“My biggest worry is being outed”: The impact of heteronormative online safeguarding on closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning young people.

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Acronyms:

Acronym:	Meaning:
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
ECCS	Empty Closets Community Services
ISP	Internet Service Provider
LGBQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
RSE	Relationships and Sex Education
SOA	Sexual Offences Act 2003
UK	United Kingdom
UKCCIS	United Kingdom Council for Child Internet Safety

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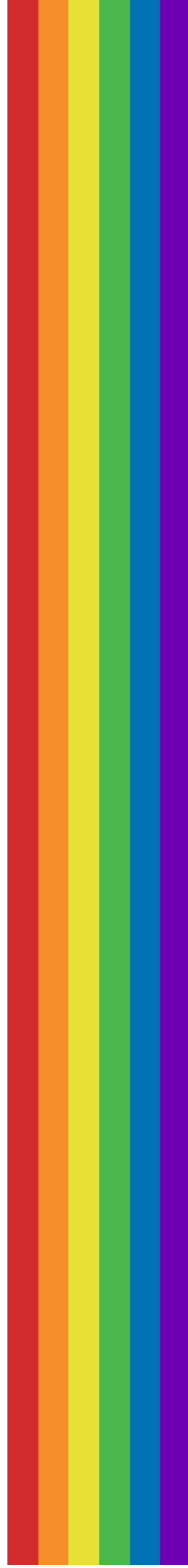

Abstract

The internet has become one of the most popular forms of media within the United Kingdom (UK), and the online sphere has been used prominently by closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (LGBQ) young people to subvert heteronormativity. Online safeguarding strategies have been developed to attempt to maintain constant control and surveillance over young people. However, these strategies are underpinned by heteronormative protectionist discourses, presenting the participants with challenges when maintaining their concealed online identity.

This thesis is original in its examination of the impact heteronormative online safeguarding has on closeted LGBQ young people: what protectionist discourses are embedded into child internet safety guidelines; and how the implementation of these strategies legitimises a heteronormative protectionist framework which creates perceived privacy and safety barriers for LGBQ young people. The thesis uses social constructionism as its overarching theoretical framework, utilising a qualitative approach involving a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of internet safety guidelines, as well as a virtual discussion board and semi-structured interviews with participants. A total of 24 participants, aged between thirteen to seventeen and identifying as LGBQ, were involved in the virtual discussion board, and 5 of them also participated in a semi-structured interview.

My research highlighted that heteronormativity was embedded into the protectionist discourses of child internet safety guidelines, relying upon adult-centric perceptions of children's needs. My data has provided crucial insights into the negative consequences of this for closeted LGBQ young people, as current safeguarding practices have failed to recognise their privacy needs. By listening to young people, this research has obtained key insights into the concealment and performative techniques used by the participants to avoid being outed by surveillance strategies promoted within these guidelines. By challenging the exclusivity of adult-centric perspectives and priorities, my data has identified how LGBQ young people prioritise the protection and preservation of their closeted identity when online, whereas adults focus primarily on protection from perceived sexual risks. Consequently, the data from participants has challenged the dominance of adult-centric knowledge currently controlling the online safeguarding agenda, demonstrating how online safeguarding approaches cause young people to feel unable to report internet-initiated abuse because of safeguarding strategies being ideologically incompatible to their circumstances and needs.

Keywords: Child Internet Safety Guidelines; Closeted; Heteronormativity; LGBQ; Online Safeguarding; Young People.

Introduction

This project is an exploratory study examining how heteronormativity within online safeguarding[1] impacts closeted LGBQ young people when concealing their online activities and identity from parents or parental figures. Their narratives are used to outline how adult-child power dynamics and heteronormativity create unique challenges to the preservation of their closeted online identity, and the consequences these have on their ability to protect themselves online.

1.0 Research Questions

This thesis aims to answer the following four questions:

1) How are protectionist discourses embedded into child internet safety guidelines?
2) How does the internet allow closeted LGBQ young people to circumvent information barriers imposed by parents and parental figures?
3) How do surveillance strategies promoted by child internet safety guidelines impact the maintenance and preservation of a closeted LGBQ young person's concealed identity?
4) How does heteronormativity within online safeguarding impact a closeted LGBQ young person's ability to protect themselves?

