of any research that was being currently undertaken at the youth group (including this research). The session comprised an introductory hour when a simple meal was prepared then eaten and followed by a collective effort to tidy up. During this informal period of time, the young people chatted with each other and took the opportunity to talk to a member of staff about any issues. To protect the integrity of the group, information from these informal periods is not included in the data used for this thesis. The hour that followed this informal period was more structured and included topic based educational discussions or activities related to being LGBT+, aimed to assist in raising self-esteem or encouraging reflection. This section would begin with a "name game" where young people would identify their preferred name, pronoun, sexual orientation (if they know it) and would answer an ice breaker question. The young people were asked to respect the views, identity and privacy of others in the group. They were also warned that everything they said in the group was being said in a public forum and to try not to say anything that they may later regret. They were also informed that should the session bring up any issues they did not wish to discuss in the group they could speak to a member of staff afterwards or throughout the week. This section would end with the question "One thing I have learned from today's session…" and each person would answer it in turn. This would clearly delineate the end of the formal part of the session. I have treated this hour long section as focus group for this thesis and have recorded neither data from the informal preliminary hour nor the informal closing half an hour.

2.2 – Discursive Reflexivity – Methodology

As stated, the research was planned and undertaken with a clear methodology in mind. Confident, I would build a rapport and then interview a selected sample of LGBT+ young people from the youth group at which I volunteered. The interview questions would be formulated through deepening my understanding of the issues facing LGBT+ pupils through reflecting upon the school workshops I had delivered. Then I intended to perform a thematic analysis through utilising the interview transcripts and NVivo program to present the *truth* of my research and reveal clear findings. However, this did not work, and, as the research components progressed, it became apparent that this would not create a meaningful thesis or create any form of truthful narrative. My initial estimates were that I

would be ready to collate my data after three months. In reality, it took me two years to both collect and then reach a suitable level of understanding of my data. The problem was that in the workshops and when I did attempt to interview LGBT+ young people, it was difficult to decipher and delineate the words of the young people from the discourse produced by the school. The young people displayed an inability to recognise LGBT+ prejudice and despite any previously cultivated rapport retreated to treating me as another adult seeking a reiteration of accepted truth. The language or meaning was drowned in the assumption of heterosexist or cisnormative entitlement or supremacy in the school pupils and the minimising shame or inability to recognise their self which was expressed by the LGBT+ youth people.

The only way I could understand the many conflicting statements and circumstances I found in my research was by performing a form of intellectual interrogation. In this inquisition, critical theory became the spotlight which I shone on the narrative data I collected. Critical theory and the lens of psychoanalysis became a sort of polygraph that mediated the denials of LGBT+phobia, revealed the hetero-/cis-normative discourses and highlighted the invisibility of LGBT+ pupils, and began to present an alternative discourse that was previously obscured by the mendacious discourses of the institution. This use of theory also became a way of understanding the difficulties presented by agency or lack of it, as in the moments where LGBT+phobia was reported by the young people it was (perhaps falsely) attributed to a teacher, parent or another individual who was acting on behalf or witin the constraints of the institution. This thesis is not a narrative of victims and perpetrators, but rather a means to understand that nobody represented within it was operating outside the processes, discourses and influence of the institution; almost everybody added into, endorsed and showed complicity with the institution for fear of no longer experiencing the safety or dividends of institutional compliance, and this in the main was committed without self-awareness or the benefit of a raised consciousness. To paraphrase the modern adage, it was not the players that were the problem, it was the game.

This research and the data collected were undertaken through ethnographic methods. I was embedded as a youth worker in both roles, with the covert role of a researcher hidden in plain sight. This position as researcher would be acknowledged to all participants in the

research prior to each session beginning and opportunity for withdrawal from the data collection and eventual study would be presented. After this point the session was undertaken in a naturalistic way that sought to engage with and then interpret the words and experiences of the research subjects or participants in the workshops or youth drop in. As Elizabeth Molina-Markham (2011, p 202) stated, " the challenge then is to render these reflections in an ethnographic discourse that is accessible to the outside community while still honouring the meanings active for those who engage in these activities." This method allows for the researcher to "critique theories, to add theory, to alter theory and to reread theory in a new light" (Berry and Clair, 2011, p 209), as evident through the discursive reflexivity in Chapter Three in response to Kristevan theories of abjection in the heteronormative institution, which are discussed through a Foucauldian Lens.

In a review of the origins and developments of critical reflection, Reynolds (2011) notes that:

> Reflection involves thinking about past or ongoing experience of events, situations or actions so as to make sense of them, potentially with a view to informing future choices, decisions or actions. In so doing, we draw on existing ideas – our own or other people's – and in applying them to our experience, may confirm these ideas or develop new ones. (Reynolds, 2011, p 8).

In this thesis critical theory offers a form of validation, as the use of this philosophical thought seeks to corroborate and assist the development of my argument. Taking the thinking of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983), I accept that pragmatic thinking, theoretical thinking and practice cannot be separated, but exist in a mutually reliant relationship. Instead of these two roles of practitioner and researcher being separate, they instead offer reciprocity and discourse between each other and unite to become one single perspective (Medwell and Wray, 2013).

This hermeneutic and interpretivist approach placed myself firmly within the research as it followed the belief that not to do so would render the situation devoid of meaning. Although it can be argued that all research is political and borne from the positionality of the researcher, it bears repeating. This is exemplified in the following famous quote by the existentialist and phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty:

> All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be

> meaningless. To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematisation is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p viii - ix).

However, in the spirit of hermeneutic interpretation, I have not used hermeneutics in a static form; having observed the development of reflexivity to partner, supplement or perhaps supercede a hermeneutic interpretation, and as such I employ a "discursive reflexivity" (Carbaugh, Nucifoo, Molina-Markham and Van Over, 2011).

> Our central concern is conceptualized as "discursive reflexivity"; with that concept, we foreground communication both as primary data and as our primary theoretical concern. As a result, we treat reflexivity as a process of metacommunication, that is, as a reflexive process of using discourse at one level to discuss discourse on another. (Carbaugh, Nucifoo, Molina-Markham and Van Over, 2011, p 154).

This is used as the methodological linchpin in this research as way to "navigate tensions" and "arrive at a new place of mutual understanding within…differences" (Hill and HolyOak, 2011, p 191). Through the use of discursive reflexivity, I have used the language of the school pupils and the attendees at the youth group as primary data but then on a meta-level as exemplars for theoretical discourse. Whilst the hermeneuticist observes a respectful distance between researcher and subject, discursive reflexivity positions the researcher as part of the research as it creates a "dialogic performance" (Madison, 2006, p 322) or "picture of selves" (Stronach, Garratt, Pearce and Piper, 2007, p 192) that incorporates the researcher into the research. This approach encourages an "ethical mindfulness" (Warin,2011, p 807) that means that there has to be a constant ethical repositioning of the researcher as I have renegotiated the meaning, responsibilities and moralities of this work. This thesis will not have a distinct ethics chapter but instead I will unpack the ethical difficulties in this research throughout this chapter, as I illustrate how I resolved the conflicts, tensions and crises involved in both the complex area of gender and sexuality and in working with vulnerable young people. Needless to say, however, as a researcher, I have filled out the relevant ethical consent forms, applied to the correct committees and maintained a commitment to BERA (2014) guidelines to ensure academic compliance.

2.3 Ethnography

This research methodology of "engaged ethnography" (Clair, 2012, p 133) is not without its critics and potential pitfalls. In this thesis there are moments and even extended narrative

threads where self-reflexivity tips over into auto-ethnography. Initially, when I had written a critical theory based analysis of the data, there was something missing; it felt removed, strangely clinical, passive or even disassociative. As I reflected on the use of ethnography and the positionality I held, it was apparent that the entire thesis was entwined in the gossamer threads of my own web of experiences in education, and, although I would shy away from defining this thesis as auto-ethnographic, there are aspects of myself from which the narrative cannot be freed. When this realisation or breakthrough became apparent, it unlocked the thesis and clarified my understanding of the issues presented. It has been acknowledged in academic circles that ethnographic reflexivity can also potentially "damage" researchers and the integrity of their study (Sampson, Bloor and Fincham, 2008), and there are moments of personal crisis in this study. In fact (as acknowledged in the previous chapter) the catalyst for the study was a period of mental breakdown that required self-exegesis, as it influenced, shaped and exposed areas of this research that cannot be expressed in other ways, and provided a constant reassessment of the researcher's voice, responsibility and gaze. The experiences of many of the young people were experiences I had shared two decades earlier, as I had traversed the same hetero-/cis-normative education system, in a similar place and with the same expectations placed upon me of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) and a gender ascribed at birth. In many ways, the reflexivity employed in this study provided "personal growth" and a sense of "catharsis", whilst providing the opportunity to contribute something through the "means to tell another's story" (Berry and Clair, 2011, p 209). Reflexivity is employed in this thesis to negotiate the paradoxical imbalance of "knowing both too little and too much" (Lather, 1997, p 102) as I was constantly faced with what Wanda S. Pillow termed as "data that breaks the heart" (Pillow, 2013, p 132).

There is a strong element of Marxism running through this thesis as I openly seek the empowerment of LGBT+ people as a disenfranchised group and critique education as a mechanism of Neo-Liberal Capitalism. This initial body of research was undertaken in the academic year stretching between September 2015 until July 2016, and I was hopeful it would present a new perspective on the state of schools in the 10 to 15 years since Section 28 Clause 2b of the Local Government Act 1988 was repealed. The amendment was enacted on 24 May 1988, and stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote

homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship". It was repealed in the Local Government Act 2003 and would allow for a more supportive and open learning environment than the one I had experienced two decades earlier. Again reflexivity was able to facilitate (as a research methodology) a way of revealing "the limits to our knowledge" through reflexive interpretation and to "make clear political orientation driving" the work forward and informing the studies decisions and omissions in a critical reflexivity (Davies, 2004, p 386).

The intention was to write an interpretivist thesis, but in both of the research settings the Marxist notions of emancipation and self-actualisation of the subject became central to my roles as both practitioner and ethnographer. Therefore this thesis is neither distinctly critical realist nor interpretivist in its approach, but by acknowledging the benefits and limitations of both (combined with my own positionality) has become a hybrid of the two research approaches. The Critical Realist approach reflects my identity: I have a personal political interest in the area of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans inclusive studies; I am a gay woman, who has previously studied Gender and Sexuality at Masters level; and as somebody who has been employed in equality related roles since 2011. However, this research approach can provoke tension when notions of agency are engaged, as the critical realist's desire to eliminate false consciousness assumes a level of inertia or deficit in agency from the research subject. It instead creates a paradox, as it seeks to simultaneously emancipate the subject whilst reducing the subject's agency and effectively disempowering their voice in preference of an authoritative authorial voice. This tension regarding agency is thematic of this thesis, as agency, pre-destination and individuality are in perpetual crisis throughout the theoretic strands and themes found within this research. It is through marrying the discordant strands of reflexive ethnography, interpretivist perspectives and critical realist goals that this thesis is written.

2.4 – Mission: Impossible (Ethics and other limitations)

The ethnographic approach used in both research components required two different forms of relationship with research participants. This is through a position of assumed authority in the school workshops, where I am authenticated by the school, and through developing

longer lasting relationships in the LGBT+ youth groups. This means that often ethical research dilemmas found in this research do not fit as neatly into a binary of right and wrong, as they may in other studies, but have often been renegotiated *in situ* as decisions were made on a case by case basis. Traditionally there are three objectives in research ethics: first to protect human participants; secondly to conduct the research in a way that serves interests of individuals, groups and/or society as a whole; finally, to examine specific research activities and projects for their soundness. These all involve looking at the management of risk, protection of confidentiality and ensuring informed consent. It is also acknowledged that this research involves vulnerable persons, as it utilises on the experiences of 13/14 year old children. This research addresses the three ethical objectives of research, as I have been mindful to protect human participants, to conduct the research in a way that serves interests of individuals, groups and/or society as a whole, and have examined my methods for their soundness. Following Denzin and Lincoln (2002) view that qualitative research is "a form of radical democratic practice" that "can be used to help create and imagine a free democratic society" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002: 86), I have employed feminist research practices, particularly in response to the ethical quandaries raised by this research. Having recorded both the complexity of the classroom (Torgerson, 2001) and also the narratives given through the relationship of trust built over time in the youth groups with sensitivity towards the potential vulnerability of the research subjects, such an approach was deemed necessary. As Denzin and Lincoln (2002: 83) identified "a feminist, caring, committed ethic with those who have been studied" offers the most suitable model for ethical engagement (Brooks et al, 2014).

However, at various stages in the research I began to doubt the integrity of my actions both as a researcher and as a practitioner. Prior to undertaking this research, I would have categorically stated unequivocally that this research benefits people. Unfortunately, to say that the efficacy of delivering an hour long in schools to combat LGBT+phobia was limited would be a wild understatement. In fact, as time wore on, it appeared that this hour was in many ways more damaging than not broaching the subject at all. It presented non-normative gender and sexuality as new special information that a stranger from outside the institution was only permitted to talk about for an hour and then disappear again. Contrary to its aims, it enforced the binary notion of cis-gender/heterosexuality as 'normal', and it

confirmed the position of the LGBT+ categorisation as the 'other'. When we speak about sexuality, invariably heterosexuality is assumed and LGB+ identities are named; in other words we default to heterosexuality as being the 'normal' position. Similarly when we speak about gender, we refer to a cis-normative male and female gender binary and gender identities which are non-gender binary, gender-queer or trans- are only visible when they are problematized or a site of crisis thus rendering them 'other'. The workshop also only gave the baseline of language and theories surrounding gender and sexuality and relied upon the limiting acronym LGBT+ that fed the institutional discourses this thesis critiques. This problem emerged as I held a dual role throughout this research as both a tool of the school that assists in the production and control of institutional discourses, and as a research who wished to disempower the same discourses. This in part was borne from having to use a number of gatekeepers to gain access to the school. This was not just one head teacher or a single governing body, but a committee of education practitioners and managers who had assisted in the 'safe' design of a workshop suitable for all schools and controlled the discourse that I was permitted to use (Denscombe and Aubrooke, 1992). The dual roles, combined with a bowdlerised narrative in the workshop, meant that I had divided loyalties as both an actor for the school, an actor for the charities I represented, as a gay woman and as an independent researcher that were difficult for others (and sometimes myself) to understand (DePalma, 2010).

This same problem in the workshop continued and was even exacerbated as I spoke specifically about trans identities. Initially I was required to define gender in terms of the male/ female binary so thus legitimise it and then to break it down as a fractured binary. Compounding the problem was the limits of the language surrounding gender (and also sexuality) as the notion of transition and the binary between two gender opposites often implied a journey or a process within which people would transition from male to female or vice versa. It would through the language available create a problem of a person's gender being in an *undecided* (in a Derridean sense) position between two binary positions, and therefore being in crisis or a threat to societal order until their gender was decided as either male or female. For many trans people, this 'complete' transition between binary poles is not their main objective but instead they may be non-gender binary, which reductively stated means they do not endorse or identify with either binary gender or they may even

reject the notion of gender altogether. This was also evident when I have spoken about same sex attraction, as implicitly I endorsed binary models of gender in order to create a legible narrative surrounding gender and sexuality.

It is important to note though that the damaging essentialist models of binary gender are damaging to the agency of all young people regardless of whether they identify as trans-, cis- or otherwise. They create limitations, predestination and truncate aspiration. However, within the current language and our frameworks of understanding gender identity, it is difficult (even within this discussion of the divisions in the gender binary and the inherent sexism that partners this) not to adhere to cis-normativity and the gendered assumptions this can bring. Cis-normativity can occur when exploring trans discourses, as the temptation is to incorrectly relate everything back to this binary model of gender that positions transition as a journey between male and female or vice versa. It is a discourse that often falls into lazy clichés, which many trans people can find troublesome. However, this is mitigated through the theories selected to discuss the data from the workshops (and youth group). It is acknowledged that such ethical dilemmas are more likely to occur in research like this when the researcher has a dual role as both researcher and as practitioner and is faced with different responsibilities, agendas and rules (Bell and Nutt, 2012).

There were a number of inherent difficulties with the session that will be discussed in more depth later in Chapter 3 but some are worth highlighting here. The purpose of the session was to discourage LGBT+phobia in schools through combating ignorance, provoking conversation and challenging current prejudices; this is an impossible mission for an hour-long session in a busy high school. The session was also aimed at both those who perpetrated LGBT+phobic acts or endorsed LGBT+phobic beliefs and those who identified at LGBT+ or were questioning their sexual or gender identity. This was a very complex and nuanced approach to negotiate, as I was simultaneously educating the bully and the bullied. This was through the provision of the information and therefore capacity needed to recognise oneself in either of these roles. The session acted as a panacea that absolved the institution from any sense of responsibility towards the risks that a LGBT+phobic culture or institutionalised heterosexism presents to young people with non-normative gender and sexualities. These risks are well documented over the past twenty years as a greater

susceptibility to suicidal thoughts, suicidal ideation, suicidal attempts on their own life, self-harm, substance misuse and sexual risk behaviours related to lowered self-esteem (Hegna and Wichstrom, 2007; Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar and Azrael, 2009; Espelage and Swearer, 2008).

In Cover's (2012) work on Queer Suicide, he notes, "suicide attempts were often posited as the result of endemic social problems, such as entrenched heterosexism, and the majority [of studies] demonstrated the ways in which the institutionalisation of the anti-queer sentiment in secondary schools related to suicide risk" (Cover, 2012, p 5). However, the school's delineation of a maximum workshop time of 1 hour and the decision that pupil participants were supposed to be the only perpetrators of LGBT+phobia in the school shows a "rhetoric of bullying here that indicated a shift away from institutionalised and cultural formations of heterosexism and instead "individualised" causal factors by suggesting that suicide was the direct result of the harassing behaviour of a small number of individuals targeting a non-heterosexual younger person" (Cover, 2012, p 6). Although it is often a conflation of two things to link suicide and other risk to LGBT+ young people (as far more do not attempt to end their own life than those that do attempt to end their life), the school should at least be mindful of the institution's responsibility to assist in mitigating this risk. Much mooted statistics such as "2 in 5 attempt suicide" (Clarke, 2004) often "produce a conception of the link between sexuality and suicide as timeless and unchanging, again problematically reinforcing the underlying notion that non-normative sexuality is itself causal" (Cover, 2012, p 6). This casual line of questioning and subsequent discussion of suicide (and tangentially self-harm) was avoided, as through my role I did not wish to add to the perception by the young people that LGBT+ youth suicide is the solution to a crisis (Wilson and Lumm, 2009, cited in Cover, 2012). Entering into discussions of self-harm or suicide also had the added risk of leading to "contagion" or "triggering" (Jamieson, Romer and Jamieson, 2006) suicidal and self-harm behaviours. However, there is a correlation between non-normative gender and sexuality and higher rates of suicide and self-harm. Therefore, I ensured my research was unobtrusive, relied upon the participants to lead discussions and reveal information, and did not willingly introduce inflammatory or damaging topics in the youth group for lazy research gains, as should we choose to ignore ethics "not only will our peers doubt the value of our work, we will be letting others down –

our participants who gifted the words to us, and the readers of our findings" (Mauthner, 2012, p 12).

Equally, there were ethical problems with the youth group. These were underlined by the level of research fatigue experienced by the attendees, as they formed a captive LGBT+ focus group for multiple agencies, organisations and charities. Often this research implicitly endorsed the heterosexist values that "normalised positions of entitlement or privilege based on claims or being heterosexual, resulting usually in the denigration or stigmatisation of non-heterosexual person, behaviours and communities" (Walton, 2006, p 9). Many of the researchers I observed had validated "different-sex coupling" at the denigration of same sex coupling and had endorsed the structures that produce "tacit and sometimes explicit intolerance of alternative sexualities" in their statements, questions and approaches (Walton, 2006, p 8). Through witnessing another research project, some of the pitfalls of creating a crusader narrative were highlighted. This obscured the narratives of the young people through the researcher's own suppositions of victimhood and a reduction of the research subject's agency. In this instance, the researcher stated on more than one occasion, "Can you think of any times when you were treated differently or prejudicially because you are LGBT?" Prompting a youth worker, including myself, on more than one occasion to reframe the question to a version where people experience LGBT+phobia not because of who they are (with its concomitant insinuation of fault, judgement or blame on the victim) but because some people are LGBT+phobic and therefore have, create and are the problem. The researcher asked for narratives where they had been "crusaders" (Cover, 2013) in fighting for their own rights against the enslaught of homophobia. The academic would suggest times when they had been bullied by an individual, creating the pathology of a LGBT+ bully as the sole perpetrator of LGBT+ harassment, bullying and other violence against the LGBT+ subject in the school, which again displayed simplistic assumptions regarding homophobia and bullying. As Michaelson (2008) and Walton (2006) discuss this absolves the institution from any responsibility for institutional heteronormativity and the marginalisation of non-normative differences. Michaelson (2008) continued to discuss how this institutional blindness to heteronormativity and its impact upon the suppression and invisibility of LGBT+ people in the wider school environment creates their availability for bullying and harassment. Furthermore Michaelson (2008) writes, when schools do include

issues around cis-/heteronormativity into anti-LGBT+phobia policies they generally place the burden of responsibility upon the victim or "crusader" to police and then report the bullying, and rarely do they appropriately redress the unjust power structures of the institution. This paradigm of victim/ crusader is ethically problematic. This research does not reinforce these problematic notions of bullying and victimhood, as it is believed the responsibility sits with the institution and the education system more generally.

The participants were protected further through my decision to gather as little specific personal information as necessary. Despite having given all participants in the research the opportunity to opt out and having gained informed consent by regularly stating my dual roles as workshop facilitator and youth group work, it was still important to make the processes transparent. I would inform the participants that I would record general notes about the session and that I may record their specific experiences after the workshop. All participants were given opportunity to withdraw their consent after the session, should, in retrospect, they decide they had disclosed something that was too personal or if they had simply changed their mind. Using Gillick competency the young people I have used as specific exemplars, also signed consent forms, but no identifying information beyond their age and attendance at the youth group was ever recorded. This method of self-consent was used rather than parental consent, as in LGBT+ related studies consent forms can sometimes lead to participants being involuntarily 'outed' and I did not want to create barriers to participation. Everybody included in this thesis has had details altered to ensure that they are anonymous. This meant that I have complied with the Data Protection Act 1998 and have maintained good quality research (data collection, storage analysis, dissemination of information). This is as there is an understanding of the potential issues related to "researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena" (Miller, Birch, Mauthner & Jessop, 2012, p 157).

2.5 Why Critical Theory?

On embarking on this research, I envisaged a very neat project that would use the themes and quotes of young people in schools, and then formalised focus groups with young people, with whom I had built a rapport with in the youth group to offer their perspective. I would have transcribed interviews and focus groups upon which I would perform thematic

analysis. These themes would then form the basis for my discussion, then from this I would draw up a list of issues that could be addressed to solve the problem of heterocentrism/ cis-centrism in schools. However, it soon became apparent this was not possible as I realised that through using both an ethnographic approach and discursive reflexivity, I could not have this neat, segmented thesis as the meta-argument was something much larger. This apparent disregard for my own methodology was borne from a series of ethical conundrums that I faced throughout the research. It became untenable for me to collect raw data that was to be thematically analysed without being critical of the data itself, the circumstances in which it was collected and the influence of the institution or youth space on these utterances. It was also apparent when I attempted to undertake formalised interviews and focus groups with both the pupils in the school or in the young people in the youth group that the quality of the data generated was poor. Instead as we begin Chapter 3, I have used critical theories to construct a central argument for the construction of the heteronormative/ cisnormative subject and, concomitantly, the abjection of the LGBT+ subject.

Chapter 3: Constructing the Subject in Schools

> "Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions- to define,
> classify, control, and regulate people."
> — Michel Foucault, 1977, p 306.

This third chapter will investigate theories of objectification and unpack them to show the ways in which the LGBT+ subject is both constructed in schools and how it can then potentially become abject in the heteronormative (and cis-normative) structures that are embedded into the institutions of mainstream education. Initially, I will explore theories of subjectivity using the work of Michael Foucault. Within this exploration, I will reflect upon the school as a hostile site for the (un)successful formation, reproduction and policing of the LGBT+ subject. In order to present this information, I have identified a number of linked theories that come together to build a central argument around the role of institutional discourse in constructing the subject in schools. This will then lead onto Chapter Four, where I will use this discussion of subjectivity in relation to schools and LGBT+ young people to answer the primary research question: does the LGBT+ pupil become abject in schools?

The first section of the chapter, Power and Discourse (3.1), looks at the role of discourse in constructing the subject and utilises Foucauldian thought to begin to destabilise institutional narratives. This leads onto Dividing Practices (3.2), Foucault's first schema of objectification in constructing the subject, as the monolithic LGBT+ categorisation is put under scrutiny. Then the argument is developed further through looking at Foucault's third schema for objectivity, Subjectification (3.3), as notions of agency are introduced into the discussion in regards to how we as subjects interact with discourse. Ideas around the neo-liberal subject are explored (3.4) as we question how current ideologies are reproduced in the construction of the subject. These notions of self-determination versus predestination are further unpacked through the Althussarian theory of Interpellation (3.5), as the transactional nature of performative language is discussed. Next, the way in which the parameters of subjectivity are policed by all members of the institution is highlighted through discussion of the Panoptic Scheme (3.6). The discussion then moves away from discourse and its enactment to the actual articulations of the pupils in the school and members of the youth group, as they speak using both symbolic and semiotic language (3.7). Developing this idea further,

Julia Kristeva's work is developed to identify the notion of the Institutional *Chora* (3.8) and how this becomes destabilising for the LGBT+ subject. As I argue in the concluding section (3.9), this is due to the permitted discourses and narratives of the institution and the language with which the young people are provided in order to form their subjectivity.

The argument in this chapter is centred upon the language and discourses that run through the schools I attended, and the schools reported upon by the young people in the LGBT+ youth group in Merseyside. The thesis explores discourses generated, authenticated and replicated by the language that framed verbal discussions of LGBT+phobia in education. However, the main question or area of tension this argument notes are the lack of positive discourse surrounding LGBT+ identities and the impact this has on the inclusivity of the institution. Coupled with a distinct hetero- /cis-normativity, the lack of language surrounding LGBT+ identity (that was not negative) denied the pupils the opportunity to positively identify LGBT+ people as anything other than the abject or with an implicit LGBT+phobia. Without this necessary discourse surrounding LGBT+ identity, it denied those young people who were questioning their gender and sexuality (as being something 'other' than the compulsory heterosexuality or cisgender that society predestines for its young people) the language necessary to discuss and understand their experiences, feelings and desires. Instead they were often abandoned with only the positive language of heteronormativity and the derogatory epithets of LGBT+phobia to attempt to reconcile their internal struggles with identity.

This was despite consistent institutional discourses that were repeatedly reiterated by the pupils in the schools and youth groups that stated both they and the school they attended were not LGBT+phobic. It was very rare that more than a handful of pupils in any given cohort would admit that they may be a little LGBT+phobic, with the remainder of the class adamant in their disavowal of LGBT+phobia. At the start of most sessions, the staff present would often make a point of telling me that they did not have a problem with LGBT+phobia in the school and it rarely came up as an issue. Initially, appearing true, after the first few workshops, I prepared myself to write a celebratory thesis on how remarkably liberated young people were and that this generation were post-LGBT+phobia. As the months progressed, however, I realised this was false. There was simply a better façade, which presented an institutional awareness that LGBT+phobia was no longer acceptable, without

any real institutional change. As shown throughout the critical theory and psycho-analytical lenses employed, when these discourses were engaged with dialogically, the institutional discourse on LGBT+phobia was revealed as a monologue that obscured a deeper hetero-/cisnormativity that was potentially damaging to the pupils.

The greatest indicator that there remained a problem in schools was the lack of visible LGBT+pupils who were willing to self-identify, who were proud and vocal in the school (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006). Coupled with the identification of only two visible LGBT+ teachers in all the schools I attended, according to the Year 9 pupils. The highest number of LGBT+ young people who were reportedly visible, in any school visited, was seven pupils, who were all in the 6th Form in a large school with around 2,800 pupils. In the sessions undertaken with Year Nine pupils, there was no school where a pupil in that age group was identified as being LGBT+ and still attended the school. On three occasions, the class identified somebody who is LGBT+ and had 'come out' or been 'outed', but that they had subsequently left the institution. This was clearly juxtaposed in my work in the youth groups in the evenings, where in the same academic year around 180 individuals who were currently in Year 9 attended at least one youth group, and over 320 individuals in that age group were on the records as having previously attended an LGBT+ youth session. This is in addition to those who were younger and older than this age categorisation, as the youth groups catered for young people aged between 11 years and 26 years old. The overall numbers of individuals with active files in the LGBT+ youth group ran into the 1000s, and the tens of thousands of expired files from over the 40 year lifespan of the youth group. When the attendees of the youth groups were asked if they were 'out' at school, the most common response was an exclamation of disbelief or derision at such a ridiculous question - an "As if!", "yeah, right" or something less polite. Often this would be coupled with a proclamation that stated a version of "I do not exist in school." This thesis argues that schools do not have a problem with LGBT+phobia, it argues the school is the problem, as it denies the language necessary for LGBT+ identities to be included in the public spaces and discourses of the institution.

3.1 Power and Discourse

When I visited the schools around Merseyside, I was a visitor and consistently a stranger to both the staff and the pupils. This made me not only unfamiliar to them but made me view the school with a sense of alienation: it was a familiar space where I recognised the tropes of education and the consistent re-iteration of everything that constitutes the notion of a normal school and, simultaneously, I recognised my position as an interloper. Each school presented to me an experience akin to Freud's *Unheimlich* (1919) or uncanny, which as Freud described as "in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind" (Freud, 1919, p 241). In Freud's work this feeling of uncanniness germinates from "particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people" (Freud, 1919, p 236). To Freud, this marked "the return of the repressed" and acted as a reminder of a previously submerged, denied desire from the subconscious. Should this repressed desire surface then it raises the possibility of losing one's subjectivity and this creates a constant threat of identity crisis.

When crossing the threshold of each school, I would read each different two or three word schema of school mottos, all of which rested on themes of effort, excellence and achievement; I saw spaces celebrating the history, genealogy and legacy of the institution; I viewed seas of uniformed bodies and I heard the same statements from young people's mouths in all four corners of the Merseyside region. Consistently, I was struck by the same discourses which ran through every school, which normalised hierarchy, processes and rituals of the institution and that gave it, and all other educational institutions, power. I remembered my own school motto: *Nil Sine Labore.* Having been formed as a subject by a similar institution, I knew that "the subject emerges within [such] discourse [s], the individual is not a pre-given entity" (Ball, 2013, p 16). This power, Foucault wrote is "always already there" (Foucault, 1980: 73) and, similar to Althussr's ideology, we are never "outside it" (Foucault, 1980, p 73) and the sense of history or longevity that even the newest schools wished to communicate, appeared to justify this power through an understanding that it was validated through having always been there. In Ball's text *Foucault, Power and Education* (2013: 30), he describes how power is not something that is possessed, nor is it 'cage' and much of the time power is not prohibitive but productive.

Ball continues:

> Power is sometimes an opportunity to be successful, fulfilled or loved. It is not always harmful. We are active within relations of power. Power is not then a structure but rather a complex arrangement of social forces that are exercised; it is a strategy, embedded in other kinds of relations […] The person "is the 'place' where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted" (Mills, 2003, p.35). Discourse can be both an instrument of power and a stumbling block to it. (Ball, 2013, p 30).

This in many ways serves as a brief caveat for this argument, as I am not critiquing the need for institutional power and acknowledge the ability of discourse to allow many pupils to achieve their potential and have active, fulfilled and self-actualised school experiences. Instead it is when this power produces dominant discourses that are harmful to some people (who are under scrutiny) and it is the role of discourse in not only creating but also subverting narratives of power that is being critically reflected upon in this thesis. As Foucault wrote in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1981) "Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (1981, p 106). Subsequently, identifying a new discourse of subjectification and abjection, I will also be looking at the silenced, prohibited discourses relating to sexuality and gender in the institution of the school that through their existence in the abject form renders the LGBT+ subject largely invisible or, when made visible, as problematic.

Foucault provides an important foundation in this thesis and, in line with his work, we begin with the same belief that there is no correct normative model that ought to be used as a benchmark for normality and held up as a utopic ideal of either a person or an ideal society. In keeping with Foucault's work, as the researcher presenting this thesis, I have spent my energy attempting to understand the covert power in the institutions visited in order to reveal subjectivity and form an alternative discourse. This is in order to provide the tools to "criticise the workings of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them" (Foucault, 1977, p 276). Whereas Foucault revealed in his discussions with Noam Chomsky on the political in society (1984, p 4-11), he held a benevolent disregard for the notions of justice from which to build a platonic ideal of utopia (as, for Foucault, justice is simply another construct that sits within the wider ideology of the society in which it is held). Instead, in

agreement with Chomsky's more practicable position, I believe that without a clear ideal or sense of justice we have no way of establishing our own standards for how we think and act, without implying we have to achieve the perfect enactment of this. To apply this to the institution of the school, the ideal I would set is to create an environment which operates in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the incumbent principles of diversity and inclusivity for LGBT+ people as part of the nine protected characteristics outlined in the legislation – and to protect the physical and emotional well-being of young people.

In this particular discussion, the law acts as an emancipatory agent in its written form, if not in its application. Often laws are a retrofit solution to social change, as the society has moved forwards and then campaigned for alteration of the codified morality in our legal structures, but on its initial release the Equality Act 2010 was complex, nuanced and liberating. Although societal attitudes have altered and become more positive towards people who do not identify as straight or cis-gendered, the Equality Act 2010 remains an idealistic piece of legislation that has been largely disappointing in its enactment. In the legislation's ideal form it should establish the equality of opportunity, with a clear emphasis on outcomes, for all of the nine protected characteristics. However, it is unfortunately often used as a flexible yard stick to mitigate institutional risk, as (without significant support by the newly anointed coalition Government in 2011) it became weakened, flimsy and the aims of equality were diluted to meet the aims of businesses. This exemplifies Foucault's argument regarding the notion of law or justice being decided by those with hegemonic power, as even the rule of law is subject to altered exegesis through different political ideological lenses. The law becomes a performative that relies upon the interpellative utterance of the sovereign power to constitute the subject (as we progress through this thesis, this idea will be interrogated and unpacked further). The Equality Act 2010 (whilst providing enlightening discourse) has unfortunately never realised its performative function to produce an enlightened subject, as Butler states (citing Foucault) "the time of discourse is not the time of the subject" (1997, p 31). In other words, interpellation (in the Althussarian sense) does not occur through discourse where the subject is not 'hailed' or linguistically constituted. However, whilst acknowledging this, the form of justice within the Equality Act 2010, when read as I believe it was intended by the named author Harriet Harman, offers something to aspire to and as a strong foundation from which to build a more liberal,

egalitarian society. This is perhaps two separate forms of justice though – with Chomsky offering Sophist debate on higher notions of Justice and Foucault looking at the institutional enactments of justice in the subject forming process. Both of these forms of justice are important in the discussions offered by this thesis, as we simultaneously critique the institution whilst searching for something better, more human or perhaps simply an ineffable something more.

However, returning to Foucault, we will discuss what the theorist identified as the main objective of his work regarding the themes of discourse and power that inform this thesis. Foucault wrote:

> The goal of my work during the past twenty years has not been to analyse the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective instead has been to create a history of the different modes by which in our culture human beings are made subjects. (Foucault, 1982, p 777).

This aim is shared by this thesis as I identify the main discourses used in schools to construct and regulate the subjectivity of its pupils. In doing this, I will offer an alternative narrative that reveals the LGBT+ pupil in the school and how they may become the abject in the institution. For ease of digestion by the reader, I have split the argument in to bite size chunks that centre on one particular concept. But the argument is not a bricolage of disconnected ideas; it is a single argument that is contributing to one single point: the hetero-/cis-normative discourses of the institution contribute to the potential abjection of the LGBT+ pupil.

3.2 Dividing Practices

Throughout the research in schools, I was struck by the limited discussion in the workshop, and how as facilitator I endorsed or even imposed these limits. The LGBT+ categorisation is treated as an immutable fact, as we teach that people sit neatly into these narrow categorisations. It is a comfortably segmented four category descriptor for the complexity of gender and sexuality. The acronym LGBT+ endorses a binary of straight or heterosexual and 'other', whilst simultaneously creating boundaries within which the 'other' is confined. This binary is also extended to gender identity, as our sexuality is defined by the gender of the object of our desire and our own designated gender, within the delineations of the

LGBT+ matrix. The use of this acronym was agreed by the institution and the charity for which I worked, then within this authorised language I discussed the complex issues of gender and sexuality – and with it the messy contradictions of human desire - in these neat distinctions. In fact the opening discussion was centred upon telling the pupils that these were the right, the correct, the acceptable terms to use as we constructed an LGBT+ discourse that complemented the normative discourses of the institution. The language that the pupils responded with was also within these same agreed parameters, as they used the established lexicon of the institution alongside this newly authenticated vocabulary.

Returning to critical theory to unpack this, Foucault provided a schema of three modes of objectification. The first mode was *dividing practices* and Foucault characterised this as "the subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself or from others" (Foucault and Rabinow; 1984, p 8). In this process of social objectification and categorisation or classification, human beings are given both a social identity and a personal one. The most famous examples from Foucault's work are surrounding the isolation of lepers during the middle ages, but it is clear how this can be applied to the categorisation of LGBT+ people in the institution of the school. This is through the establishment of a binary opposition, with the straight cisgendered identity of the perceived undifferentiated mass of the pupil body sitting in opposition to any who do not adhere to these normative identities. The second mode of objectification is related to but independent from the first and is "scientific classification" (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984, p 9). These classifications, through the dividing practices or scientific classification, "that separate subjects inside themselves or from others (the mad from the same, the sick from the heathy, the criminals from the good)" (Ball, 2013, p 127), in doing so served to objectivise them.

This brings up issues of control and containment; this is particularly evident in relation to the workshops included in this research as they provided a mediated or approved discussion that sat within a wider pervasive institution discourse of Cis-/heteronormalisation. The workshop content presented had been created in relationship and with permission from the schools as to what constituted a permitted discussion. This is a key component of institutional discourse, as it relies upon not only what is said or promoted to enact its power but also by controlling the discourses that are silenced by these dominant discourses – here this would be any meaningful discussion of gender and sexuality. As Foucault wrote:

> Discourse is secretly based on an "already said" it is not merely a phase that has been already spoken, or a text that has been written, but a "never said", an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its mark.(Foucault, 1972, p 25).

In line with this, the institutions were comfortable with a language that existed within the distinct boundaries of the LGBT+ matrix, which placed individuals into four distinct categories and omitted straight or cis-gendered identities as requiring any scrutiny and therefore gave a reductive version of gender and sexuality. This exemplified Foucault's dividing practices, as it provided a neat almost clinical pseudo-scientific classification of gender and sexuality. It gave the pupils the tools to identify their gender as 'cis-' or 'other', or their sexuality as 'heterosexual' or 'other'. As Jackson wrote in 2006, "institutionalised, normative heterosexuality regulates those kept within its boundaries as well as marginalising and sanctioning those outside them" (Jackson, 2006, p 109). This was clear in the workshops as by highlighting LGBT+ people and limiting the permitted language (and therefore discourse) to these very neat thumbnail descriptions of complex sexualities and gender identities the institution was not only able to control the information permitted in the institution regarding LGBT+ identities but also establish their difference to the cis-/heteronormative mainstream. As Jackson (2006: 110) continues to write "the term 'heteronormativity' has not always captured this double-sided regulation" and the workshop was instrumental in establishing and confirming in its hour long form the entrenched binary of straight/ cis- and other. Different theorists have posited views on how one might attempt to destabilise the binary used in this dividing practice. Allen (2011, p 84) wrote that through "failing to identify explicitly as heterosexual can serve to reinforce the homosexual/ heterosexual binary, where silence about heterosexual identity maintains its 'normal' and 'natural' status." Due to the time of one hour sanctioned for the discussion of gender and sexuality in the workshop and the prevalence of normalised discussions regarding straight/heterosexual or cis- gendered identities that ran through the school experience, it was clear that the workshops simply served to legitimise the normative structures of the schools by permitting a regulated and controlled discussion of 'othered' sexual and gender identities. In other words, whilst giving the appearance of breaking down boundaries, the workshops simply strengthened those boundaries by constructing distinct binary identities of normal (ie: heterosexual and cis-gendered) and the *other* (ie: everything

that deviated from this) outlined in this hour and legitimised by the workshop facilitator (ie: me).

At the end of most days spent in the schools delivering workshops, I would facilitate a youth group in the evening. The youth groups would operate on different rules of engagement but deal with the same issues regarding gender and sexuality – and, as these rules were established by the young people themselves, binary genders, sexualities and the neat compartmentalisation of trans identities would be dismissed. This follows Bourdieu's differing belief that the way in which to destroy the binary and reduce the prejudicial reproduction of normalised behaviours was by simply not using it, and by choosing not to re-iterate it then one would therefore not legitimise it: this provokes a symbolic subversion. As Bourdieu wrote:

> To perform a labour of symbolic destruction and construction aimed at imposing new categories of perception and appreciation, so as to construct a group, or more radically, to destroy the very principle of division through which the stigmatised group and the stigmatising group are produced. (Bourdieu, 2001, p 123).