1.1 Positionality and relevance

1.1.1 Positioning myself in the research

The relevance of this research can be explained through both a personal story of my own childhood experiences, as well as the links that these experiences have to the broader societal context in which my childhood occurred. My state education began with my enrolment in Primary School on Monday 4th September 1995, but little did I know at the time that the UK had a statute in law colloquially known as 'Section 28'. This refers to the Local Government Act 1988, which prohibited the 'promotion' of homosexuality (Local Government Act 1988: 28(1)(a)), as well as the promotion of the 'acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended

[1] Safeguarding refers to the policies and practices required of individuals, groups and institutions who work with children. In contrast, child protection refers to the activities conforming to these policies and practices which are undertaken to either protect a child from experiencing significant harm or responding to a child who has experienced, or is likely to experience, it. More information on these distinctions can be accessed from NSPCC (2020) [Accessed 30th September 2020].

family relationship' (ibid: 28(1)(b)). It was eventually repealed on the 18th of September 2003, just as I had entered year eight in secondary school. However, it would be inaccurate to state its repeal led to Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) becoming inclusive, as the psychological toll of this provision, as well as the anxieties and fears which legitimised Section 28 to begin with, remained entrenched within pedagogy. This was particularly apparent during the 2006-07 school term, when I had entered my final year of secondary school education and my school was selected to participate in a trial programme referred to as 'Ready for Life'[2].

One of the things which has always stood out upon reflection is how heteronormative the entire programme was. Non-heterosexual identities were not acknowledged at all. It is notable this programme trial occurred in the same year that Stonewall released their first School Report, which highlighted the ongoing legacy of Section 28 despite its repeal years earlier (The School Report, 2017)[3]. Fortunately, these heteronormative information barriers were minimised by my access to the internet, which became a crucial lifeline for consuming information and resources befitting of my needs, but which also affirmed that I was not the only person in the world who felt this way. It is this social exclusion, combined with the actions I had to take to conceal my identity, which prompted my interest in this research. I can empathise with the struggles reported by the participants, and I too have previously managed concealment strategies and engaged with similar dilemmas on how I would report abuse when closeted if such a situation ever arose.

Two drastic differences between then and now are the portability of technology, and the expansion of basic features for everyday devices. When I was a teenager, mobile phones had the ability to send and receive picture messages, but socio-economic factors prevented a sizeable portion of young people from being able to afford the costs of MMS messaging. Additionally, webcams were a peripheral device for a computer, meaning they had to be bought separately by parents. Nowadays, the ability to send picture messages is an integral

[2] This programme consisted of five school days being spent attending relationship and sex education workshops. At the time, the trial reflected a rapid expansion of the usual number of hours assigned to relationship and sex education in schools, which typically consisted of a couple of hours during the year as part of a broad and disjointed curriculum referred to as Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE).

[3] The 2007 School Report by Stonewall is not currently available online, but key data from it is referenced and summarised within the School Report 2017 when reflecting upon long-term changes and trends. See this version of the report for relevant findings from the 2007 study.

part of many social media platforms and does not incur additional costs, and computer devices have webcams integrated as a standard feature. These changes have significantly altered the prevalence of online safeguarding strategies and have further complicated closeted young people's ability to conceal their identity and keep themselves safe online. It is for this reason I am interested in their perspectives in understanding this topic, as they are the ones best equipped to express what their privacy and safety needs are, just as I was when I was in their position during my own teenage years.

1.1.2 Professional and societal interest

Rose (1989: 121) states childhood has "become the most governed sector of personal existence", reflecting the profound transformations which have occurred within law and social policy across the twentieth century to enshrine protections for children. These have been intended to improve their lives and well-being but has also come at the cost of rendering them as objects of knowledge, to be studied, surveilled, and understood on their path to adulthood (Hallett and Prout, 2003).

Within law, there are a variety of legal duties which require safeguarding practitioners to listen to children's wishes when making decisions on their behalf. Section 53 of the Children Act 2004 requires the local authority to give due regard to the wishes of the child when determining which services to provide under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, as well as before making any decisions to protect children as part of a Section 47 investigation. The wishes of 'looked after' children must also be considered (Section 22(4) of the Children Act 1989) when making decisions regarding accommodation (Section 20) or placing a child under police protection (Section 46(3)(d)). The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity, including when working with and assessing children. Law prohibits them being treated any less favourably than others when determining access to services which are needed to meet their needs. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) states a "child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the child" and has been ratified in the UK since 1991.