The young people in the youth group would simultaneously find comfort and restriction in the ever expanding repertoire of sexual and gender identities available to them; at the end of my time working with the groups, I had noted over 60 different gender or sexuality categorisations used to express identity in the group. As each hour long section (of the longer youth group session selected to be used in this research) began, we would sit in a circle and each person in turn would state their name, their preferred gender pronoun (such as he, she, they/them), sexuality (if they knew it) and answer an ice breaker question. This would mark the shift from private discussion to public debate. The responses to gender and sexuality were never as neat or as bordered as gay or trans or straight or cis, but were flexible, nuanced and liable to fluctuation, as the youth group provided a safe space to try on different identities. A person who described their identity as "pansexual non-gender binary" one week may define themselves as "straight trans male" the next. Without the institutional need to regulate, the young people were able to operate away from binary constraints. This meant that instead of obscuring their gender/ sexuality or searching for the moments where they recognised themselves in the discourses permitted by the school (and therefore identifying with and then re-iterating a narrow, constructed and permitted version of non-heterosexual or non-cis-gendered performance in the institution), the youth

space offered them opportunity to look internally for their own desires and match this to iterations of gender performance they had found organically and independently. This shows the breakdown of the division in the young person (outlined in Foucault's *dividing practices*) that causes the self-objectification in forming the subject in the institution; this will be discussed in more detail later in this section when we look at Foucault's third schema for objectification which was *subjectification* as we will look beyond how the institution objectifies and therefore constructs the passive subject and move onto an investigation of how the person exercises their agency to participate in their own subjectification.

Returning to the school workshops, on a number of occasions, I would attempt to subtly deviate from the script regarding gender and sexuality provided by the school and to raise the notion of heterosexuality as a distinct sexuality, rather than simply a normative default. This was on most occasions deemed provocative by teaching staff - charged with mediating and regulating behaviour in the classroom – and they would interject to counteract my words and to redress the permitted boundaries of the discussion. On one of the more extreme occasions, I had unwittingly deviated down a path of discussion that asserted that being gay was absolutely fine and that it should not be something to be ashamed of and that it was okay to talk about being gay – all statements I would make again and do not perceive as being particularly radical. This session was unusual in a number of ways, as it was held in the only Catholic school I was invited to enter. Once through the initial security checks undertaken at reception, before being permitted to enter the classroom, I was asked to speak to the head teacher to be further vetted, who warned me in no uncertain terms I was not there to "recruit" young people to my sexuality, but to simply provide information, and that "Catholic Values" were at the heart of the school. Before it was my permitted time to speak to the young people, there was an assembly, which focussed primarily upon messages around following the righteous path and the sanctity of marriage, and then after this the whole of Year 9 would remain in the hall to hear my talk. This meant that instead of being in a classroom that was structured to interact with thirty pupils, as was usual, I was stood on a stage behind a lectern in front of around 150 pupils. The hall was clad with dark wood, had huge individual portraits of ten popes and Mother Theresa of Calcutta adorning the walls and directly behind me was a twelve foot carved crucifix, depicting a beatific Christ on cross, whose sculpted torso, loin cloth and aquiline features embodied a homoerotic

desire. Usually a confident public speaker, this unexpected scenario had left me quite discombobulated.

Discussions were stunted as the young people reiterated a script that refuted homophobia whilst giving credence to bigoted religious dogma, as Bible verses and religious teachings were quoted in response to the direct true or false statements that constituted the main body of the workshop. Every opinion that was spoken or narrative given was a citation of institutional discourses. This reiterated the links between sex and procreation through the sanctity of marriage and the purpose of creating a family, which had been theme of that day's assembly and explicitly excluded same sex relations. It was clear that in this school "one had to speak of sex as of a thing not simply to be condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum" (Foucault, 1981, p 24). It was apparent that in the prevalent discourses of this school "sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered" (Foucault, 1981, p 24) for the purposes of Christian union and procreation. This raised issues not only regarding same-sex attraction but also about reproductive choice, around sexual liberation and tangentially surrounding feminism. The discussion felt anachronistic, as viewed through the lens of a more modern liberalism, such religious fundamentalism appeared retrograde but within this institution, where religious discourse held power, it underlined a fundamental Foucauldian assertion that "power produces, it produces reality" (Foucault, 1979, p 194).

The impact of the space and the effect of the polite but persistent rebuttals of my attempts to engage were visceral, as I sweated and clamoured through the session. The challenge was to manage my own cognitive dissonance, as I was required to show respect to the Catholic beliefs the pupils were expressing whilst attempting not to show deference or resisting the urge to rebuke their beliefs in a dogmatic god too emphatically. It was a double bind, and one not without irony, as my own ideological positioning or subjectivity clashed with that of the institution; in order to deliver the workshop, it had been made apparent that I must submit to the will of the institution, but by submitting to the institution's mastery I truncated my own agency and compromised my own subjectivity. I would catch the eye of young people in whom I recognised familiar feelings, as they quietly nodded and gave half smiles of encouragement that let me see I was speaking to some people to whom the

session meant more than simply information transference about the experiences of others. As the session progressed, I gave up on the idea of active engagement and simply became a story teller, speaking about my own experiences in past workshops, asking the questions then providing the answers through repeating entire discussions from other schools. The amounts of smiles, interaction and non-verbal responses increased to almost the usual level of other schools. However, when I stated that I had known I was gay from being about 14 years old and also in Year 9 (but had not told anybody about my sexuality until I was 21 years old), it appeared I had transgressed the permitted boundaries of engagement. I continued to say that should anybody recognise their self in any of the topics I had described, they could speak to me and gave them a card that directed them to the charity's confidential services. My message was simply that the young people should talk to somebody and not let feelings of isolation, shame or fear fester within their selves. I had not perceived that this may be viewed as recruitment, as feelings of attraction or identity are simply ontological or ways of being: you cannot convert somebody to a gender or sexuality simply by providing them with an outlet to express their personhood. When asked, the pupils in this school (and most schools I visited) stated they could not identify a single adult in the school they could take with regarding issues relating to gender or sexuality.

It was at this point that the teacher (who had been sat on a chair to the rear of the stage facing the year group, as part of an unholy trinity of gazes falling upon the cohort of young people: the teacher, myself and, of course, the image of a tortured Christ) stated, "Just for the record, I think everything you are saying is absolute rubbish." She continued to state how she never spoke about her heterosexuality, how she believed homosexuality was unnatural and that if young people were LGBT+ they should keep it to themselves. It continued and as her speech progressed, I realised, she was re-establishing the institutional discourse and returning the group to the script they were responding with earlier in the session. As Clarke (1998) stated, albeit before the rescinding of Section 28 2b, "It is necessary to recognise that homophobia is a political practice, and that sexuality is a political issue, insofar as some practices are approved of, some are disapproved of and some are illegal and punishable" – in this school, religion established the political ideology and the law regarding homosexuality was entrenched in centuries of religious prejudice.

This made even discussing alternative gender and sexualities a transgressive behaviour that required containment.

To finish this vignette, I wish there was a more satisfactory conclusion in which the session was not neutralised, but I conceded to the will of the institution and returned to the agreed script of information transference, and, as a means of self-preservation, retreated from the more personal narrative present in the previous discourse. I was complicit with the will of the institution and, instead of being an actor for liberation as I had hoped to be, I became another instrument of the dividing practices evident in the institution; I was rendered the "other" and resumed the reiteration of the permitted discourses of the school. Although Bourdieu's notion of Habitus is not a dominant theory in this thesis, it is apparent that Catholicism created the accepted beliefs, discourses, ethos and environment in this school and informed the power structures that acted upon the emergent subject. This example also epitomises something I found in varying degrees in all the schools I attended (and was often complicit with), which was Bourdieu's notion of "invisibilisation" (2001), in which LGBT+ identities are seen to be accepted as long as they are not visible. This was evident not only in this Catholic school, but in all the schools I attended, as LGBT+ young people were only noticeable due to their complete absence.

The school had wanted a passive discussion of diverse sexuality and gender identities, which would be transmitted as a non-interactive lecture and similar to the way pupils may learn about Hinduism or another religion it would not implicate the young people in the discourse. By discussing my own sexuality and embodying somebody who was gay, rather than envisaging a remote theoretical gay person, and then encouraging other people to speak out about their sexuality, I had transgressed boundaries. Inadvertently, I had become an evangelist for LGBT+ identities, which I had been told was forbidden by the head teacher. The teacher's interjection had caused me to submit and cede my own subjectivity to the mastery of institution, in the way Bourdieu (2001) describes below:

> Everything takes place as if the homosexuals who have had to fight to move from invisibility to visibility, to cease to be excluded and made visible, sought to become invisible again, and in a sense neutered and neutralised by submission to the dominant norm (Bourdieu, 2001, p 121).

When we return to the less restrictive habitus of the evening youth group, the dominant norm is altered. The "invisibilisation" (Bourdieu, 2001) that perhaps appears necessary in

the high risk environment of the school is no longer required in the lower stakes youth space. The young people would arrive at the youth centre in twilight, wearing school uniforms, the attire of their assigned gender or sartorial choices that indicated a wish to conform to exterior dominant norms of hetero-/cis-normativity. As their comfort and confidence increased through repeated attendance in the group, they would often bring a small change of clothes to wear for the session that they would then change out of again before going home or back into mainstream society. This may include gender altering accoutrements such as chest binders or padding, skirts or trousers, hats or wigs, make up or make-up removal. However, it may also be a slogan tee shirt that advertises their sexuality, clothing that displayed the Pride rainbow flag, the non-binary flag or other symbols of gender and sexual diversity such as the now much celebrated (in youth circles) the queer symbol of the unicorn. They would comb their hair in different partings, or try out new postures, stances and walks. They would try on and discard different personalities that gave a more overt performance of their gender or sexuality. They would flirt. For young people, for whom there was not the liberty to obtain material items that represented their gender without drawing parental criticism (as it was not only the school that created a dominant norm but also the habitus of the family), then they would often swap clothes with their peers, or if they had available funds they would have items of clothing or other paraphernalia shipped to the youth centre to avoid antagonism at home. The freedom of the youth group would allow a space where the young people were able to find a low risk environment in which to practice ways to be visible and concomitantly enjoy having both cultural and social capital in this subculture. They behaved in a way common to any oppressed minority group does when they are placed in a liberated environment: they became their self.

It appeared that the "pupils transgressive practices enabled them to develop new forms of subjectivity" (Gilborn and Youdell, 1999, p 105) away from the need to perform a normalised role in the institution of the school. This raises Foucault's two meanings of what it is to be a subject, as the young people are simultaneously "subject to someone else by control and dependence" - such as the need to blend into the heteronormative structures of the school - and they were simultaneously "tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault, 1982a, p 212) which would be purposefully concealed in the school

but enacted in the permissive confines of the youth space. This was where free will within institutional limitations was apparent, as the young person could choose to adhere to or obfuscate their identity in line with heteronormativity of the institutions, or engage in transgressive behaviour in the school at the risk being 'othered' and therefore 'abjected' (as will be discussed in the next chapter). However, in the youth group, this risk is mitigated as the sessions were structured to allow these transgressions to take place and were encouraged by both their peers who were present in the group (and often by staff, who ensured the rules of engagement and safe behaviours in the group were observed). As Foucault continues, "both meanings [of what is to be a subject] indicate a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1982a, p 212); this occurs simultaneously through the dividing practices of the heteronormative institution and through the self-regulation of the individual. Again, in some ways this sounds radical but they were simply doing what their cis gendered and heterosexual peers were permitted to do in the hetero- and cis-normative habitus of the school, as in a way that was akin to most adolescents, they practiced their own transformative new gender and sexuality as emergent adults. This was through choices in clothing, flirting, hairstyles and myriad other choices that were for cisgendered and heterosexual pupils were entirely taken for granted, reproduced and normalised by wider society. It was an attempt to gain some agency in the subject making process, as often the moments their self as an LGBT+ subject was visible in the habitus of the school or in the habitus of the family was a site of crisis.

3.3 Subjectification

This brings us to Foucault's third mode of objectification. This is *subjectification*, and is the mode of greatest interest as we move to the next stage of discussion in this thesis. It is the process through which the individual is complicit and indeed active in the process of objectification and convert themselves into subjects. Whereas Foucault provided a large overview of subjectivity through the ages, I will be using Judith Butler's (more directly applicable) work developing Foucauldian ideas to facilitate this discussion of *subjectification* — "a process that Butler describes in terms of simultaneous mastery and submission, entailing a necessary vulnerability to the other in order to be" (Davies, 2006, p 431). However, what is meant by this? As Butler describes below the process of *subjectification* is

more complicated than simply acting against power or resisting external forces that act upon us, it is allowing that power to simultaneously make us:

> We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from outside … But if, following Foucault, we understand power as *forming* the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are. (Butler, 1997, p 2)

When we apply this to the context of the school, we are not applying this to a vacuum which is devoid of external pressures, politics or ideologies. Amongst other things, the modern school is an instrument or apparatus of the neo-liberal state and its pupils are not expected to simply become happy, well rounded subjects, but are positioned to become successful future actors in the capitalist state. However, more than these expectations placed upon the pupil, is the sustaining desire of the pupils to become successful and to adhere to the values, goals and moralities of the school. This is often at the expense of individuality as the subject is imbued with a responsibility to fit the needs of the market. This converts into very practical concerns, as much of education is concerned with future employability.

The notion of *subjectification* underpins all the other theoretical discussion in this chapter. As we interrogate the issues it raises regarding the mastery of the institution and the submission of the pupils, and the questions it poses regarding agency or predestination. There are quandaries posed in this chapter regarding the feasibility or advisability of 'coming out' as LGBT+ in the school environment, and the impact this will have on the individual pupil. For many young people in schools, it was preferable to assimilate, submit to the mastery of institutional discourses and maintain the values that would allow them to become *successful* subjects. It would future proof them, by allowing them the opportunity to succeed in school without the burdens of a LGBT+ label that may destabilise their safe inter-dependent relationship with the power structures of the institution. This transactional relationship is easy to decipher: in return for an adherence to the collective normative values of the school, the pupil is granted protections, opportunities and other dividends of subjectivity within the institution. To intentionally or unintentionally 'come out' -and therefore destabilise this collective complicity - could only cause problems and issues for the individual, as they stepped out of the mainstream *subjectification* of the student body. They would potentially mark themselves as other, as radical, rebellious or threatening to the

status quo as a potential 'other' and in need of intervention that may result in their abjection.

This was often an area of consternation between staff in the youth group, as often some staff members would offer vociferous support for the young person to 'come out' at school as either not-heterosexual or not cis-gendered. However, ethically this could be seen to create a dilemma: it should be empowering for young people to state they are LGBT+ at school, but sadly (with so many indicators of hetero-/cis-normativity in schools) this experience is rarely positive. It is a Catch-22: how are schools supposed to become less hetero-/cis-normative if there is nobody challenging this set of suppositions, when it is this same set of normative values that is ensuring nobody is 'out' as LGBT+, and therefore increasing visibility or pushing the agenda, because the hetero-/cis-normativity of the school makes it near impossible to 'come out'? This expression of an overt non-normative identity through performatively "coming out" could even be accepted within the confines of the institution where the discourses were controlled, but what protections would then be afforded in other aspects of their lives, both present and future. This issue was particularly magnified in areas of higher social deprivation, when issues of class came into play, as the young people were forced to negotiate their family's expectations, future career paths and community expectations, which they reported were often LGBT+ phobic. This pressure to be 'out' as LGBT+, although well intentioned, is problematic as it encouraged the 'crusader' (Cover, 2013) narrative that insinuates LGBT+ people must take responsibility to change society and do that through their own identity. It creates issues with the framing of questions surrounding LGBT+phobia, as the responsibility for change should sit with practitioners endorsing hetero/cisnormative ideals and those engaging in LGBT+phobic acts not school children. People experience LGBT+phobia not because of who they are – with its concomitant insinuation of fault, judgement or blame on the victim – but because people are LGBT+phobic and therefore have, create and are the problem. Although, I would never argue for somebody to remain closeted or to hide their sexuality, it needs to be acknowledged that relinquishing your access to a recognised subjectivity has significant risks – the onus should be on the institution to modify its behaviour not the pupil, but sadly this is not currently the case and at present schools remain often hostile places to be LGBT+.

3.4 Reproduction of the Neo-liberal Subject

When we think about one of the purposes of the modern education system then it is to produce the next generation of workers, and in an increasingly corporate, managerialism-led and personal-brand driven economy this means a compliance with societal norms and hegemonic ideals (of which LGBT+ identities still reside on the periphery and distinctly in the realm of the personal rather than the public). As the critical pedagogy theorist Henry Giroux writes, "Not only does neo-liberalism both undermine civic education and public values and confuse education with training, it also treats knowledge as a product, promoting a neoliberal logic that views schools as malls, students as consumers and faculty as entrepreneurs" (2010, p 168). Giroux terms this "the age of the disappearing intellectual" (2010) and links the much fuelled rise of under-educated bigotry with fulfilling the needs of large corporation, through diminishing established equality narratives and re-establishing the dominant monolithic narratives of capitalist success. This critical thought is not a recent intervention and is not confined to the United States of America. One of Tony Blair's New Labour's most questionable legacies is the marketization of education, as he cashed in on the role Britain played in the architecture of Free Market Capitalism in the Reagan-Thatcher era. On coming to office in 1997, Blair stated, "A lot of those skills are globally marketable, so that means that your education system – if it's done properly – becomes a major part of your economy; it doesn't just serve your economy, it's a major part of your economy" (Stated in 1997, quoted in Cunane, 2012). Mr Blair was speaking in an interview with David Blunkett, who served as his education secretary from 1997 to 2001, for the London School of Business and Finance; itself a private provider of education for businesses. Education in this country under the stewardship of Blair's government and then as New Labour's lasting legacy, became a brand that has continued to grow; through capitalising on a perception of Britain as an exemplar of modern neo-liberal capitalism, Blair described how Britain was able to sell that genealogy of the education discourse "The truth is that we're up there now with the best in the world at attracting students from all over the world to come and study here," he said. "Those students will go back not just having studied the English language but [having] some tie to our country" (1997/ Cunane, 2012). With the narrowest of margins in the most botched of referendums at the ill-conceived whim of a maverick millionaire Prime Minister, the country decided in 2016 to opt for Brexit. Again, this is a high risk gamble that

we will become once more a nation capable of pioneering capitalist thought, through serving the needs of businesses through providing a haven of reduced taxation, diminished workers'/ human rights and an education system that has been primed as a precision economic machine for two inglorious decades.

As Ball (2013) writes, "the neo-liberal subject is malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled" (Ball, 2013, p 139). Again this is iterated in Tony Blair's work in education as he stated, "This [the links between education and the economy] is also very exciting, by the way, on another level. It offers enormous opportunity, but only for people who are prepared constantly to reassess, to re-evaluate and to adjust. And that is as true in higher education as it is if you're in the financial sector or manufacturing. Anyone who stands still gets left behind" (1997, cited in Cunane, 2012). Much of the behaviour exhibited in schools is related to what Foucault termed *government* and exhibits performativity in a way that exists within what Ball (2013) terms:

> a "new" moral system that subverts and reorients us to its truths and ends, It makes us responsible for our performance and for the performance of others. We are burdened with the responsibility to perform and if we do not we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible (Ball 2013, p 138).

The ideologies of Neo-Liberalism underpins education and hold influence over the mainstreaming of discourses on identity, as pupils are conditioned to become successful and productive subjects in a distinctly Capitalist Society. Achieving successful and productive subjectivity is not only reliant upon an insidious hetero-/cis-normativity that is present in the mainstream or corporate ideal, but is another "manifestation of *dividing practices* which work to identify, valorise and reward the successful and productive" (Ball, 2013, p 140). The subjects who fulfil this are termed as the "affiliated" (Miller and Rose, 2008) and prosper in society and receive the dividends of a capitalist society through protected economic and familial security. Gillies (2011, p 215) writes that those who do not remake themselves in "the image of market" become abject or exiled or reformed through punitive measures. This brings in the questions regarding freewill or agency that prove a site of conflict when discussing subjectivity and create the link between the two schema of objectification highlighted in this thesis: *dividing practices* and *subjectification.*

> That the person is made subject by and subject to discursive relations of disciplinary power, but being such a subject s/he can also engage self-consciously in practices that might make her/him differently. The subject acts, but s/he acts within/at the limits of subjectivation (Sawicki, 1991, p 175).

The LGBT+ young person does have choices or agency within the proscribed boundaries of the institution. Their subjectification is "not a state of being but a struggle of becoming, an endless effort of reinvention, and of struggling between capability and constraint, limitations and transgression" (Ball, 2013, p 152). It is performative and although "performativity works best when we come to want for ourselves what is wanted from us, when our moral sense of our desires and ourselves are aligned with its pleasures" (Ball, 2013, p 136) it is in fact a constant renegotiation between what part of our identity we will cede or submit to the mastery of the sovereign power or institution from which we want something greater that we cannot provide ourselves. This may be through access to a future as a worker in a neo-liberalist capitalist society, having a traditional nuclear family or by being legible in the institutions of society.

3.5 Interpellation

One area this issue of legibility was pertinent (and caused controversy between staff in the youth group) was regarding the use of pronouns. For some young people in the group gendered pronouns were problematic as they did not identify themselves as male or female but instead as a non-gender binary person, with no desire to transition between the two polarised genders. Often this would be explained in terms of feeling alienated by gendered epithets or pronouns, such as daughter or she, son or him, and that when somebody called you, named you or hailed you using a gendered pronoun that it caused an anguish, a disconnect or a rejection of that identity. This description is indicative of gender dysphoria. In the youth group this was respected; the young people were permitted and encouraged through the "name game" to identify the pronouns with which they identified, and this was then monitored by staff through an insistence people used the pronouns defined by the individual. Some staff would then encourage the young person to push for change of their pronoun in schools and would be vocal about the need for the young people to become activists in their schools for gender and sexuality rights. On more than one occasion, a young person was encouraged by a particular member of staff in the youth group (who is a trans activist) to 'come out' as trans- in school. This created an uncomfortable discordance, as the adult's interest in the well-being of the individual young person was subsumed by a need for

visible trans young people in schools to force forward institutional change. It was an ethical quandary posited with a loose and vague utilitarianism by a trans adult, who operated socially in a sympathetic ideological sphere of other activists and worked in specialist LGBT+ services – rather than the hetero-/cis- normative structures of the school. Empowered by the freedom of identity and emancipatory discourses they experienced in the youth group, one young person had told their form tutor at school that they no longer wished to be referred to by their feminine given name nor referred to by female pronouns, but by a masculinised version of their name and by male pronouns. The teacher was sympathetic and was supportive, but they were unfortunately not trained or experienced enough to negotiate the situation with the delicacy, nuance and understanding required. The form tutor's response to the pupil's request was to attach a memo to the electronic morning register that would be visible to all teachers who opened the register and had classes with the young person. This simple message stated that (names changed) Jane would now be referred to as John, and staff should now refer to them using male rather than female pronouns. This electronic tool was used mainly to pass on information regarding the status of the young person: innocuous information such as why their school tie was missing or that there was a personal mitigating circumstance that impacted on some other mundane practicality.

Over the course of the first day, the memo was read out to the class by less enlightened staff, the contents were derided and invasive questions were asked of the pupil both publicly and privately. The situation had not occurred in the school before: there was no policy or procedure in place; the senior management team were not consulted or even informed, there was a rudimentary understanding of LGBT+ issues both in staff and pupils. In defence of the staff, there had been no training or preparation work in the school; and many questions were simply practical as issues remained unresolved (such as which changing rooms or toilets should the young person use). This also raised safeguarding and confidentiality concerns, as the parents of the young person had not been consulted and were not supportive of this social transition between genders. It was further compounded through John no longer responding when hailed with their previous name or gender pronouns, which angered some staff and created issues around discipline in the school as other young people would mimic this behaviour for their own sport or advantage. It was an

unmitigated disaster that resulted in the young person leaving the school for a period of time until it was resolved. In part this was due to online bullying and when they subsequently returned to the school it was with support procedures in place and with the deletion of all their online presence. This was not limited to the areas where they were bullied but, due to the school informing their parents, all of their online interactions were scrutinised and they were forbidden to make contact with online friends, who had formed a support group as they were also experiencing similar gender dysmorphia. Chastised by their experience in attempting to deviate from the cisnormative strictures of the school, the young person chose to return to their female identity in the school, but after meetings between their parents and youth workers, the young person was able to continue to explore their gender identity in the segregated space of the youth group.

As Althusser wrote, we are schooled in a transactional relationship with ideology and its various institutions. It is not a conscious or explicit transaction but rather one that is entrenched through the normalisation of reproduced values, practices and ideas that dominate society. Althusser continued to state:

> What do children learn at school? They go varying distances in their studies, but at any rate they learn to read, to write and to add (...) But besides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour. (...) I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order. (Althusser, 1970, p 135).

Althusser described the dual function of education or schools as Ideological State Apparatus, in that they present the basic tools needed to become a useful part of society (such as literacy and numeracy) but also teach discipline and its related *subjectification* that ensures children understand the expectations of their class when submitting to the dominant ideology of Capitalism in its modern context of neo-liberalism – or in this case to adhere to hetero-/cis-normativity.

> In other words, the school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its 'practice'. The reproduction of labour power thus reveals as its *sine qua non* not only the reproduction of its 'skills' but also the reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the 'practice' of that ideology, with the proviso that it is not enough to say 'not only but also', for it is clear that *it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power.*(Althusser, 1970, p 139).

In order for the current hegemonic ideology to maintain power throughout its institution, its values and therefore those of the society in which we are subjects, it must instil those values into the young emerging citizens. This is the dividend of ceding to the will of an education establishment: a skillset which will ensure sufficient compliance by the subject to almost guarantee a safe and structured place in wider society for a predesignated level of employment.

Aspects of this situation with the name change and altered gendered pronouns, cited earlier, clearly exemplify Althussarian notions of Interpellation (which will be further unpacked later in the thesis when the discussion moves into Kristevan and performative theories). As this theory illustrates, it is not as straight forward as simply changing a name or a pronoun, as the meanings invested in these names and gendering substitutes are entrenched with culturally bound assumptions, and unsettling these assumptions becomes an act of defiance against categorical order. In its simplest form, Interpellation is the way in which individuals acknowledge, respond to and engage with ideologies and subsequently recognise themselves as subjects. In the example given above, all the actors in the situation are negotiating a shift in the young person's subjectivity and how this subjectivity is renegotiated through an altered permitted 'hail' (ie: changed name and pronouns) and therefore how they desire to be interpellated. However, how interpellation occurs is not the prerogative of the subject but rather this privilege belongs to the ideological hegemony or the discourses of the institution and is performed by the actor for the institution. Althusser defined ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1972, p 162). He perceived ideology to be the mediation between systems of power and individuals, and was a means of power hegemonies to obscure more apparent systems of abuse and repression (whilst simultaneously reproducing hegemonic ideals). This was through engaging individuals as subjects in an ideological power structure in which they believed, participated and advanced. In this instance, although the form tutor has attempted to sanction the interpellative shift in how the subject or pupil is hailed, they do not have the authority to impose this and therefore it is not respected or actioned. In a school that has a culture of hetero-/cis-normativity, this rejection of the gender assigned at birth (and the related rejection of the ideological hegemony) is subversive, rebellious and

brings their subjectivity into crisis (as they tempt an institutional abjection, as will be discussed later in the thesis).

Althusser's work creates a new complexity in the relationship between mastery and subjugation in the process of *subjectification*, as by showing how individuals choose to recognise themselves as subjects, he highlights how these willing subjects can be complicit in submitting to the mastery of the interpellation. Equally, the converse to this is true and his work describes how the subject can reject an interpellation and through doing so commit an act of rebellion, threaten the fragile power of the hegemony and require sanctions. The most famous example Althusser gives of *subjectification* through interpellation is of a police officer shouting out "Hey, you there!" in public place; after hearing the shout an individual turns around, and "by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*" (Althusser, 1972, p 174). Through acknowledging the police officer is addressing the individual, s/he is then hailed as a subject and legitimises this mastery over them through accepting the 'hail' therefore the person hailed recognises her/himself as a subject. The subject does have freewill though and can choose not to turn around, but this will provoke sanctions; it will also not change the fact that they are a subject, but will simply highlight that they are problematic, not subjugate and are a threat to societal order. This is as subjecthood is twofold: although s/he is recognized as a social subject by the law (and therefore authenticated), but s/he is also subjugated to the law (and therefore repressed). Althusser continues to discuss that "the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (Althusser 1972, p 175), and we must not forget that schools exist as one of the largest examples of what Althusser terms *Ideological State Apparatus*. This quote is interpreted to mean that ideology, interpellation, and subjecthood mutually reinforce each other so that "ideology has always already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: individuals are always-already subjects" (Althusser 1972, p 176).

When we look at this is terms of gender then we can see that an individual is 'hailed' as a boy or girl almost immediately after birth and that this *subjectification* is then inscribed in law through a birth certificate. Furthermore, this 'hailing' as a gendered subject is built upon

specific ideological assumptions of the roles, heterosexuality, characteristics and identifiers a boy or girl, male or female or the gender binary should entail that predate the birth of the individual. Immediately constructed as a subject, individuals are expected to perform an interpellated gender identity that is based upon simulacrae of essentialist gender notions that predate their existence. Again, this links to Foucault's work on how subjectivity is constructed, through the focus on discourses surrounding the construction of sexuality (Foucault, 1997), and this was further developed by Judith Butler (1990) into a theory of gender performativity. Similar to Foucault's thinking, this subjecthood has a duality, as it both subjugates individuals as passive beings (involuntarily subjugated through dividing practices such as gender) but it also simultaneously, and counter-intuitively, creates the potential for agency and rebellion (by mobilizing around these new identities, such as a LGBT+ rights movement). Agency is also present when we think about this in terms of *subjectification* as the subject submits to this identity, as interpellated by hegemonic society.

As previously stated education does not exist in a vacuum, but is entrenched in all aspects of society: it reflects the ideology of the wider society as it charged with reproducing societal values and thus producing useful subjects. Similarly, David Gauntlett describes how "interpellation occurs when a person connects with a media text: when we enjoy a magazine or TV show, for example, this uncritical consumption means that the text has interpellated us into a certain set of assumptions, and caused us to tacitly accept a particular approach to the world." (Gauntlett, 2002, p 27). When we apply this to schools we can see through the history we teach, the religions we celebrate, the texts we study and even the mathematics we emphasise that all our education is designed to subjugate young people as Neo liberal Capitalist subjects. In this vein, cultural theorists such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno have argued that the homogeneity of mass media interpellates and pacify subjects who desire familiar tropes and formulaic story lines which only serve to further stultify them (1979), and that this constructs an idea of how their reality should appear, irrespective of how "capitalist production so confines them, body and soul, that they fall helpless victim to what is offered them." (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979, p 128). Yet a widespread and mainstream acquiescence to wider cultural messages or normative structures in education only perpetuates the status quo, and Adorno and

Horkheimer proceeded to argue, "immovably, they insist on the very ideology which enslaves them." They continued to state that "the misplaced love of the common people for the wrong which is done them is a greater force than the cunning of the authorities" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979, p 128). This brings us back to the ideas of mastery and submission as, for the majority of people, this complicity with ideologically hegemonic ideals is preferable, comforting and passively selected; it is only for a minority of people that such normative constraints become problematic and they are forced to reject what is offered to them. It is a transactional relationship and for most the protection, support and security of the dominant ideology or sovereign in return for compliance, discipline and reduced agency is a fair deal. However, this is a structuralist framing and presents subject as little more than an automaton or habituated animal, and does not allow for the same degree of agency as imbued in the subject as will be discussed later in this thesis.

3.6 Panoptic Schema

To return to the school workshops, they showcased an extreme example of two separate things – the first being Foucault's Panoptic schema, and the second is Kristeva's notion of Semiotic and Symbolic language, and its implication in the subject making process. The Panoptic schema (Edwards, 2013), taken from Foucault's development of Bentham's theory on the perfect prison (1977), is the process of self-surveillance used by the institutions that make up society, and therefore by society as a whole. Through the act of monitoring or having *government* over our own behaviours and the behaviours of others, we all subscribe to a set of normative behaviours, utterances and other performatives that ensure the smooth running of societal order. This is motivated potentially by a fear that others will see our transgressions from societal norms and enact a punishment upon us or withdraw benefits but also on an implicit desire to adhere to social norm and a fear that if others transgress societal norms that social order will collapse. This is as it is important to note here, as Ball (2013, p 32) writes, "we are produced [as subjects] rather than oppressed, animated rather than constrained", or in other words we are both contributing to the panoptic schema whilst simultaneously being governed by it – put plainly, we assist in the construction of our subjectivity through our performative actions and self-government. As Broadhead and Howard (1998, p 7) state we are not reluctant participants in the Panoptic

schema or the maintenance of normative constructs but do this "imaginatively, aggressively and competitively".

In schools, the panoptic schema was inscribed in legislation from 1988 until 2001 by the presence of Section 28 2b; the anti-gay legislation that prohibited the promotion of homosexuality or the pretended family relationships that were borne from same sex coupling. Although, over 15 years have passed since the legislation was repealed, Edwards (2013) argued that the panoptic schema Section 28 2b put into place was so effective that it continues to reassert the function of heteronormative power relations in schools. Much of the current academic work on schools post-Section 28 states that the situation has improved and schools are more open and "gay friendly" (McCormack and Andersen, 2010) and that the discourse around homosexuality has "shifted at least contemporaneously if not casually with the repeal of Section 28" (Nixon and Givens, 2007, p 455). Although, I agree to certain extent, I would instead argue that the legacy of Section 28 is such that there remains a culture of silence, with the concomitant performances of passing (through allowing others to assume you are cis-gendered or heterosexual) and covering (through creating a straight or cisgendered narrative through performative language, appearances and constructed personal relationships) both in the student body and in the staff room. In many ways the removal of Section 28 2b simply presented an opportunity for a "reworking of the boundaries of normality" (Ball, 2013, p 48) and this occurred through the constructed or institutionally permitted narrative taught by workshops such as the one I delivered. In much of the post-section 28 academic work there is also an unspoken or perhaps unrealised agenda or bias: to apologise; to mitigate; to only note symbolic language or measure public actions. Throughout this doctoral process, I have been repeatedly confronted by my own sense of shame, internalised homophobia, adherence to invisibility and the echoes in my mind of Anglican utterances from my school days on the sanctity of opposite sex union. This is not something that knowingly impacts on my contemporary self, but my education spanned the years that Section 28 2b was active and homophobia was rife in schools; this was the time when I was developing into an adult and it would be naïve to believe that this insidious institutional abuse does not have an impact on my own subjectivity and also on the educators, practitioners and policy makers who were my contemporaries at school.

Section 28 2b, to use Bentham's language converted schools into 'inspection houses' to ensure the maintenance and imposition to reassert the function of heteronormative power relationships in schools. As Foucault wrote, this is discontinuous insofar as it does not present a continuous process but simply a state of being that forms our reality, "[it is]not a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function: it is a way of making power relations function in a function and of making a function *function* through these power relations" (Foucault, 1977, p 205). Since the changes in equality legislation and the repeal of Section 28, this Panoptic schema that reasserts the function of heteronormative power relations in schools now has an added complexity in that it must simultaneously disavow the visible homophobic subject. When we return to the example of the Catholic school earlier in the discussion then this process becomes apparent, as nobody in the group of pupils can speak: they are in the double bind of being required to support the heterosexist values of the institution, whilst not being visibly homophobic; and they are required to listen to a compelling narrative against LGBT+phobia and cis-/heterosexism, whilst silently maintaining these values. The invitation by schools to the charity to deliver the workshop was often a way of appeasing the wider panoptic schema in education not to appear visibly homophobic. There is little doubt that the workshop would be listed in various reports to parents and other interest parties as evidence that the school encouraged diversity: as schools could offer data such as over 150 Year Nine pupils undertook LGBT+ awareness training, without any recourse to show efficacy. However, the construction of the workshop, the environment in which we were all placed and the policing by the staff of the situation maintained the panoptic schema that continues to reassert heteronormative power relations in schools.

3.7 Semiotic and Symbolic Language

This brings us to Kristeva's theories of language in the subject making process and how this relates to Foucauldian thought. When we apply this argument - that pupils are schooled (or interpellated) in their role in constructing the panoptic schema of hetero-/ cisnormativity whilst simultaneously disavowing LGBT+phobia - to all the schools I attended, then it still remains evident. One of the first questions I would ask each group, when we entered the 'True or False' exercise component of the workshop, was to ask them to apply the following statement to their own beliefs: "I am Homophobic, Transphobic or Biphobic. True or false?"

Although small pockets of the group would show the green card to state they are LGBT+phobic; the majority of each cohort would show the red card that denoted they were not LGBT+ phobic. Often the pupils who would state they were LGBT+phobic would do so on religious grounds; sometimes it would be related to an emergent fragile masculinity; often it would be dictated by the family habitus in a plethora of other ways: although all fascinating avenues of digression, they are not the focus of this thesis. The language used in answers to this question marked what Kristeva would term the symbolic response (1984) to LGBT+ identities, and each class would recite from the same script of phrases that would unambiguously renounce LGBT+phobia. Ubiquitous phrases were "you should be allowed to be yourself", "love is love", "we are all the same inside" and other such homilies would populate the discussion. The young people's affect would be measured and contained, as the language remained unexcitable and reminiscent of recitation of a times table or rote learned poetry.

As the session progressed, the symbolic mode of signifying was often derailed by the semiotic extra verbal ways in which they communicated (Kristeva, 1984). Another statement read out to the young people was "True or False: I have used the word gay as an insult." Most of the young people in the classes admitted to calling somebody gay as an insult at some point, but most would deny that, in the context they had used it, the word gay still meant homosexual. The pupils would mitigate their use of homophobic language by listing other swear words as examples of how words lose their original meaning. The discussion would be used to unpack how the etymology of words was important and that they were not used as neutrally as the young people supposed. It would often be the case that, when they used the reclaimed epithet argument, they would acknowledge how previously racist or homophobic language had been re-appropriated to be included in a narrative of empowerment. However, there is an element of falsehood to this often well intentioned attempt to disempower the language of hatred. As Butler wrote in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) when discussing the term "queer":

> In fact the temporality of the term is precisely what concerns me here: how is it that a term that signalled degradation has been turned – "refunctioned" in the Brechtian sense – to signify a new and affirmative set of meanings? Is this just a simple reversal of valuations such that "queer" means either a past degradation or a present or future affirmation? Is this a reversal that retains the abjected history of the term? When the term has been used as a paralysing slur, as the mundane interpellation of pathologised sexuality it has produced the user of the term as the emblem and the vehicle of

normalization; the occasion of its utterance, as the discursive regulation of the boundaries of sexual legitimacy. (Butler, 1993, p 169).

Although, the use of the word "Gay" as a pejorative adjective is a reversal of its established meaning as a word to mean same sex attraction, and as intrinsically linked to the Pride movement, much of Butler's words still apply. As argued in many of the school workshops by the pupils, as evidence for the passive refunctioning of language, the word 'gay' has had a meaning earlier than this, when the term was found in Enid Blyton books as meaning a particular innocent happiness. However, this change in meaning is different as 'gay' had become a political term, as a defiant claimed language used to counteract interpellative terms engrained with hatred, negative connotations and the narratives of abnormality. Instead this new meaning used by young people served to return the word 'gay' to a lexicon of heteronormative language that made homosexuality synonymous with abnormality, something broken or displeasing – and has occurred at a time when it may be perceived as a backlash at the increased mainstreaming of LGBT+ identities and the repeal of Section 28 2b. The pupils would also admit to using the word 'gay' to describe something or somebody they did not like. Again, using symbolic language and logical, clear arguments, they would state that when they said something was 'gay' they were not implying it had homosexual desires. In this discussion, I would ask if 'gay' no longer meant to have same sex desires, what did it mean in this context and asked the pupils to provide synonyms. In all the workshops delivered the same tropes, themes and phrases occurred and a list of the same adjectives was reproduced in every school then transcribed onto the whiteboard. Amongst others, words which appeared most commonly were: weird, stupid, broken, not normal, rubbish, terrible, bad. The words were always negative and portrayed a negative attitude. During this process, the language used would be clear and the debate would sit firmly within the language of the symbolic, as pupils would remain seated, responsive yet courteously raising hands and their faces would show the passive engagement usual in a classroom environment.

In most schools, groups of boys (and some girls) would then take the opportunity to list homophobic slurs for the amusement of each other. These would include but were not limited to: fag, bumder, batty boy, dyke, lezzer, homo, puff – it would often descend into a top trumps game of homophobic/ biphobic/ transphobic epithets. I would write them on the board without comment at this stage. Again in these discussions it would be the male

Year Nine pupils who would dominate the engagement with homophobic language, but the entire room would actively engage through the extra-verbal ways in which bodily energy and affects influence public debate. Their responses exemplified semiotic language. The room at this point would invariably erupt into a cacophony of non-verbal iterations. Pupils would shout out, gasp, guffaw, touch each other to display homosocial engagement (Kimmel, 2004) and often leave their seats through either standing or sometimes even falling off their chairs. They epitomised what Kristeva termed *jouissance*, as the words and gestures streamed out of them from a vast trove of internal desires and drives derived from both erotic and psychic pleasure (Kristeva, 1984). It would present a clear juxtaposition between the symbolic language used to refute their homophobia and the semiotic language that betrays their previous statements and confirms their implicit heteronormative bias.