These legal duties have become an integral part of social work practice, with continuing professional development (CPD) being an ongoing requirement which practitioners must evidence to ensure continuation of their professional registration. Standard 4 of Social Work

England's (2020) professional standards framework stipulates CPD is an important component of ensuring public safety and confidence in social work. This reflects that professional competency is an ongoing process to ensure that safeguarding practitioners' knowledge of strategies and procedures remain current. Linking this process to public confidence and safety means there is potential for this research topic to be of relevance to CPD training going forward. It draws critical attention to barriers within online safeguarding strategies and offers research pipelines to further utilise children's voices to ensure they contribute to the breaking down of safeguarding barriers for sub-populations of children. This would not only have clear societal benefit for children's rights but would also provide critical CPD considerations for child protection practitioners, who are tasked with upholding these rights and guaranteeing the ongoing efficacy of safeguarding models and procedures.

1.2 Developing the research

This research project has been developed based on gaps in knowledge identified by my master's dissertation, conducted as part of my MA Social Work course in 2014. During that research, I examined why LGBQ young people used online coming out communities to assist in their identity exploration, as well as the responsibilities which community staff had for safeguarding their members. This was done using an online questionnaire for the community members and hosting an online discussion board for community staff. The key findings highlighted that closeted LGBQ young people strongly preferred online support because of the perceived safety and security it brought. Additionally, staff recognised that because their community members were closeted and accessing the website without the knowledge of parents, this increased their safeguarding duties to ensure this did not create risks of harm to the member or wider community. However, it was when analysing these key findings that two gaps in knowledge emerged:

1. Young people primarily relied on 'stranger danger' narratives to assess online risks, and research examining the efficacy of online safeguarding failed to account for how these narratives inadvertently reinforced a young person's vulnerability. Priebe and Svedin (2008) highlight that child sexual abuse is hidden from adult society and more likely to occur by perpetrators of a similar age to the victim. The dominance of the older male typology has remained at the forefront of safeguarding strategies, without research examining the implications of this amongst young people when trying to

assess risks to protect themselves.

2. Community staff were caught in the dichotomous dilemma of recognising the importance of protecting a closeted member's identity from others, such as their parents, but also saw this as an area of considerable concern when fulfilling their safeguarding duties. Such duties had clear tensions when applied to closeted LGBQ young people, meaning staff had to simultaneously recognise the importance of a closeted member's privacy needs, but also be prepared to 'out' an individual against their wishes if a safeguarding scenario arose. When examined further, children's organisations which acknowledged closeted identities would recognise privacy needs but default to encouraging children to report concerns to a parent or trusted adult. Within research, this approach had not been examined through the narratives of LGBQ young people, and so its efficacy as a safeguarding approach had not been assessed from their perspective, despite obvious conflicts existing.

It is based on these considerations that this project was developed, and the study which has occurred has addressed these gaps in knowledge. The use of closeted LGBQ young people is a crucial component for obtaining original contributions to knowledge, as it is their perspectives which identify the barriers and tensions which exist within online safeguarding strategies.

1.3 Original contributions to knowledge

The thesis makes numerous original contributions to knowledge. The first is evident through the CDA of child internet safety guidelines. This analysis shows that social practices at the macro level are constructed by developmental, naturalist understandings of childhood, reinforcing adult-child power dynamics and heteronormativity within safeguarding. These are evident at the micro level through the textual analysis which is undertaken, as well as at the mesa level when analysing discursive practices, which transmit 'appropriate' strategies to parents. The consequences of these are evident when analysing the participants' data, as strategies deployed from these guidelines present unique challenges and dilemmas to closeted young people.

The second contribution is evident from how closeted LGBQ young people become agentic producers of their sexual socialisation. This presents a challenge to the orthodox schooling of

RSE, which utilises ideologically constructed knowledge to transmit information to young people in a passive manner. Whilst educational enquiry within RSE is permitted, heteronormativity within schools restricts closeted LGBQ young people from asking inclusive questions without it challenging their closeted status, and information barriers set the scope and tone of the enquiry which can occur to ensure appropriateness throughout RSE schooling. Participants recognised that the online sphere afforded them opportunities to circumvent the information barriers reinforced by parents and parental figures, allowing them to access materials and resources which catered to their needs. To sustain this control, participants had to manage the deployment of surveillance strategies by parents, including taking responsibility for their own safety. When done successfully, the internet provided a transformation to the power dynamics of RSE, with participants transgressing from the passive 'recipient' role within schools and instead being empowered to exercise their agency online to access and consume any sexual information they desire. This presents them as agentic producers, as they are making clear and reasoned decisions about the content they seek out and make conscientious decisions about whether to integrate that knowledge into their own sexual socialisation by allowing it to become part of their identity exploration and construction. This demonstrates that rather than predominantly adopting knowledge from an 'approved' RSE curriculum at school, they are instead able to get the most transformative knowledge from their own agency online.