3.8 The Institutional Chora

However, to leave this as a simplistic dichotomy between the Semiotic and the Symbolic in language reduces Kristeva's work. It is important to bring into this strand of theoretical discussion the notion of the *semiotic chora.* Kristeva (1984) wrote:

> Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed upon the body-always already involved in semiotic process – by family and social structures, In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stasis in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. (Kristeva, 1984, p 25)

To Kristeva, the *chora* is primarily the ambiguous articulation of the mother's womb and the preverbal state of infanthood. It is a vague notion of a space, which is in part a receptacle and in part the genesis of subjectivity. In other words it is a nebulous, multi-faceted notion that struggles to be defined, without plunging head first into criticisms of Oedipal discourses, modified Lacanian Mirror phases and *thetic* significations – which at this juncture, are sojourns I am unwilling to undertake. Superficially, it can be compared to Bourdieu's theory of the habitus as being a theory of becoming a subject through the powers that act upon the emergent subject; however, it is more than this because it intrinsically links the process of language acquisition with development of the subject. Here the pre-verbal child in the *chora* (to Kristeva in the pre/postnatal care of the mother), expresses itself through the coos, cries and babbles of baby talk, alongside sounds and

gestures. Through this acquisition of language, the child also realises its own difference from its surroundings, from others and to gain an articulated sense of self. Also, language allows the child to point to objects, people and events outside itself, to recognise similarities and differences between itself and others, and simultaneously other people can reference the child through their name, gender and other forms of interpellation (McAfee, 2004). Kristeva terms this the *thetic* break (1984). A key example Kristeva offers is when a child approximates a dog's bark, with an imitative "woof woof". This may initially appear semiotic but (according to Kristeva, 1984) is the first steps towards making propositions and with this the symbolic identification of a dog as something separate to itself. Kristeva states this act "constitutes an attribution, which is to say, a positing of identity or difference" and it begins to "represent the nucleus of judgment or proposition" (1984, p 26). To Kristeva the study of language and its inseparability from the speaking being is intrinsic to understanding the development of the subject. In this instance, I would argue the institution of the school becomes the *chora* for the emergent LGBT+ subject as through its stifling of LGBT+ discourse, controlling the discourse of heteronormativity and only overt language around LGBT+ identities present, learned and permissible in the institution was derogatory, pejorative and damaging: the LGBT+ adolescents were in a pre-language position as they did not have the vocabulary to positively recognise themselves as a subject. Articulations made by the classes that appeared semiotic could also be perceived, as similar to the child identifying the dog, as the first cognisant identification as the LGBT+ individual as different to oneself or as the 'other'. This is as, simultaneously, other pupils and even staff at the institution may not have the language available to positively hail the LGBT+ young person as a subject either – it is a double bind.

When first entering the youth group, often the new young people would not know what to expect. They may have heard about the group from a friend, have undertaken a school workshop facilitated by me or a colleague, googled it, have been directed by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services or, in rare circumstances, they may have been signposted by their school. It would be unusual at this point for the young person to be able to articulate the aspect of their gender or sexuality that made them feel different, but generally it would be that they simply did not recognise their self in the cis-/heteronormative structures of the school. Often the language used in the youth group

would need to be unpacked for newer members, as it was a vocabulary that did not exist within the stricter confines of the educational institution or, as a general rule, in the habitus of the family. It was language that many of them had found on the democratised, liberated corners of the internet - on blogs, tumblers, Instagram and other peer to peer social networking sites – and it was this language that brought them together in "a community of practice" (Wenger, 1998) in these virtual and real forums. The youth group provided a safe space to learn and use this language, and, in doing so, create a new, more representative discourse. In these group discussions, there would invariably be a moment when a newer young person would make an exclamation (or if more introverted make a quiet acknowledgement afterwards) that they recognised their self in something somebody said, in a way they never had before. This would be the beginning of their engagement in the group as soon not only would they state "that is like me", but they would also state "I am not like that." Simplistic though it seems, this echoes Kristeva's *thetic* break, as the emergent subject leaves behind the *chora* (in this case arguably the school) and develops a language that allows them to recognise their self and their difference to others. This is the power of the initial naming process, which I have mentioned earlier in the thesis, as by being able to state their name (given or preferred), gender pronoun (again, given or preferred) and sexuality (once more, given or preferred) then the young people would begin to have agency in how they were interpellated as a subject – and subsequently to protest, rebel and radicalise against the rejected interpellation. During the school workshops, it was evident that this language that would allow recognition is not available in the heteronormative institution of the school and, without the ability to name oneself, the speaking being is denied that moment of recognition, subsequent empowerment and ability to protest or subvert. In the youth group the power and ideology surrounding identity is guided by the young people who participate, and is not set by the normative strictures of the school.

3.9 Authorised Discourses

In the school, we have seen the two main discourses available for discussion of LGBT+ identities. The first discourse sanctioned by the institution is the denial of LGBT+phobia through clichés and platitudes that rarely overtly discuss LGBT+ identities, but instead provide a perverse heteronormative endorsement that simultaneously privileges cis-gender/heterosexuality whilst 'othering' LGBT+ identities . This narrative provides a

superficial negation of LGBT+phobia, without any real understanding of how this prejudice (or even LGBT+ identities) become manifest. It is a discourse that obscures any deeper understanding through providing a vacuum of knowledge that is filled with vocalisations of heteronormativity that paradoxically silences LGBT+ narratives whilst seeming to articulate them. The second discourse we can observe is the pejorative language relating to LGBT+ identities that provides the only overt articulation of LGBT+ identities and allows LGBT+phobia to function in the school. Although this language is not sanctioned by the school, it is also generally not condemned as most of the young people questioned in the workshops described how LGBT+phobic language was not treated as seriously as racist language, LGBT+phobic bullying is not effectively dealt with and teachers will often turn a blind eye to or even use pejorative or LGBT+phobic language (This is corroborated by the brief data section of this thesis). These two narratives are a function of power in the institution and serve to construct or interpellate the cisgendered and heterosexual subject in the school, whilst leaving the LGBT+ subject with no available language within which to recognise who they are, apart from in the negative, bigoted slurs of LGBT+ hate speech.

Judith Butler took this a step further in her work on *Excitable Speech* (1997), as she asks "What gives hate speech the power to constitute the subject with such efficacy?"(Butler, cited in Salih, 2004, p 221). Butler's answer to this is that such hate speech is authenticated by sovereign or institutional power, and this is compounded by the redundancy of the subject's decision to cede to the interpellating voice of Althusser's policeman or not. Butler describes, (in the first chapter of *Excitable Speech* called "Burning Acts, Injurious Speech" (1997)), an important development of Althusser's work, how in the moments when the subject refuses the interpellation or to follow the authoritative voices demands – and the instruction becomes a failed performative – the way in which they are still interpellated as a subject. Essentially, it does not matter if the LGBT+ pupil does not recognise their self when hailed either as an assumed Cis-gendered heterosexual person or as a LGBT+phobic slur, as the performative function of this language does not require them to respond or submit to the hail by the authority figure in order to be interpellated. Butler uses the example of articulated 'Hate Speech' that hails the subject but does so in an injurious, malignant way. Often the subject will simultaneously refuse the pejorative name, whilst simultaneously recognising the name as referring to them; this means that the individual (whilst refusing

the hail) still has a strong desire to metaphorically "turn around" and this maintains the power of the hate speak, as it is then recognised by the law, its agent or in the context of this thesis the vocalisation of the accepted institutional discourses (Salih, 2004, p 213).

Butler (1997) is critical of the power of Hate Speech to constitute the subject without assistance, and notes that much of the power of this language comes from the way in which it is regulated and therefore how we as subjects are censored. Whereas I do not agree with Butler's calls to minimize state intervention in punishing hate speech, her work offers an interesting insight into both the performativity of hate speech in hailing the subject and where the language of hate speech derives its power. In order to further her argument, Butler cites this quote from Derrida:

> Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"?... [I]n such a typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance (Derrida, 1988, p 18).

The LGBT+phobic language used in the schools was not the invention of the pupils, and it has gained its injurious power in the genealogy of its meaning and usage, and also through the entrenched historical attitudes towards LGBT+ people. Butler writes "the speaker who utters the racial slur is thus citing that slur, making linguistic community with a history of speakers" (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 221). Even in the moments hate speech is being penalised by the school, Butler states, it is simply being authenticated as holding power, and therefore as legitimate language: through its recognition and subsequent repetition, it becomes the language of the institution.

Undoubtedly, Butler would be critical of my recognition of the LGBT+phobic language in the workshop and would be perceive writing the words on the whiteboard as a process of legitimising the language. However, I disagree and will use Butler's own argument against her to make my point. As the LGBT+ hate speech when used by the young people is a citation, then they are not the authors but rather as Butler writes, it "is precisely this iterability by which a performative enacts its injury [that] establishes a permanent difficulty in locating final accountability for that injury in a singular subject and its act" (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 221). According to Butler, this means that the pupil (in my example)

using the LGBT+phobic language is not to blame or therefore punishable, as they are using the only language that is available to them, and it is not their fault that this is entrenched in power that they did not create. Subsequently, by penalising the interlocutor you are further instilling power into the language and also empowering the (hate) speaker, thus placing the LGBT+ subject in a position of victimhood. The perpetrator of the LGBT+ phobia is the institution that sanctions these roles of bully and victim through a hetero-/cis-normative passivity. However, I believe it is only through disempowering, normalising and making transparent the LGBT+phobic language and then presenting an alternative lexicon, discourse of empowerment and means of recognition of LGBT+phobia that institutional change will occur. This was an ambitious aim for an hour-long workshop: I was hopeful that through presenting the seeds of thought, these ideas would germinate therefore having an impact greater than the time allowed in the classroom.

This deconstruction of institutional discourses is not only important in enabling a person to recognise their self as a subject, but also through this self-recognition understanding why they are perhaps being victimised, bullied or othered – or why they are victimising and bullying others. The third part of this particular section of questions asked the question "True or False: If I were LGBT+, I would be comfortable coming out as LGBT+ in this school." It was almost unanimous in each school I attended the response to this was false: the young people stated they would feel uncomfortable coming out as LGBT+ in their school. After some discussion, I asked the pupils to list words to describe how they would feel if they were gay in the school then I wrote them on the opposite side of the whiteboard to the list of epithets or adjectives used as synonyms for 'gay' earlier in the discussion. Here is a complete list of the words regularly used to describe how they would feel if they were gay in their school: "lonely", "different", "angry", "alone"," frightened", "bad"," rubbish", "insecure"," friendless"," anxious", "worried", "paranoid", "scared", "not normal", "under threat", "secretive", "be pretending", "acting", "isolated", "ostracised", "miserable", "individual", "proud", "ashamed", "uncertain", "good", "on my own", "not fitting in", "weird", "broken", "suicidal", "depressed", "sad". Occasionally a young person would list a positive word such as proud or great, but the overwhelming majority of suggested terms were negative. With both lists next to each other, I would ask the group, who is making people feel this way and, if we care, what are we going to do about it? I would return their

attention to all the LGBT+phobic words they had listed, which indicated the way in which they as pupils in the school used LGBT+ language. Most workshop groups listed everybody else before they accepted any responsibility; they would list parents, teachers, society, media, music, television, films, other people, older kids. In the end they would admit that perhaps they should not use LGBT+ language in a derogatory way, but were still aggrieved that they were being made to feel guilty for prejudice or bigotry when they perceived homophobia and transphobia to be something different rather than the background noise of cis/heteronormativity they reproduced or the culture they reinforced through their performative actions.

In most schools, however, the pupils had already asserted that more traditional ideas surrounding LGBT+phobic bullying (such as physical violence and verbal assault) had been largely eradicated – and they did not partake in this, as they were not LGBT+phobic. Should this be the case, I would ask, then why would you feel any of these adjectives (referring to the list of negative emotions on the board) if you are LGBT+ in this school? Invariably at this point, the answers would become stilted, stunted and forcible opinions would dissolve into non-sequiturs or dwindle to a series of awkward verbal fillers such as "erm"; the class would be returned to the semiotic stage of language: they had not been permitted access to the symbolic language surrounding positive enunciations surrounding LGBT+ identities. Pupils who had dominated the discussions would continue to attempt to answer, but find they no longer had the language or that there was a central paradox in their arguments. The discussion would try to fall back on the main two available discourses in the school but now in crises they would become polluted by each other. Often the pupils in their attempt to deny their implication in the creation of the emotions on the board would fall into the trap of articulating the belief that LGBT+ pupils may feel these emotions because there is something wrong with not being cis-gendered or heterosexual: they would reveal their deeply engrained cis-/heterosexism that decreed that being cigendered and heterosexual was implicitly superior or correct. In the preponderance of the 72 times I held these discussions, this conversational strand would conclude with silence, as language had either not been available or had betrayed the user.

In this instance "the creation of silence must therefore be seen as a potentially gradual process of deprivation of speech rather than a sudden and possibly unmotivated falling into

silence" (Herdina, 1996, p 34), as it would be at the point when it seemed they wanted to argue most or speak most to defend their position that language would invariably fail them. In groups which had been very engaged in the discussions, this was more marked. They denied they were LGBT+phobic or that the language they used betrayed an implied a supremacy of heterosexual or cisgendered identities. However, they were unable to articulate a resolution to the central paradox at the heart of hetero-/cisnormativity in schools: if everybody is not LGBT+phobic, then why are almost no LGBT+ pupils visible? Why are all the institutional discourses surrounding LGBT+ identities negative? Why are pupils denied the language and information necessary to positively identify who they are? It is apparent, as Bellebaum writes, "If someone is silent, s/he does not necessarily conceal something – if someone conceals something, it does not mean that s/he has to be silent. Sometimes words are required to keep a secret" (Bellebaum, 1992, p 65). The pupils were equipped with an institutional discourse to verbally refute their cis/heteronormativity, but once the logic of this was challenged they were left without the language to respond. This is in part due to the pupils being part of a wider conspiracy of silence that predated their role in the institution and was part of their constructed reality, as Hewitt (1991) writes:

> Furthermore, it usually involves refusing to acknowledge the presence of things that actually beg for attention, thereby reminding us that conspiracies of silence revolve not around those largely unnoticeable matters we simply overlook but, on the contrary, around those highly conspicuous matters we deliberately try to avoid. (Hewitt, 1991, p 225).

This inability to talk about LGBT+ identities and the resulting silence are not due to accident or oversight but are a carefully constructed and historically engrained through a series morally informed institutional decisions designed to create a culture of silence and to control the discourses surrounding LGBT+ identities in schools.

There are clear problems with this reflective device of showing the cognitive dissonance of believing one is not LGBT+ phobic but then being presented with the implications of one's actions, which the remainder of the workshop would attempt to redress by providing the language necessary for a positive discourse surrounding LGBT+ identity. The first problem was it created a narrative of victimhood for any LGBT+ pupils present and it highlighted not only their peers' implicit prejudice but possibly their own adherence with those with prejudicial views and to those who may be LGBT+ (often the same people), as the workshop must have the dual purpose of speaking to both. Secondly, the list of emotions on the board

were not necessarily the feelings of an LGBT+ young person but instead reflected the projected emotions and attitudes of the class – they illustrate the peer group's cis/heterosexism but this is not automatically representative the cisnormative and heterosexist feeling of an LGBT+ young person. Thirdly, this lack of language or cis/heterosexism is not the fault of the pupil (LGBT+ or not) as they are only granted agency to live within the discourses of the institution. This is the central paradox of the workshop, when the pupils have answered the first question, regarding whether they are LGBT+phobic, and stated they are not then they have told the truth but also simultaneously stated a falsehood.

Chapter Four : The LGBT+ Pupil as the Abject

This penultimate chapter directly answers the central research question: is the LGBT+ Pupil constructed as the abject in the school? In short the answer is yes, absolutely. However, the longer answer is something more nuanced and a more complex argument along the lines of yes, but only when it emerges as something problematic that undermines the authorised institutional discourses. In order to discuss this more fully, this chapter begins with a brief overview as to how abjection is defined and used in this thesis. The chapter is then split into three modes of abjection that have been observed in schools and the experiences of the LGBT+ young people from the youth groups used in this research. Throughout my research, I observed three distinct main modes of abjection related to LGBT+ identities, through the discourses and language used. These identified modes were: first, abjection by the institution; second, abjection by the peer group; thirdly, abjection by the self. As Nikolas Rose (1999) neatly surmised "abjection is an act of force, it is a "casting off" or "casting down", it is a "demotion from a mode of existence." Rose (1999, p 254) discusses "the works of division that act upon persons and collectives such that some ways of being, some forms of existence are cast into a zone of shame, disgrace or debasement" and are "denied the warrant of tolerability, accorded a purely negative value." This relates to LGBT+ young people in the school, as when they become visible or negate the narratives of the school they are still immediately silenced, debased or cast out. It is important to remember that although identified separately, all three modes of abjection work simultaneously to ensure the abjection of the other; in their enactment, they are mutually reliant.

Returning to Ball (2013, p 34), as I begin to discuss the role of the institution in abjection, and his assertion "the school is a "precision instrument", an "analytical space" in which to "locate individuals" or from which to exclude them is helpful. It is, as he writes, both a normalising and excluding machine, which draws upon and ramifies "breaks in the species.""

> To be not abject is to have control of the body and its functions, but the *recognition* of what will count as abject is regulated and authorised by the hierarchical discourses and practices of government. Within this relational state of play in classrooms, each student's positioning of herself and her positioning of and by others is always tenuous and open to re-inscription, both as other and as that which is to be abjected (Davies, 2004, p 434).

As the above quote suggests pupils cede to institutional power as it creates comfort and protection from being the 'other' or 'the abject'. Throughout the previous chapter, abjection has been cited in the argument but has not yet unpacked. Abjection exists on the edges or the periphery of the school experience, and it creates the boundary within which the pupils must remain in order to be "good" or "successful" subjects in the school, whether this is through policing their own behaviour or the behaviours of others. This is not predestined but instead is impacted by the agency of the pupil as they attempt to sit within what is deemed "regulated and authorised by the hierarchical discourses" (Davis, 2004, p 431). To choose to reject this position of safety is at the risk of being made abject in the institution. To think about this in terms of performativity, this refusal to answer a 'hail' of the institution can result in abjection. Equally, to be forced to answer a 'hail' that sits outside the normative structures is also liable to result in abjection, as can other sorts of rebellion against the institutional hegemony. Abjection is also seen to occur through the maintenance and limitation of discourses surrounding LGBT+ identities. Pupils and staff are not only limited by the language, ideas and knowledge they are permitted to have and express in the institution, but also how the institution will recognise and *hail* them due to any transgressive iterations or bonds.

From these limitations placed upon discourse, the argument has also been made that it is very difficult for the pupils to deviate from a tight track of subjectivity, as they are interpellated repeatedly as cis-gendered and heterosexual, with little option of diversion from this identity. In fact the existence of the abject and what behaviours, identifications and actions constitute the abject are used to police the entire population of the school. Without the abject, there could be no notion of the normal that the subject needs to achieve in order to be deemed successful or non-threatening. The performative nature of gender indicates, according to Butler (1990), it is a constant reiteration of a culturally constructed norms that are based upon the repetition of societal conventions. To use Butler's essay "Melancholy Gender/ Refused Identification" (1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 243-257), she writes there is a presupposition "that masculine and feminine are not dispositions, as Freud sometimes argues, but indeed accomplishments, ones which are achieved in tandem with the achievement of heterosexuality" (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 247). However, the pursuit of these accomplishments is embedded and normalised

throughout societal institutions, and individual agency is passively truncated. Subsequently, the boundaries are made apparent, so are rarely transgressed and the rules of engagement are infrequently flouted. This is due to the risk of being made the other, of being cast out and due to a collective fear of the dangers of abjection, which are represented alongside the benefits and dividends of being complicit to hegemonic ideals. As Dean (1999) stated:

> By becoming clear about the limits, we open up the possibility of an action to accept or reject them, to show their contingent nature, or to add up the costs of transgressing them. Above all, the point of a critical ontology of ourselves and our present is to make us clear on these risks and dangers, these benefits and opportunities, so that we might take or decline to take action (Dean, 1999, p 14).

In the school, this is moderated by a greater societal fear of LGBT+ narratives as gender performance and sexuality are often conflated or positioned as contingent upon each other. Butler identified this as Freudian matter, as she wrote: "Freud articulates a cultural logic whereby gender is achieved and stabilized through heterosexual positioning, and where threats to heterosexuality thus become threats to gender itself" (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 251). This brings the entire notion of a monolithic heteronormativity into question, as in this logic a threat to gender is always a threat to sexuality and vice versa: in other words heteronormativity is always a version of cisnormativity (and cisnormativity is always a version of heteronormativity), as gender and sexuality cannot be detangled. Butler (1997) posits

> the fear of homosexual desire in a woman may induce panic that she is losing her femininity, that she is not a woman, that she is no longer a proper woman, that she is not quite a man, she is like one, and hence monstrous in some way. Or in a man, the terror of homosexual desire may lead to a terror of being construed as feminine, feminized, of no longer being properly a man, of being a "failed" man, or being in some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 254).

Butler continues to argue throughout her work that normative gender identities are acquired in part through a constant rejection of homosexual attachments. Within her gender matrix, which is based upon an oedipal prohibition of same sex desire, she writes "if one is a girl to the extent that one does not want to a girl, then wanting a girl will bring being a girl into question; within this matrix, homosexual desire thus panics gender" (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 251). These ideas of gender are pivotal when we try to understand gender and sexuality in the school, as the adolescent subjects are negotiating their transition from childhood into the sexualised genders of adulthood.

There remains a focus in this chapter on institutional discourses and the silences that often replace alternative discourses that has permeated the entire thesis. To maintain focus in the thesis, I have omitted a discussion on the physical environment of the school and the way in which the spaces are structured to ensure a gender binary is instilled. This is through changing rooms, toilets, segregated sports clubs and other activities divided by binary gender. This means that LGBT+ people are often forced to occupy a liminal space that sits between these two binary points. There were many further examples of prejudice, abjection and discrimination that I encountered during the research that are not included in this thesis, such as the trans pupil who was ordered to get changed for sports in a broom cupboard or the out lesbian girl, who was defined by her sexuality (as finding females attractive) and re-interpreted as male, and therefore instructed to get changed in the boys' changing rooms.

The first mode of abjection I will discuss in this chapter is institutional abjection and this will be through highlighting sex and relationship education (or lack of it) in particular reference to the information or discourses constructed around LGBT+ identities and related sexual acts. In the second mode of abjection, peer-led abjection, the thesis will look exclusively at same-sex desire and how the pupils react to this. It will continue with a brief psycho-analytical explanation as to the source of this abjection and the impact this has on their assertion they are not LGBT+phobic. The final type of abjection is the abjection of the self and centres upon how the limits placed upon language, being without meaningful discourse and the (in)ability to recognise their identity all combine to mean the LGBT+ young people learn to abject their self from the institution. There is a dangerous homogeneity to a discourse that suggests all LGBT+ pupils will experience abjection, when this is simply not the case. Many LGBT+ people are able to negotiate existence in the institution, alongside an LGBT+ identity, through maintaining a closeted identity, through passing or lying to cover up internal drives and desires in order to receive the dividends of a submission to the mastery of the institution. Duggan (2003) termed this willing compromise as 'homonormativity', or as a way of exploring your LGB identity in narrow, heteronormative-sympathetic, apologist terms. It is a means of stating, yes, you are gay but you are willing to fit into the structures of a heterosexual hegemony and subjugate your own identity. Duggan is critical of homonormativity and is particularly invested in how homonormativity functions within

neoliberalism. In particular Duggan highlights how an "invisibilisation" has occurred that means that although LGBT+ people can enjoy greater freedoms it is within a strict heterocentric paradigm. Duggan points to the privatization of LGBT politics that means that instead of gay culture becoming actively part of the mainstream, it has been hidden in plain sight as, in order to have public recognition, much of what had initially made LGBT+ identities different or "other" have been diluted, institutionalised or disempowered through the opening up of previously segregated LGBT+ spaces, the endorsement of permitted stereotypes and carefully followed tropes. Instead LGB+ desire has been firmly consigned to the private sphere and previously queer spaces have become regulated, as institutionalisations such as equal marriage have been seen as a safe solution to economic and immigration injustices. It is clear how homonormativity functions in schools, as we look at the previous example and the pupils' belief that LGBT+ people could choose not to be out or overt in their identity. For Quinn and Meiners (2011, p 140), homonormativity works within schools to generate "feelings of shame and fear" in LGBT+ young people and "to remap queer resistance from a focus on social justice to gaining access for select – normal – queers to participate in militarism as patriotism, the free market, domesticity and other forms of a diminished public sphere".

4.1 Type One - Institutional Abjection

Institutional abjection has been observed throughout the research and evidenced throughout the thesis. The abject is always present in the school as it sits adjacent to the construction of the successful subject as a reminder of all that is deemed forbidden, transgressive and unsuccessful in the institution. The institution clearly marks the abject, in this case LGBT+ identities, as undesirable – both as a member of the institution and as an object of desire. There has been very little monitoring or empirical data gathered upon how many LGBT+ pupils are physically abjected from institutions through exclusion, segregated spaces and managed moves, so this thesis has to look at how this occurs through discourse. Mark Fallon (2017) from the alternative education school, Rotunda, in Huyton in Liverpool, reported he believed around 80% of the pupils he taught identified as LGBT+, and that this had an impact on their removal from mainstream education. He linked in the magnifying aspect of class or being part of a marginalised community, as the low education

demographic of the local area is often linked with greater levels of LGBT+phobia. However, correlation and causation cannot be meaningfully discussed, as data on gender and sexuality in schools is not currently captured.

So, let's talk about sex (baby!), or rather let's not talk about sex - especially not sex between people of the same sex - in a school setting. Carefully omitted from sex and relationship education, LGBT+ sex education is a political hot potato. There remains for some conservative politicians a continued privileging of small minded voters over the public health or wellbeing of young people, or the ability to recognise and discuss abuse or exploitation. In 2017, the Education Secretary Justine Greening announced that Relationship and Sex Education would be made compulsory under Section 34 of the Social Work and Children Act 2017 (*Pink News,* 2017). This legislative change would provide greater focus on relationships, wellbeing, consent and understanding healthy relationships, which are all indisputably necessary changes to current legislation. The change would also include all academies and free schools in its jurisdiction; these are currently able to opt out of following the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) guidance of the National Curriculum. It was proposed this would be implemented from September 2019, but has been returned to its information gathering stages. However, this pledge did not include anything specifically in relation to LGBT+ identities and still maintained the caveat that faith schools could be given exemptions. The Conservative Party crushed the recommendations that suggested a more inclusive Bill, as proposed in an amendment made by an all-female group of MPs headed by Labour's Stella Creasy. In the Bill Amendment Committee, votes were cast down party lines, with the 10 Conservative MPs voting against and the 5 Labour MPs voting in favour. In response to the proposed changes, Simon Hoare, Conservative MP for North Dorset, stated the amendment did not afford enough protections for faith schools who oppose homosexuality. In a seamless return to the language of Section 28 2B, he stated:

> Some form of protection is needed for those who run faith schools, all faiths, to make the position absolutely clear. I have little or no doubt that I will receive emails from constituents who happen to read my remarks. They will say that this is all about promotion, and this or that religion thinks that homosexuality—or another element—is not right. To provide a legislative comfort blanket, for want of a better phrase, the new clause needs to include a clear statement that we are talking not about promotion, but about education, and where sex education is delivered in a faith school environment, those providing the education should not feel inhibited about answering questions such as "What is the thinking of our faith on this particular aspect of sexuality?" (Hoare, 11th January 2017, Pink News)

We have a duty to protect the physical and mental health of teenagers, rather than the rights of religious bigots to voice potentially damaging beliefs about LGBT+ people, and to consolidate their right to reproduce these prejudices. Conversely, in an interview in February 2018, as part of LGBT+ History Month, the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, announced once more the "Proud of Our Diversity"(Corner, 2018) manifesto, which reads as a well informed and fully realised understanding of the issues facing modern LGBT+ people. This was initially released in 2016 (Douglas, 2016) to little press coverage. It is a manifesto that recognises the invisibility of LGBT+ identities and the silence that operates around non-normative genders and sexualities in wider society. Do not mistake me for a die-hard Corbynista, but even with the softening of Theresa May's stance on LGBT+ rights as she lurched closer to power, the Conservative party (and the DUP) are still unsympathetic at best to LGBT+ rights; Labour promise progress in places where the Conservative party provide regression.

The assertions regarding the hetero-/cis-normativity of Sex and Relationship Education are corroborated by current academic work, and multiple studies show that there remains a focus in SRE upon heterosexuality (Connell and Elliot 2009; Elliott 2010; McNeil 2013). This is a problem as it is also evident in these studies that these gaps in knowledge are not being filled through discussions with parents; instead it is widely reported that parents and adolescents often avoid or express discomfort when discussing sexual topics (Connell and Elliot 2009; Green and Sollie 1989; LaSala 2010). To compound this further, in the instances when family conversations about sexuality do occur, academic work shows that parents often assume that all children are heterosexual (Martin et al, 2009). The pervasive culture of heteronormativity not only dictates sex education in the school but also in the home; heterosexuality is perceived as being the compulsory norm and this assumption eradicates the potential for discussion of other forms of sexuality.

My own ability to talk about sex in the school workshops was voided. As was usual in topics related to sex, there was a high level of scrutiny surrounding the workshop I delivered by the schools. Instead of safeguarding, greater awareness of child sexual exploitation and the modern move to empower victims of child abuse having paved the way to greater transparency and more detailed SRE education, it appears, it has simply served to increase anxiety (and concomitantly maintained the silence) around the topic of sex. Academic work

shows that sex and relationship education programmes are frequently scrutinized by parents and/or school administration (Elliott et al, 2016). This is especially evident when the subject matter they cover attempts to address lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues, and these school based interventions often face even more challenges from parents, school governors, or other authority figures (Elliot et al, 2016). The redaction of LGBT+ sexual health in permitted institutional discourses often serves to limit these discussions and in doing so perpetuates the normalisation of heterosexuality as a mainstay in the construction of the subject. However, research has found that excluding specific issues relating to LGBT+ young people is often detrimental, and can leave them without much needed information regarding sexual decisions – and in this thesis, it is argued, the redaction of these SRE discourses denies opportunity for LGBT+ pupils to recognise their self, and for others to hail them appropriately. Omitting these areas from SRE discussions also serves to maintain the ongoing invisibility of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adolescents, whilst serving to reproduce existing narratives surrounding heterosexism and homophobia (Connell and Elliott, 2009). Most importantly though it contributes to their role as the abject in the school, as by presenting hetereo-/cis- centric narratives in SRE as the only authorised narrative the LGBT+ pupil is constructed as the 'other' by the institution, their peers and by their self.

In the school based workshop, I was only permitted to discuss sexual relationships in the vaguest terms. It was forbidden to refer directly to any sexual acts that may occur between same sex couples or refer to anatomy or genitals. As Zimmerman (2015) asserts, the "state sponsored school would come to dominate nearly every aspect of children's lives, but it rarely and then only gingerly touched on sex." In the comparatively more liberal youth space, having become concerned at the level of misinformation regarding sexual acts, consent and issues surrounding child sexual exploitation, the workers invited in the Brook Advisory Service to deliver an LGBT+ inclusive sex and relationship workshop outside the parameters and pressures of the school. This organisation was chosen as the charity would often be present on the same enrichment days as us, and both the Brooke Advisory's staff and the staff at the school would refer to their workshop as "covering sex." Before their session at the youth group, we began with the 'name game' that introduced the young people, their sexuality and preferred pronouns, and asked the icebreaker question "which one word would you use to describe your experience of sex education at school. The

answers were "non-existent", "straight", "biological", "heterosexual", "reproductive", "frightening", "scary", "don't-do-it", "nothing." When asked where they got their information on sex, they responded that the internet was a main source for gaining information. This was through YouTube channels, peer to peer social networking sites such as Tumblr or sometimes pornography, and research has documented this as a supplemental or even replacement sex education source for sexual minority students (Pingel et al. 2013).

The lack of institutional engagement with LGBT+ discourses surrounding sex and relationship education creates a vacuum where the young person in order to find information to recognise their self and find a place where they are named as a subject must fill the gaps in their knowledge.

> It seems to me that an often quiet, but often palpable presiding image here… is the interpretive absorption of the child or adolescent whose sense of personal queerness may or may not (yet?) have resolved… Such a child - if she reads at all - is reading for important news about herself, without knowing what form that news will take; with only the patchiest familiarity with its codes; without, even, more than hungrily hypothesizing to what questions this news may proffer an answer. (Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1997, p 10).

As Kosofsky Sedgwick wrote the young person may find they are either silent or invisible under the guise of cis-/heterosexual subjectivity or abjected through an inability or refusal to adhere to this hail – and this is dangerous, as the unmonitored young person may therefore seek out ideas, moments or discourse where they can recognise their own subjectivity. The institution of the school often creates a problematic authoritative voice by which the LGBT+ young person is interpellated as the 'other' or completely invisible. This can make the unmonitored, unmediated spaces on the internet appear to be a refuge, where LGBT+ people exit, have a voice and access to an entire lexicon that does not exist in the institution. As academic research has shown, gaining sexual knowledge through these types of media outlets can be problematic when the information is not always accurate (Hust et al.2008) and the motives of others may be exploitative.

Returning to the workshop delivered by the Brooke Advisory Service, although it included LGBT+ people in the discussion, it remained firmly in same parameters of the institutionalised discourses of the school. The information imparted in the workshop remained dominated by what Elliott (2012) refers to the "danger discourse", which often surrounds conversations on teenage sexual activity. This refers to the terms in which

teenage sexual activity is discussed often exclusively focusses upon risk and rarely on pleasure. The language used and the topics focussed upon - such as various consequences that can occur like pregnancy, punitive reactions to underage sex and sexually transmitted infections – were only in terms of being dangerous and something from which teens need protection (Elliott 2012; Schalet, 2011). The silenced discourses prevalent here are not only same sex or trans relationships, but also the principle of pleasure being a component of sex. As Foucault wrote, "there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses" (1978, p 27). In this instance the removal of the principle of sex for pleasure or recreation rather than the utility of reproduction, automatically censors those whose sexual practice cannot result in progeny.

This idea that "lying is done with words, and also with silence" (Rich, 1980: 640) once more is evident here, as the act of sex and relationship education is not only delivered to inform pupils but also to establish an accepted prohibitive discourse surrounding "sex" as something to be feared, to abstain from and as automatically linked to procreation. It also highlights legitimised sex to be exclusively heterosexual through the language used and the sexual processes described. As Pellegrini (1992) states,

> (L)anguage … constitutes a prism through which human knowers organize, interpret, and give meaning to their experiences. Language marks out the limits of the possible. It tells us what to think because it is impossible to think outside language. (Pellegrini, 1992, p 42)

Therefore in this context, language surrounding sex education constructs an alternative reality through its silence, where non-heterosexual sex (or sex that cannot lead to procreation) is wanton, lustful and intrinsically wrong. Through establishing what is still high risk but institutionally legitimised (ie: heterosexual sex between adults), the discourse constructs the abject on the margins of this to show what is absolutely forbidden, is deemed too high risk and is deviant so therefore 'other'. Even when the language used is not anti-LGBT+, the privileged heteronormative discourse reinforces the marginalization, invisibility and silence of non-hetero sexualities; simultaneously it serves to strengthen a hegemonic model of heterosexuality and to authenticate the opposite sex conventions that structure wider society. As Kumashiro (2002) states,

> Schools and other social institutions serve two functions: they privilege certain groups and identities in society while marginalizing others, and they legitimize this social order by couching it in the language of "normalcy" and "common sense". (Kumashiro, 2002. p 7).

The fact that schools continue to police non-heterosexual knowledge of sex and relationships (and narrowly define heterosexuality), indicates how far the heteronormative institution needs to shift. This is despite the fact that research has indicated sustained education can work to address discrimination and trans/homophobia (Sears, 1997). Discourses outside the school have already moved away from a notion of 'queer liberalism' that reduces sexualities such as gay or lesbian to a "mass-mediated consumer lifestyle and embattled cultural category" (Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 2005, p 4), but it appears, through reproducing entrenched archaic values and silencing inclusive discourses, schools are yet to embrace this equity of sexuality and experience. In response to the SRE session in the youth group, we developed our own inclusive sex and relationship education that has been rolled out as part of the charity's schools programme.

4.2 Type 2 – Peer-led Abjection

The second type of abjection I identified was peer-led abjection. This manifested itself both through the adherence of the pupils in the school to the normative constructs of the institution and therefore wider society. Indisputably, it is partially a result of the limited sex and relationship education offered by schools, as discussed in the previous paragraphs. As heterosexuality is authenticated by the sex and relationship education discourse, homosexual desire is positioned as something deviant and problematic. This resulted in the abjection of any individual who displayed LGBT+ identitifiers and, arguably, this was policed by peers as part of their own achievement of successful hetero-/cis-normative subjectivity. In the workshops, a clear example of this was the response to the statement: "True or False I would be okay with my best friend coming out as gay". In each group this was met by varying degrees of repulsion, disgust and fear. Even in groups where the levels of inclusion, liberation and tolerance were high, this statement would elicit a strong reaction that exemplified the Kristevan notion of abjection.

In many schools, there was also a carnivalesque aspect (in a Mikhail Baktin sense), as humour was sought to ease the tension around a subject that presented a clear challenge to their subjectivity. As Bakhtin wrote; "this is a profoundly universal laughter, a laughter that

contains a whole outlook on the world" (1963, p 34). In early stages of the workshops, there would be a perceived breakdown of the dualisms or binary constructs of gender and sexuality, as they verbalised their acceptance of all genders and sexualities in line with institutional discourse (but in reality these dualisms were strengthened through the definitions given at the beginning of the workshop). The workshop sat as something different outside the usual constructs of the classroom; although hardly a bacchanal, through eliciting a more free informal discussion, permitting coarser language and even by allowing the pupils to call me by my first name, the rules of engagement had been shifted. As the workshop situated the examples further and further into the lived experiences of the pupils and therefore outside the permissive atmosphere of the workshop, the pupils began to re-establish a dualism, perceive a threat in the breakdown of boundaries and reject their earlier liberalism. As Bakhtin wrote:

> All the images of carnival are dualistic; they unite within themselves both poles of change and crisis: birth and death (the image of pregnant death), blessing and curse (benedictory carnival curses which call simultaneously for death and rebirth), praise and abuse, youth and old age, top and bottom, face and backside, stupidity and wisdom (Bakhtin, 1963, p 33).

The binaries or dualisms which had been increasingly in danger of collapsing in the discussion, as the pupils sought to negotiate their belief they were not LGBT+phobic, were strengthened as the boundaries of their subjectivity came under threat. This would be manifested through assertions about their own (hyperbolic) heterosexuality or bold statements about their stereotypical masculinity or femininity.

The strong verbal reactions were often semiotic as the pupils would often just make mock vomiting sounds or show physical symptoms of disgust, such as shuddering, stating they had goose bumps, clutching their stomachs or covering their faces. When symbolic language was engaged, the statements centred round notions of desire, namely, the fear that their friend may find them attractive and therefore try to instigate sexual relations with them. Although, not limited to males, it was mainly the male students who identified and verbalised this fear. It would often be expressed through humour and crude language to draw a laugh from the room but also potentially to mask a deep rooted fear. To return to Butler (1997),

> If we accept the notion that heterosexuality naturalizes itself by insisting on the radical otherness of homosexuality, then heterosexual identity is purchased through a melancholic incorporation of the

love that it disavows: the man who insists on the coherence of his sexuality will claim that he never loved another man, and hence never lost another man (Butler, 1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 335).

It would be an unusual workshop (and indeed it only occurred 7 out of 72 times) where nobody stated "what if he tried to bum me?" or something to that effect to a response of nervous laughter; it was always framed in vulgar or immature language. The conflation between male homosexuality and sexual assault was often ingrained in their minds, as they would often articulate a worry that saying no and not consenting would not halt the advances. When they spoke about this fictional best friend, it was as a monstrous being. My response to this was generally pithy or sarcastic, which was at odds with my otherwise earnest demeanour, and attempted to jolt the young person out of this odd fantasy they had constructed.

When I questioned whether coming out as gay would alter their real best friend's personality, the discussion would be divided between those who would try to show understanding (but often with the caveat that things would be different) and those who would immediately end the friendship (as they believed their friend would be intrinsically negatively altered). To return to Butler's work, it is evident that in instances when the best friend relationship is ended by the pupil, then the broken "attachment becomes subject to a double disavowal, a never having loved, and a never having lost" (1997, cited in Salih, 2004, p 334). The pupils who stated they would end the friendship said that they would have felt lied to or deceived regarding their friend; with a belief that if they were mendacious about this then what other aspects of their personalities were untrue. This was often coupled with a deep feeling of betrayal or violation in the moments they had shared together, such as sleepovers, getting changed after sports or personal conversations where they perceived the best friend to be secretly altered and therefore the memory corrupted. As Butler (1997) continues "This "never-never" thus founds the heterosexual subject, as it were; it is an identity based upon the refusal to avow an attachment and, hence, the refusal to grieve." Most stated that although they would not actively bully the friend, the relationship would be truncated; they would avoid them and would purposefully create a distance in the friendship that meant less time would be spent together. Many stated that it would be like they had never known them, so they would not miss the friendship. This displays abjection in its most distilled form: their friend through revealing they are LGBT+ or the 'other' must

be cast out of their lives; without this rejection of the 'other', the pupils subjectivity is placed in a position of risk or crisis.

When questioned whether they would discuss with their friend why this was happening, most stated no they would not as they would not know how to put it into words. I would suggest that they could explain to their friend that they were homophobic, biphobic or transphobic, but this again was met with widespread denial with only very few participants conceding that perhaps they were a little prejudiced. However, this is a complicating factor of heteronormativity, as it is not only homosexuality it regulates but all gender performances and also perversely it regulates heterosexuality (and those aspects of bisexual identity surrounding homo/heterosexual desire). Intriguingly, follow on questions I would always ask would be "do you choose who you find attractive?" or "Is being gay a choice?" Most of the young people questioned would state that being gay or who you find attractive is not a choice, but would then argue that it was a choice whether you acted upon it. In this part of the discussion, the pupils would almost univocally reveal their unerring investment in the normative constructs of the institution of the school; they would construct a dialectic that simultaneously argued that same sex attraction should be accepted and should be treated as equal, but not in the public spaces of the school as the institution demands everybody to "fit in" and "be normal". It was commonly stated that LGBT+ people should wait until they had left school before "coming out". Again, this is abjection in its most pure form, as the pupils submit their agency to the domination of the institutional will, and also police the behaviours of those who may potentially transgress these (hetero)normative constructs, thus bringing the shared spaces and collective identity of the institution into a perceived disrepute.