The final contribution to knowledge is the impact of heteronormative online safeguarding. This demonstrated a differentiation between what closeted LGBQ young people consider to be the biggest risk to their safety and well-being versus what parents and parental figures are most concerned with. When considering if they would be able to report internet-initiated abuse, participants felt they would lack meaningful control over decision-making, causing a risk of being outed. Participants felt adult-centric anxieties took precedence when attempting to manage online dangers and risks. Consequently, young people's fears of family rejection were not even considered within safeguarding practices, despite concerns of familial homophobia and rejection being the most prominent perceived threat to their safety and well-being. This presented participants with the decisional balance of either having to report abuse at the risk of being outed prematurely or concealing it to prevent their more prominent fear of being outed.

1.4 Research process

The research was structured into two parts: participants were initially recruited via an online discussion board named Empty Closets Community Services (ECCS), which is a non-profit organisation providing coming out resources and support for LGBTQ+ individuals. The organisation provided a private space on their forums and allowed me to control access to ensure privacy was maintained for myself and the participants. The discussion board was open for a period of two months, and eligible community members were able to agree to participate at any point up until 31st January 2019, with the community board closing on Thursday 14th February 2019. This allowed the recruitment of a maximum of 30 participants who identified as LGBQ, which proved challenging because of the disproportionate number of gay males on ECCS's community. Challenges to recruitment also reflected apprehension closeted young people have for participating in research during early stages of their identity exploration.

The second stage of data collection began after completion of the online discussion board, as participants had the opportunity to undertake an interview using an online telecommunications platform, such as Skype, to explore the topics in more depth. The sampling occurred using self-selected sampling, allowing individuals to decide whether they wished to continue participating in the research or to end their involvement (Jamison, 2006). The interviews took place using a semi-structured approach, with the researcher and participants both having roles in guiding the interview topic and structuring the discussion. Participants were asked generic and personalised questions relating to their online discussion board contributions. Whilst they were not given advanced access to the questions, they were aware their data from the discussion board would influence questions asked during the interview.

1.4.1 Recruitment

The research project originally planned to identify an in-person LGBQ youth group for a focus group, as this method has historically been used by qualitative sociologists to undertake guided research discussions which bring together varied perspectives from group members (Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook, 2007). Upon examining key principles of participatory children's research, it became apparent I needed to ensure my methodological approach followed the 'least invasive' principle when seeking access to children's voices. I was

mindful of not falling into the trap of involving children within the research but not providing an environment for understanding their perspective (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2014). When reflecting upon this, I concluded an in-person LGBQ group posed considerable challenges to this principle. First, the eligibility criteria for the research project aimed to ensure the participatory cohort were closeted during the period of data collection, and such criteria would have created tensions within a physical support setting. A young person's ability to attend such a group requires a degree of openness, therefore a guarantee that a cohort would meet this criterion would be difficult to ascertain. Consequently, this would have divided the group into eligible and ineligible members[4]. Second, research by Stonewall (2017) has shown that closeted young people predominantly use the internet for accessing LGBQ resources and support for the first time. This meant an in-person LGBQ group would most likely be populated by individuals who had already begun openly identifying in their physical sphere.

To ensure the most appropriate sample was obtained, I changed the design to recruit participants from an online organisation which specialised in coming out resources. This ensured the most effective methodological approach was in place, as data was being gathered from participants whose 'here and now' aligned with the issues being examined within this research. If the data had instead come from an in-person group, this could have jeopardised the participatory principles of the research by excluding the relevant voices of closeted LGBQ young people who are most vulnerable to heteronormative online safeguarding. Their perspectives were crucial for examining this topic, but it would have been impractical to try and locate them in an inaccessible environment because of the self-disclosure required to attend. Additionally, the ability to enforce the eligibility criteria was enhanced within an online community, as the larger membership base meant any individuals who did not participate were less likely to feel excluded and marginalised. This allowed the recruitment to take advantage of the more diverse and populated community dynamic, which was less close-knit and had a significantly greater number of people to interact with, compared to local in-person groups.

[4] I would either have been required to adapt the eligibility criteria to allow all individuals of that group to be welcome to participate or undermined the inclusivity principles of the group by excluding certain members from participating.