On a personal level, most of the pupils would deny being LGBT+phobic, but would continue to make statements that displayed concerns they would be seen as not adhering to the hegemonic heterosexual or even be perceived as LGBT+ through their association with the hypothetical friend. Sentences to this effect would start with "you don't understand…", "you don't know what it's like…", "you don't know what people would say…". They would offer statements that denoted a need for individual protection relating to the boundaries that formed their self, which the collectivism of the institution was able to offer; example phrases are "I just want to fit in" or "I'm not doing anything that makes me different". The

young people in the workshops even at this point, having renounced their hypothetical best friend for being LGBT+, were able to state, passionately, that they were not homophobic or transphobic. All while freely admitting they would not be comfortable with somebody of the same sex desiring them, especially at school. When I probed deeper, through asking about whether they would feel comfortable with their friend discussing anybody of the same sex they found attractive, such as a classmate or a celebrity, and the answer was generally still a resounding no from the male pupils, whereas the female pupils were more malleable in their response to their friend's sexuality (especially if he was male).

To resituate this exemplar in the themes and theory discussed in this thesis, it is important to address how Kristeva situates the abject in terms of a food loathing that invokes these strong reactions of repulsion:

> The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace. What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood. What makes something abject and not simply repressed is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness. It remains as both unconscious and a conscious threat to one's own clean and proper self. The abject is what does not respect boundaries. It beseeches and pulverises the subject (McAfee, 2003, p 46).

The infant in this quote comes without any formed borders and these must be developed through the rejection of desire for the other and simultaneously a rejection of the borderless self. Here it is evident that Kristeva's reading of the abject is built upon one of the central concerns of psychoanalytical theory – how the 'I' forms. To investigate this further, I would need discuss Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage (1968) in some depth, as an example of how this is incorporated into psychoanalytical thinking. However, Kristeva's work is developed from not only the work of Lacan (in particular as a contrast to *object petit a*), but also from reading Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the carnival and Freud's development of the Uncanny or *Unheimlich*.

All of these theories focus upon the idea of a lack or unnamed object, which has a psycho-analytical impact on the individual. In the symbolic order, according to Lacan, this unknowable or missing part is referred to as *object petit a*. Slavoj Žižek (2001) explains this *objet petit a* as:

> Pure and simple: the lack, the remainder of the Real that sets in motion the symbolic movement of interpretation, a hole at the center *(sic)* of the symbolic order, the mere appearance of some secret to be explained, interpreted, etc. (Zizek, 2001, cited in Hanlon and Zizek, 2001, p 7)

This manifests itself largely in a need for input from other people and reward for our actions; we want other people to like and accept us. However, as found in the institution of the school, this goes beyond simple esteem or likeability but instead the *object petit a* becomes an insatiable need to become a successful subject through adherence and policing of societal norms – and, in this instance, the achievement of heterosexuality and a legible gender identity.

Lacan's theory of the *object a* was later argued as not only impacting upon the individual but, it began to be seen as representing a permanent societal structure of subjectivity, or as the paradigm of "Imaginary order". By some post-modern thinkers (Lyotard, 1984; Fuyukama, 1995), it was seen as an argument that actually disproving the notion of the individual. For LGBT+ people this can be problematic as their identity, desires and self may not be legible or may be rejected by other people based upon homophobic or transphobic misconceptions, a wish to maintain societal order and a subsequent wish to police the barriers of what is considered normal. Whilst for people who do not identify as LGBT+, this need to conform may require that they comply with the abjection of subversive genders and sexualities that threaten not only the boundaries of their self (psychoanalytically and corporeally) but also the boundaries of the body politic or institution.

Kristeva agrees with Lacan in that the mirror stage can create a sense of unity (as one recognises the self and the 'other' as separate but the same), but she believes that even before this stage the infant is able to distinguish between "I" and "other". She states this process is abjection – as it is "a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of yourself" (McAfee, 2003). The 'abject', according to Butler's (1990: 124) reading of Kristeva, is a 'structuralist notion of a boundary-constituting taboo for the purposes of constructing a discrete subject through exclusion'. This builds upon both Kristeva and Lacan's work as the abject although policed or reinforced by the submissive subject it is simultaneously established by the mastery of the institution. There are many examples of how this occurs in schools but perhaps never more starkly than in the classes surrounding Sex and Relationship Education. In adolescence, this *thetic* break appears to occur again, as teenagers are often

denied the language to understand sexuality and gender fully, so subsequently reject LGBT+ identities as the abject or 'other'. This raises the questions: in this situation, how do you know if you are LGBT+, are experiencing LGBT+phobia or are LGBT+phobic when you barely understand what this means? As shown in this chapter and throughout this research, you do not.

4.3 Type Three - Abjection of the Self

> Along with sight clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from mother and father who offer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me", who am only in their desire, I *expel* myself, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself* (Kristeva, 1982, p 3).

This leads us onto the third form of abjection I observed in relation to schools. This is abjection of the self or an inability to recognise oneself as a victim of homophobia. It was a regular occurrence in the youth groups that young people would move schools or experience difficulties in school that were related to the catch all term "anger issues". In one such example, Caitlin, the Year Nine pupil involved had been out of mainstream education for over nine months. She was meant to be home schooled by her mother, but by her own admission she spent much of her day playing videogames. She described how the previous year she had experienced problems at the single-sex academy school she had been attending and the staff recommended that she move schools. The details at this point were vague, but in the short narrative she provided, it had been decided that instead of moving schools she would stay at home and be schooled by her well intentioned mother. As the sessions progressed, Caitlin began to slowly reveal more information about her "choice" to leave mainstream education. She stated that the other girls did not like her because she said weird things and she just felt different and odd all the time. When asked what sort of statements were perceived as "weird", she would describe statements that would draw suspicion that she was not straight and were indicative of an emergent same sex attraction. She would repeatedly state that it was her fault for being "different", "odd", "weird", and that she was really embarrassed by what she believed they thought about her: namely that she is gay. What Caitlin was clearly describing were feelings of internalised homophobia. This is defined as when a sexual minority person holds negative attitudes or expresses homophobia towards their self and others who are sexual minorities (Shidlo, 1994). This is

also known as internalised heterosexism (Szymanski, 2008), internalised homonegativity (Mayfield, 2001) and homonegating processes (Russell and Bohan, 2006).

As time progressed, and Caitlin felt more comfortable sharing her experiences in the youth group, the story developed. She had started to hint and express her same sex attractions to her friends. As a result, they had rejected, had made her periphery to and then excluded her from their social circle. This situation had been compounded by Caitlin developing a crush or infatuation with one of her friends. Due to a lack of understanding of herself and denial of her sexuality, this was further compounded as she did not socially regulate it but instead it was left exposed. Her attempts to re-join the social group or engage with her crush had caused the girls to become more actively hostile, and they would call her a "weirdo", or refer to her as "gay" in a pejorative way. This sudden and immediate rejection from her friendship group and a feeling of increased isolation in the school, coupled with a sense of difference, shame and fear - and an inability to discuss this experience with anybody in the institution - meant that Caitlin withdrew, struggled to comprehend herself and, when questioned, verbally lashed out at others. As a gay adult viewing the situation, I could recognise what Caitlin could not; her inability to recognise herself as gay, meant she didn't understand the situation. Consequently, she was bullied by the other pupils for nascent expressions of same sex desire.

The narrative presented by Caitlin referred staff attempts to support her, whilst evidencing they did not have the knowledge, the skills or the language to name or discuss the situation. Without the perspective of the staff, it is difficult to suppose their intentions, but, in the story provided by Caitlin, it appeared that her sexuality was alluded to in vague terms but never spoken about directly. In one instance, according to Caitlin, the pastoral support stated she was too young to know whether she was gay, it was not uncommon to have confusing feelings due to hormonal changes and that it was probably just a phase. However, it was suggested Caitlin may be happier in a school where these rumours did not persist, regardless of whether they were true or not. The very clear message from the school to Caitlin was that she was the problem as the actions of the other girls were not sanctioned, and, in accordance with peer-led abjection, she was abjected. At this point she did not leave

but continued at the school, but in her story discussed how she felt isolated from both staff and pupils; she felt she was not really welcome there anymore: a spectre at the feast.

Subsequently, Caitlin's behaviour became more erratic and culminated in an emotionally heightened situation where one of the girls she had been friends with had persistently goaded her for being gay and, having lost her temper, Caitlin had thrown a chair at her. The missile did not make contact, but the school decided that the situation was untenable. The decision was taken that Caitlin temper was a risk in the current situation, so a managed move between schools was suggested, but this should be with the illusion of Caitlin's choice. This led to a conflicted understanding from Caitlin as she struggled to understand her role as an agentic victim. She performed the role interpellated by the institution: she was given the impression of freewill as she chose to leave, but was also the victim of institutional abjection. This is where agency becomes a moot point, as it was her choice when she responded with anger, which brought sanctions and so therefore she was disciplined or abjected from the institution. However, equally, the institution provided her with no space to explore her identity or sexuality, and so she was left with no other recourse but to react or act out. When I raised with Caitlin that she may have experienced homophobia in school and that the problem was not just her behaviour but the heteronormativity of the institution, she was defensive of the school. She denied this, vehemently, as she stated she did not know she was gay at this point, so therefore how could she experience homophobia. She was in a pre-discursive position regarding her sexuality, but I would argue that the same sex desire still existed; however, temporally, Caitlin was only able to perceive her same sex desire as having begun once she had left the school and named it with newly acquired language in the youth group, (or when she had made the *thetic* break with the *institutional chora*). In narratives temporally situated at a time when she was still in school, she saw herself as subjected to institutional norms that defined her as problematic and, as she denied her homosexuality, she concomitantly denied the homophobia. Here it is important to remember, the subject is not determinist and the subject maintains agency albeit one that is radically conditioned, in which they can reflexively and critically examine their conditions of possibility:

> [T]o claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a

> purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted? (Butler, 1995, p 46)

Through the words Caitlin used, it was often apparent that there was a rejection of the school as an institution, as she said very clearly "I hate that place." In Caitlin's descriptions of the school, she was always unwilling to be critical, despite stating she hated it; she always perceived herself to be the problem. Conversely, despite the institution truncating her agency and allowing an invisibilisation of identity, there was also a longing to return to a state of oneness and belonging within the secure confines of the school. As the institution rejects the pupil; the pupil rejects the *institutional chora.*

> The 'subject' discovers itself as the impossible separation/identity of the maternal body. It hates the body but only because it can't be free of it. That body, the body without border, the body out of which this abject subject came, is impossible (Kristeva, 1982, p 3).

This creates yet another double bind for the LGBT+ young person as the have a "longing for narcissistic union with its first love [in this instance the institution of the school] and a need to renounce this union in order to become a subject. It must renounce part of itself in order to become a self" (McAfee, 2003, p 47). This situation was not unusual and often LGBT+ young people at the youth group would describe instances in schools where they felt their identity was not recognised or that LGBT+phobia was not addressed. This would often lead to a feeling of injustice, a loss of faith in the fairness or integrity of the school and therefore a breakdown in the transactional relationship between their self as an obedient subject and the school as sovereign. However, this was not a break devoid of trauma, but one borne from necessity; they could not be LGBT+ within the institutional *chora,* as the language to name them and therefore authenticate them as such did not exist. As Davies states:

> The agentic subject disavows this dependency, not out of a flawed capacity for reflexivity, but because the achievement of autonomy, however illusory it might be, is necessary for the accomplishment of oneself as a recognisable and thus viable subject (Davies, 2004, p 433).

The LGBT+ young person emerges from an undifferentiated union with the principles and beliefs of the institution, which are often troubling to them regarding their sexuality or gender identity. The break from the institution is achieved through expelling, physically and mentally what is not part of their proper self (but constructed by the institution) as they assert their identity. In the LGBT+ young person, this is through rejecting the interpellative hail as a cisgendered or heterosexual subject. However, this abjected gender identity or sexuality is not gone forever, as this abjected part of the self continues to reside in the

subconscious, remaining on the edges of their awareness as a spectre of something they are not. However, this is complicated for the LGBT+ young person, as often it is not the cis/heteronormative 'hail' that is rejected, but the 'hail' as the 'other' or as an LGBT+ subject. Often, they do not have the ability through language to recognise themselves as LGBT+ - and may share many of their peers or the institutions horror and disgust at the (LGBT+) other. This is problematic as the young person can find their self in a limbo where they are abjected from the institution, as not accepting the institutional hail – and they can also abject their self as an LGBT+ subject. The young person can simultaneously find "the abject both repellent and seductive, and so the borders of the self are paradoxically continuously threatened and maintained" (McAfee, 2003, p 47). This is as "abjection works at the level of individual borders in defining that which it is possible or not possible to be" (Davies, 2004, p 445), sometimes simultaneously.

All three models of abjection act upon the individual in order to regulate behaviours and identity. Judith Butler (2003) writes about the need for a liveable life through the recognition of desire and self by society and its institutions, through having a legible gender performance.

> What counts as a person? What counts as a coherent gender? What qualifies as a citizen? Whose world is legitimated as real? … By what norms am I constrained as I begin to ask what I may become? And what happens when I begin to become that for which there is no place within the given regime of truth? This is what Foucault describes as 'the desubjugation of the subject in the play of … the politics of truth' … This relationship is an urgent one; it carries a certain theoretical urgency, precisely at those points where the human is encountered at the limits of intelligibility itself. (Butler, 2004, p 624)

This is the main purpose of abjection: it serves to delegitimise the subject who does not adhere to the institutional hail and therefore poses a threat that it may bring the fragile hegemonic power into crisis. This is achieved by denying subjectivity and therefore a liveable life within the confines of the reproductive discourses of the institution or school – and therefore in wider society.

Chapter Five: The Polygraph (or the conclusion).

From the outset, there had been something deeply unsettling about re-entering schools after having had left fifteen years earlier. It remained to me as the *unheimlich* (or the *chora*) that I had spent much of my adult life rejecting, forgetting and mitigating its impact. For some people school is remembered as the halcyon days of endless summers and constant reward; it is to borrow a phrase from the popular song their *Glory Days*. My very limited memories of my school days appear to be a string of small humiliations, a feeling of latent inadequacy and romantic crushes that gave me endless sleepless nights followed by tired, grey, dreary days. This perhaps is the inherent risk with ethnography as the necessary reflexivity "provides personal growth for many a scholar, a catharsis for others, a means to share another's story" (Berry and Clair, 2011, p 211); this thesis undoubtedly brought personal growth. It was during a drive home after a particular trying workshop in a school that I realised delivering the workshops was damaging my mental health, and I needed to stop. The session had been in a science laboratory and the disengaged teacher had texted throughout the session, as the group had tried every trick in the book of making the visitor leave. They had thrown things across the class, some of which had hit other pupils and me; they had made up fake names and made silly noises, and they had been outrageously LGBT+phobic. The area was economically deprived and as I entered the school there had been a van advertising a breakfast of hot spam sandwiches for a pound on chalked A-frame sign. The pupils referenced not only the attitude of the school but also their wider families and everybody else in the community. This was the only school I felt too intimidated to come out as gay and tell the group about my own experiences; it was also one of the schools that needed the intervention the most.

Afterwards as I was driving down the motorway, one particular incident from my school days brought me up short, and it could not be quickly repressed once more to an area of the subconscious simply marked "There be monsters". It was my own experience of abjection that exemplified the three components described in the previous chapter, as it was implemented by peers, the institutional actor and also through my actions as an agentic victim. There is a danger in telling this tale that I appear self-pitying or that it implies there is an implicit right to success, without having earned it; neither of these notions are my intention, as it is understood I was in part responsible in this situation. I was in Year 11 at

school: it was a selective co-educational Grammar school, which had only started accepting girls ten years earlier, and many of the pupils were very affluent, often with the sense of entitlement and self-assurance that goes alongside this. I was not one of these pupils but one of the minority of pupils who were bussed in from the small villages around the more wealthy central town. The school was also deeply religious and each Friday morning we would attend the Church of England Church next door for a sermon and service.

Mr Crabtree was the physics teacher and Head of Science at the school; a position I suspect he had gained through longevity rather than any great pedagogic virtue. He taught the top set for Physics, which consisted of twenty-five boys and ten girls – and I was one of those girls. During summer holidays before the term had begun, I had done what it appears many repressed young gay females do and had cropped my hair, without parental permission. This shearing had been conceived as a way of opting out of the constant chatter and obsessive search in my all female friendship group for the attraction, selection and rejection of our male peers in the all new and novel dating game. This hair cut had contravened the gender regulatory school rules, which stated that boys *must not* have hair that touched their collars and that girls *must* have hair that at least touched their collars. To return to the theoretical discussion of the thesis, I had refused the institutional hail as a girl and was now in serious danger of becoming abject. Therefore my initial land grab for my own queer identity was thwarted, as my crop was forced to grow out and my hair spent most of my 16th year looking like an unflattering bowl cut (undertaken by somebody who deemed the bowl to be a superfluous luxury). To add to this image of an awkward teenager, I was also carrying, deep in the recesses of my (top secret!) inside blazer pocket, the carefully written out words to The Buzzcocks "Ever Fallen in Love with Someone (You Shouldn't Have Fallen in Love With)". As in my adolescent angst, I had a love that dare not speak its name for my best friend and partner in Physics – let's call her – Lindsey. The lyrics had become a totem of my shame, fear and imposed secrecy that undermined my every act and deed in the school.

As we trudged into the physics laboratory everybody noticed a machine on the table, which Mr Crabtree was fussing and fiddling with, and he had set a seat so that it was carefully positioned to be viewed by the room but also in close proximity to the contraption. After revealing it was an old lie detector machine, Mr Crabtree requested volunteers to undertake

a polygraph in response to which most of the boys and some of the girls raised their hands. I did not put my hand up, concentrating my gaze on the grain of the wooden desk and was paralysed with a heart pounding fear of all my disgusting secrets being revealed about my feelings for girls. Mr Crabtree looked around the class and pointed at me to come and sit in the chair. Despite my protestations, he insisted and stated that I was being insolent, as when a teacher asked me to do something then I should do it unquestioningly. Whilst remaining polite, as captain of the debating team, I was an outspoken teenager; this was particularly irritating to teachers that enjoyed a small amount of petty power, but liked by others who enjoyed engaging with pupils.

The interrogation started out with innocuous questions as to whether I had done my homework for that day and how long it had taken me. The questions altered as the polygraph continued, as he asked whether I had a boyfriend and whether I had ever had a boyfriend, and inappropriately whether I had ever been kissed. To these answers, I answered no and he gestured to the gizmo behind me that displayed I was telling an ignominious truth. He then asked me if I fancied boys, to which I answered affirmatively, yes, whilst thinking, oh goodness, no (yuck!). The polygraph showed an inconclusive response, as my cheeks and ears burned with humiliation and blind panic. He then asked me if I fancied anybody in the room, and - with my mind betraying me by thinking about Lindsey as I replied - no, I stated I did not. The polygraph was less inconclusive this time and displayed very definitely that I was lying, to which the room erupted into laughter. Mr Crabtree then went through each of the boys by name and questioned whether it was them, and as I replied no, not them, it showed I was not lying, as all the while the room of loud boys and quiet girls heckled and laughed at each other and at me. When he said, is it one of the girls then with a sneering snort, the hot tears that had been prickling in my eyes and the barely controlled contortions of my mouth broke into humiliating crying and I took off the finger sensors as I fled from the room to the refuge of the girls' toilets, as the bell rang and the next lesson began.

As I left, I heard him say to the class that had fallen into a silent embarrassment, "It must be one of the girls then…" to low level nervous laughter. I heard the scrape of a stool on the floor as somebody pushed it away to stand up from their table, and, as the door closed

behind me, I heard Mr Crabtree say, "Oh sit down Lindsey, no need to chase after your girlfriend" to a more raucous laughter. At this point my fate was sealed, there were now homophobic taunts from the boys, and in the quieter corners of the school and in the no man's land of the school bus from those who had heard about the much gossiped about lesson. There was a drifting away from Lindsey and the rest of my friendship group as they either did not want to be tarred by association, our interests diverged or perhaps I pushed them away through my sense of angry shame and furious humiliation. This was mirrored in the pupils' reactions in the workshops I would deliver two decades later. Lindsey once told me in a very decided tone "I don't believe in lesbians" as if, similar to Father Christmas or the Tooth Fairy, one could simply choose not to believe in same sex female attraction, but this perhaps exemplifies the abjection that runs throughout education, as if we can choose and manage through disavowal our relationship with the revolting, forbidden but ever present notion of homosexuality.

However, most importantly, I never returned to Physics or through fear of the same group or seeing Mr Crabtree in fact made the decision not to attend any of my science lessons ever again: I made the choice to abject myself, as 'other'. I could no longer adhere to the heteronormativity of the school, it was no longer an option, and my attempt at submission to the normative values had influenced my abjection – I simply had to submit to the new institutional 'hail' as the 'other' and performatively abject myself from the classes. Freewill is present here, but one that operates within the complex power structures and discourses of the institution. This was always an aspect of this story that, previously, I had found difficult to reconcile, as the decision to no longer attend science lessons was my own, and therefore the failure in the exams was my fault, but this thesis helped me realise subjectification and abjection are far more nuanced and complex than this.

> In order to understand subjectification, we must grasp this double directionality, this impossible doubleness of subjection: we are both acted upon and we act—not in separate acts of domination and submission, but with submission relying on domination/mastery, and mastery relying on submission. (Davies, 2006, p 448).

Subsequently, I went from being a pupil who was predicted three A*s in science to being an adult with no formal qualifications in science, as I had already been put forward for an exam paper that required a minimum attainment of a grade B to get any sort of GCSE pass. The

impact of this single Physics lesson and the domino effect it put into motion was felt throughout my future choices, as without Science GCSEs, you cannot do science A-levels, and without science A-levels myriad degree routes are closed off to you: I had never expected to become a scientist, but I had hoped to study something related to psychology. It is also shocking, perhaps, that despite the Physics lesson having been inscribed into the folklore of the school year, with teachers being fully aware that I did not attend my science classes because of if it and the audible whispered taunts of lezzer as I walked down the corridor that no adult ever broached the subject with me. However, this was 1997 and Section 28 2b was still in full force so teachers were unwilling to enter into potentially difficult conversations relating to sexuality. Instead, rather than be of assistance or support, the school and the teachers within it treated me as the problem and further compounded the issue with further comments, indignities and lack of understanding. Again, this was underlined in schools twenty years later, as, when asked in the workshop "True or False: there are adults in this school I could talk to regarding LGBT+ issues I may encounter," very few workshop groups identified more than one or two adults, and many identified none. In the discussions pupils still doubted the beliefs and support teaching staff would offer them, as LGBT+ identities were still never discussed and when the topic was raised, it was often negatively. Again, it was apparent very little has changed in terms of support offered to LGBT+ young people in schools.

However, having already stated that the example given in introduction to the thesis was my first experience of homophobia, it is surprising to find another so readily present in the thesis's concluding section. This stems from the fact that at the time of this example when I was sat in that humiliating Physics lesson, I was deeply homophobic, as was everybody in the school, in my family and in my community. Everybody I knew shared the belief that it was an illness, it was not natural and it was a perversion. When I heard the words "Lezzer" or "Dyke" in the corridors, I never viewed it as homophobic, as everybody was called a "bender", "puff" or "gay boy" – it was a short hand for social undesirability, not normal or to mark difference in a community that rewarded conformity, without any deeper understanding or link to sexuality or gender identity. Again, this was evident as still being the case in many schools, as homophobic language had barely changed and largely remained unchallenged. I just always felt it was a coincidence that I was in fact gay, but this

was something I could barely acknowledge to myself. The interlocutors did not realise the very specific meaning those words had when they fell upon my ears. This was confirmed when as *Friends Reunited*, *Facebook* and other social media sites came into everyday social interaction – and friend requests appeared from the ghosts from my school days - that they expressed surprise that I am gay. It was not until seven years later when I had left that community (and distinct habitus) behind that I came out as gay to my closest friends, and even then that was with an enormous amount of panic and upset. Two years after that I came out to my family, once I had an established relationship with a woman and clear sense of my own sexuality.

However, the impact of Mr Crabtree's polygraph was exacerbated by the shame of my same-sex attraction, whether that had been his intention or not. It was further compounded by a friendship group, I had held since primary school, being ill equipped by the actively homophobic and insidiously heteronormative discourses of the institution to offer support. This was hindered further by the teaching staffs' lack of intervention, either through fear of Section 28 2b, adherence to the narrative where I was perceived as problematic and abject or that they did not have the language available. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, when it comes to LGBT+ issues in schools, we are constantly denied the language needed to frame our identity, to discuss who we are and to recognise ourselves and the identities of others. The most important factor in all of this, though, was my abjection of myself, as instead of having the language or discourse available to analyse this situation as through anything other than indicative of my own pathological problems, I blamed myself. After this, I attended sixth form college, where I staggered along for 18 months until I was justifiably expelled for being an obnoxious, angry, truant, self-destructive mess to the laments of tutors who found my ability and my attitude hard to correlate. It took until I was 22 years old to return to education at a very different institution to the one I had expected to attend when I was 16 years old. I only ever spoke to Mr Crabtree on one more occasion: this was on GCSE results day, when he sarcastically congratulated me on my results by saying I had met his expectations; he looked like a man who was celebrating a victory: the interpellation was complete. Ten years later, when my sister (who is two years older than me and was in 6th Form when the polygraph took place) told me that Mr Crabtree had died; I found it hard to express any sympathy. My sister simply said, it's okay not to feel sad, what

he did to you was awful. We had never spoken about it, and this was as far as she was willing to be drawn on the topic and I did not ask – we still did not have the language available and I remained unsure exactly what he had done to me (and what I had done to myself).

To say attitudes to LGBT+ people have changed in the past twenty years (since this occurred in 1998) is a huge understatement. LGBT+ rights post-2003 are perhaps one of the few areas of legislation where the law is an agent for change rather than a retrospective actor on a cultural shift that has already occurred. Same sex couples were only granted the same rights as married couples in terms of inheritance tax breaks, ability to access a partner's life insurance, pension and social security and the ability to be their partner's next of kin should they become ill through the Civil Partnership Act 2004. Before this some of these rights would only be permitted on the good grace of an often estranged wider family. It is only in the past ten years it has been legal for same sex couples to adopt children, as in the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 Parliament decreed that a couple must be married was dropped, thus allowing a same-sex couples (who could not legally marry until 2014) to apply. However, even then it had to mitigate this legal change as not being about LGBT+ rights but as being about ensuring less children are kept in the care system and widening the net to include more potential adopters. These are relatively new rights that have had a seismic change on the way in which same sex relationships are now perceived as normal and homophobia is largely discredited in polite society. Although there is still a way to go with homophobia, this is nowhere near as accepted and prevalent as transphobia, as trans identities are still deeply stigmatised. However religious bigotry is still permitted in terms of not accepting gay people's right to marry, being allowed to state homophobic views as a response to religious teachings and the ability to directly discriminate against people through denial of goods and services. This is a paradox at the centre of our society that we allow permitted pockets of bigotry, and simultaneously allow our education system to be heavily influenced by this vocal minority of dissenting voices. In Merseyside, over 80% of secondary schools have a religious affiliation and nationwide the Church of England remains the largest education provider in primary and secondary education, as a currently over 1,000,000 children are educated in Church of England schools, a quarter of primary schools and over 200 secondary schools are Church of England run, and a further 500

schools declare they are Church of England in ethos. In addition, over 800 academies are sponsored by the Church of England, and over 15,000,000 people currently living in the UK have been educated at a C. of E. school (C. of E Website, 2018). This is not an insignificant influence on the nation's education system.

This thesis is not arguing that no progress has been made over the past twenty years regarding LGBT+ identities in schools. However, it is definitely arguing there is still some distance to go before we have reached parity, and are not still acting in ways that are detrimental to LGBT+ young people. When I began this thesis, it was going to be a business case for LGBT+ equality in Higher Education. However, through fate and consequences, it became an exploration of LGBT+ identity in schools, which over time developed once more into an argument surrounding discourse, subjectivity and abjection. The greatest barrier to writing the thesis has not been lack of access or richness of information, but it has been my own constant refusal to address my own experiences in education and the impact they had upon my life. There have also been limitations imposed by not being a qualified teacher and not having the professional experience of teaching in schools, but through concentrating on the accounts of the Year Nine pupils involved I have not attempted to adopt or commandeer the view of the teacher. Writing this thesis and the events that led to it changed who I am and how I perceive myself, and it has been written by somebody who has experienced, lived and can empathise with the narratives of the young people both in school and in the youth group. This has often felt like the slow and painful removal of a scab from a wound I had long forgotten about, which once the blood had ceased to flow and it had healed a little was removed once more. There have been months when I have refused to look at this thesis or conduct this study, as even thinking about it has made me feel overwhelmed or nauseous, and the desire to quit has been strong. To return to the words of Foucault, again:

> I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not at the beginning. If you know when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it? (Foucault, 1977, p 307).

To be perfectly honest, had I known where this thesis would lead me then I may never have begun it, but am sure this will change in retrospect as I move on with a greater knowledge

of who I am and how my subjectivity has been shaped. Instead of the emotionally removed "business case for equality" thesis I had set out to write, I have written this deeply personal work, which exemplifies everything I had no intention of ever public admitting or analysing: it has been a process of renegotiating my own subjectivity and "to become again what we should have been but never were" (Foucault, 2004, cited in Ball, 2013, p 146).

When I reflect upon this thesis and its argument, like you, I can see the limitations of its argument. There are areas I ignore, such as intersectionality whether that is related to ethnicity, ableism, class or something else, and there are broad suppositions about education made, as there is very little investigation into individual school policy and procedure. The thesis is limited by only centring on the words of the pupils, which are then filtered through my memory and analysis – and they are often fallible narrators, as am I. There is no right of reply given to teaching staff or policy makers, and in this discourse surrounding how the institutional discourses they purport contribute to the suppression of the liberating discourses required for the emancipation of LGBT+ pupils in schools, they are in fact silenced themselves. However, as the researcher I own these limitations as the thesis is a thread of a larger argument or a contribution to part of a longer body of work. Just as an hour long workshop cannot successfully address LGBT+phobia in schools, nor can a 45,000 word thesis hope to provide a conclusive, exhaustive argument regarding the silencing of discourse, failed subjectivity and rendering of the LGBT+ pupil as abject – however, this does not mean we should not try. Similar, to the workshop, my hope is that the thesis offers pause for thought, an alternative view and a re-evaluation of a seemingly benign cis/heteronormativity in schools. To borrow Foucault's stated desire: it is hoped the discourse offered in this thesis serves to destabilise in the mind of the reader the discourses offered by the institution and to subvert the power they hold. I do not doubt that there are schools that are more holistically effective in managing LGBT+ bullying and diversity, and that they do not feel the need to access the charities I worked for, either through partaking in school workshops or signposting pupils to the youth group drop in. However, I believe all are still guilty of some degree of heteronormativity and subsequently encouraging homonormativity in the LGBT+ pupils at the school – and that all will have a need to address their trans exclusive/ inclusive practices.

However, there is something that makes me qualified to discuss this issue, as Boylorn (2011) wrote: "Writing from a reflexive standpoint requires a particular kind of vulnerability and exposure, Particularly, speaking from a marginalised position, (…) it is imperative that researchers show how and why their standpoints are relevant markers in research" (Boylorn, 2011, p 180). I have undertaken extensive study in Gender and Sexuality and have an Undergraduate degree and two Masters Degrees in related disciplines. However, this academic work, is secondary to the understanding I gained through lived experience: I knew how it felt to be a closeted, young, gay person. I still remember and carry with me the feelings of isolation, shame, frustration and anger of being a repressed gay teenager. Simultaneously, I knew how it felt to be confused by my LGBT+phobic beliefs through ignorance borne from a lack of knowledge. It had been my hope before entering schools that I would find my role to be redundant, and that the classes would be filled with a generation of enlightened young people – as the world has moved on in so many ways, through media representation, legislation and rights. Initially, it seemed I was proved right, but as the two roles ran simultaneously (and I spent my days in light of the mainstream institution that purported LGBT+ inclusion and my evenings in the twilight with the LGBT+ young people who were the collateral damage of this institutional inclusion) it became apparent that much work was still to be done. Overt LGBT+ phobia does not exist in most schools, but LGBT+phobic language is still not challenged, young people are still not actively supported and cis/heteronormativity still defines the spaces of the institution. However, one of the biggest epiphanies I had during this research is how much the formative experiences of the school influenced my view of myself, life choices, notions of who I am and attitudes about my identity well into adulthood – and how easily I could be undone once a similar situation occurred in the workplace.

This would be the next step in this argument or investigation were word count to permit – so much of research into LGBT+ young people focuses upon self-harm, controlled substance misuse, alcoholism, sexual exploitation, diminished academic achievement, leaving school early, subsequent lowered earning potential, mental health difficulties, higher instances of both attempted suicide and taking their own lives, and other self-destructive risk behaviours (Almeida et al, 2009; McNamee, Lloyd and Schubatz, 2008; Robinson and Espelage, 2011). This is the spectre that hangs over this entire discussion, as this inability to positively

recognise oneself in institutional discourses and any subsequent abjection has the very real consequence of higher rates of suicide in LGBT+ young people. As Kosofsky Sedgwick wrote 25 years ago and, damningly, it's still true today: "I think everyone who does gay and lesbian studies is haunted by the suicides of adolescents" (Sedgwick, 1993, p 13). Although, these were all present in all my experiences in both school and the youth group, I made the decision not to make it the focus of this thesis.

It is an unfair generalisation to say schools are toxic environments but for a minority of pupils who are 'othered' by their normative constraints, they can be damaging. This thesis offers an alternative narrative that serves to subvert, undermine and expose the heteronormative discourses of the school. It is not an exhaustive argument, and offers a single theoretical reading of a complex and nuanced area. An alternative discourse is proffered, whilst attempting to reveal the silenced discourses of the institution that serve to obscure, to undermine, delegitimise and render invisible the LGBT+ pupil. It is discussed that to show parity the LGBT+ pupil must commit acts that serve to homonormalise their identity, to lie, to cover, to keep their identity secret or perform stereotypical tropes of their sexuality that neutralise their perceived threat to the heteronormative student body. The thesis looked at Foucault's key models of objectification that assist in the formation of the subject: dividing practice; scientific classification (tangentally) and subjectification. Opportunity was taken in the argument to criticise the use of binary constructs and narrow definitions of gender and sexuality in order to regulate all identities that sat outside the cis/heteronormative discourses of the institution. The Panoptic schema was cited as a particular model through which the subject helped police this categorical order. The youth space was cited as a place beyond the regulation of the school and operated as a site where young people could safely experiment, rehearse their performances and construct their iterations of identity without fear of abjection. This led us on to a discussion of Foucault's third schema for objectification which is subjectification. This is where notions of freewill were introduced, as it was noted that subjectivity is not predestined but rather inside the narrow confines of institutional discourses sits a constant renegotiation of relationships of mastery and submission. The subject is constantly changing, choosing and often resisting the interpellative hail of the institution. This again raised issues surrounding control and containment, as resisting the institutional discourse raised the threat of abjection once

more. This was underpinned by reference to performativity and the neo-liberal agenda of a modern education system.

In a thesis that relied upon the narratives of Year Nine pupils, both in the school workshops and youth group, language is important to the analysis. This is through Althussarian notions of transaction and interpellation. Through this as subjects, we relinquish part of our agency for the protections and rewards of our ideological institutions. We perform as regulated subjects, who respond submissively to the discourses of power, and we adhere to the normative structures in a way that makes us recognisable. When we resist these performatives and interpellations, then we show ourselves as problematic and in need of regulation, by becoming a threat to the hegemony's fragile hold on power. It was then through the Kristevan link between language and subjectivity that these theories were explored. The argument discussed semiotic and symbolic drivers to investigate the distinction between statements by the pupils that appeared parroted and the interjections that displayed deeper emotive language and drives. This centred on the symbolic utterances that reproduced institutional discourses that permitted regulated LGBT+ inclusivity, and the semiotic extra verbal ways in which this discourse was betrayed as superficial. This strand of theoretical discourse moved on to an understanding of the *semiotic chora*, which transposed the concept from the maternal womb to the *in loco parentis* influence of the school. From this a strand of argument was developed, in which the LGBT+ subjects break from the *institutional chora* , becomes comparable with the thetic break of the infant – therefore bringing identity into crisis for the LGBT+ young person, as they are left in a pre-language position regarding their gender and sexuality.

The ability to use LGBT+ language is not always emancipatory, and it is noted that hate speech can also serve as an institutional discourse and interpellative hail of the subject, these are according to Butler (2003), and in line with my own beliefs, citations of accepted beliefs regarding LGBT+ people and often reference historically entrenched discourses. It is through penalising this language that an institution legitimises it as a discourse containing power. However, this language and the sanctions against it offer the capacity for the LGBT+ being to recognise when they are being victimised, bullied and othered. This is a key issue in schools as dominant institutional narratives declare that schools are inclusive, not LGBT+ phobic and a safe place to come out, whilst using these same discourses to contain LGBT+

identitites, obscure them and purport cis/heteronormative narratives. In the moments when pupils wish to discuss these discourses critically or say something other than the institutional message then they were without the available language and left with silence. The discussion then moves onto the dangers of risking access to success in the Neo-liberal workplace; this is through a discussion of abjection. Three forms of abjection were noted in the schools, these were: peer-led abjection; institutional abjection and abjection of the self. These were explored through rejection of LGBT+ desire, sex and relationship education and the exclusion of pupils from specific spaces in the school or from the entire school. It is also discussed in this section, the ways in which the LGBT+ being is complicit in this abjection and how this relates to understandings of agentic victimhood.

To complete the thesis and the narrative arc between the adult self and the adolescent self, in these parting paragraphs, I have tried to offer a brief explanation as to why the cis/heteronormative structures of the school are an important factor in influencing behaviours in adulthood. When I reflect upon the workplace example at the beginning of the thesis (and questioned why my subjectivity was so fragile), there are easily identifiable similarities with the incident during my school days almost twenty years earlier. Returning to the Kristevan notion of the *chora* but in the modified version used in this thesis where the mother has been substituted in her parental role for the proxy-parental role the institution, it is apparent many LGBT+ young people who are unable to adhere to the mastery of the institution and are made abject lose this *institutional chora.* In a quote I can relate directly to my own experiences, McAfee (2003) describes the impact this may have as follows:

> Now imagine the child losing her mother […]. The mother fades away before the child knows that this mother was an other. The child suffers a loss she cannot articulate. […] She may well recover and have a normal childhood, but then, later in life, as a result of some trauma, she may sink into a depression that far exceeds the immediate trouble that precipitated it. She is listless; she moves slowly; she sleeps most of the day; she barely speaks (McAfee, 2003, p 48).

Freud and later psychoanalytic theorists posit that depression or melancholia, as it used to be known, was an act of mourning for something lost. Kristeva describes two different versions of depression: the first is *objectal depression*, which fits with Melanie Klein's 'internal object' discourse surrounding depression (Klein, 1940), which occurs after the *thetic* break; the second definition is as *narcissistic depression*, which "instead of centring around a feeling of hostility to some internal object, a depressed narcissist feels flawed,

incomplete, and wounded" (McAfee, 2003, p 49) and this occurs before the *thetic* break. Here I am asking for a huge leap between the loss of the mother in the subject making process and the loss of institutional subjectivity, and it is one that I believe provides an interesting argument, if not in this short form a water tight case. At school, pupils are consistently asked to adhere to the values of the school, to be part of the institutional values, to be part of the school family and make the discourses of the school be the narratives you utter as a speaking subject, alongside the morals you hold and the ideology you live within. Every school I entered had a motto, a list of values and rules by which to live, and each school made it clear that in order to be part of the school community you needed to live by these edicts. To be forced to break from this, to speak words other than the discourses that have formed the reality of the school thus gaining a new language and to see yourself as separate is, to me, a form of *thetic* break. Therefore it is only logical, following Kristeva's philosophical thinking, that to be abject in the institution and to refuse the institutional 'hail' and then break from the heteronormative discourse without the means to articulate it is also a *thetic* break. The issue is compounded by not having the language available that means the lost *institutional chora* leads to an unspoken *narcissistic depression*:

> Sadness would point to a primitive self – wounded, incomplete empty. Persons thus affected do not consider themselves wronged but afflicted with a fundamental flaw, a congenital deficiency. Their sorrow does not conceal their guilt or the sin felt for having secretly plotted revenge on the ambivalent object (Kristeva, 1989, p 12).

Kristeva continues to define the ambivalent object, rather cryptically as "the thing *(close)*" and this is "the real [in a Lacanian sense] that does not lend itself to signification, the centre of attraction and repulsion, seat of the sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated" (Kristeva, 1989, p 13). When I spoke with LGBT+ young people who had experienced abjection in school, they were often recalcitrant, when asked why they did not speak up there would be similar themes in their replies. These were: their words did not mean anything; they would not be understood; they could not put it into words or language failed them; or without sufficient language to successfully think about and then articulate what happened to them they could not argue against the institution. They are in many ways severed from the symbolic, which is interesting as Kristeva moves her notion of *Narcissistic Depression* away from the psycho-analytical realms of neurosis into the sphere of psychosis

where all meaning is lost to an ineffable sadness (McAfee, 2003). Although placed as an endnote to a longer thesis on subjectification and abjection, it is important to make the link between the impact of the school on adolescents still having repercussions in the individual's adulthood in terms of resilience, mental health and other life choices.

However, this thesis whilst discussing subjectification and abjection has been preoccupied by language. Even now I find it difficult to pull together into words the dual notions of an education system that I have latterly enjoyed and the amount of knowledge it has enabled me to gain and the grey fog that sits over my formative adolescent experiences in school. Through working in the youth group and leading workshops in the schools, I was constantly faced with the fact that mine was not a unique experience in school but widespread in those questioning their gender and sexuality in many different forms with many different triggers. I am not a psychologist, but it appears the link between adolescence experience and arrested development in adulthood is apparent – not least in my own experiences but also in the preoccupation of psycho-analysis with establishing this, through ungrieved losses, multiple arguments of melancholia and mimetic loss to name but a few. In order to address mental health issues, suicide risk, substance misuse and all the other risk behaviours, schools need to ensure there is the language available and the people to speak to that enables all pupils successful development as a subject, and mitigates the risk of their abjection.

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