Furze et al. (2014) argues the move away from traditional face-to-face settings is dependent on the topic under study and the needs of the participants. The ability to conduct asynchronous data collection has allowed historical access barriers to be broken down, and for the depth of data to be further enriched by gathering it over several weeks. Livingstone and Haddon (2009: 36) state "children should be studied in context, so their interests and role within social constructs should also be considered. Children are, or have the potential to be, active and conscious media users and should be treated as such in research". I argue that because the internet provides an important platform for non-normative identity exploration, using virtual research methods to access these marginalised and hidden groups is most appropriate. As a result, if the research was to effectively position children's voices at the heart of its analysis, it had to be prepared to utilise more modern data collection methods and not favour methods simply because of tradition.

1.4.2 Gatekeeping

One of the biggest challenges encountered was navigating the gatekeeping process for agreeing ECCS's involvement and gaining access to their community members. The organisation has clear procedures for working with academic researchers, and this involved contacting them with a research request and being assigned a gatekeeper by the Board of Directors, who discussed and scrutinised the research project more thoroughly before agreeing to participate. I was familiar with this process and had a positive pre-existing relationship with the organisation, as my master's dissertation had also engaged with ECCS's community to obtain its participatory sample. This highlights one of the key benefits that research contacts and pre-existing professional relationships can have within gatekeeping negotiations, as hard-to-reach populations become significantly easier to negotiate access to (Duke, 2002; Wilkes, 2009). The organisation indicated they were willing to consider participating within the project and recognised the importance of the topic to its community members[5].

[5] See Appendix Item G for a copy of the research approval letter provided by the ECCS gatekeeper. I also recognised the flow of information at this early stage of negotiation was unidirectional and required me to provide all necessary information for them to analyse the research documents (Bohan, 2018), and to give them all the necessary time needed to consider the proposal from their perspective and to raise any concerns or issues which were beyond the considerations of the researcher (Brooks, Reile and Maguire, 2014).

Whilst gatekeeping negotiation began positively, the process became a learning experience and I soon ran into an unexpected challenge, causing a considerable delay to data collection commencing. The assigned gatekeeper had an unexpected absence due to sudden and significant ill-health, and this led to the approval of the research being delayed. This learning experience highlighted that even when a researcher does everything correctly and has a productive relationship with gatekeepers, there are still unexpected challenges which can arise causing access barriers to emerge. The implications of this meant I either needed to identify a new organisation to approach or wait patiently and obtain updates from the organisation whilst they tried to handle research requests without their gatekeeper present. The former option was considered, but I was hesitant to pursue this because of the time-sensitive nature of the research and the lack of a pre-existing relationship I would have had with a new organisation. Instead, I chose to wait whilst the organisation continued to consider the research request. This proved successful as the organisation approved the request, allowing me to obtain ethical approval for the research.

Despite this, the delay in agreeing ECCS's involvement did have noticeable consequences on the research process and led to data not being collected until much later than anticipated[6]. This learning experience highlighted the importance of being proactive in contacting gatekeepers so that any potential barriers which may arise can be dealt with without compromising the viability of the research project. As this experience demonstrated, you can undertake all appropriate arrangements in a timely manner with a gatekeeper, but unexpected barriers can still present themselves and impact the progression of the research.

1.5 Definitions

It is important to be mindful that certain labels have been chosen so that there is consistency throughout the project when discussing how their identities/roles fit into the research scope. In this section, I will outline what these key labels are, define what I mean when you see them being discussed, and justify why my definition is most suited:

Children and young people: I rely upon the definition outlined in the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) statutory guidance. This defines children as "anyone

[6] This fortunately did not have a noticeable impact on the data obtained, and the unanticipated delay was mitigated by me reaching out to ECCS early into the research project to discuss their involvement, ensuring there was still time to complete the research by the time the issue had been resolved.

who has not yet reached their 18th birthday" (ibid: 106)[7]. The term 'young people' refers to individuals between thirteen to seventeen years of age, aligning with the eligibility criteria for this project. This term is important as it recognises that teenage years invoke developmental discourses specific to that life stage, which are accompanied by heightened adult anxieties regarding capacity for exercising agency. Additionally, this age group are afforded rights such as Gillick competency within the UK, which are of relevance to the research[8] but only apply at later stages of childhood. By using the term 'young people', I am able to draw attention to these factors so that issues relevant to the participants do not become conflated with broader understandings of children and childhood.

Parents: This refers to any individual who, under the Children Act 1989, possesses parental responsibility for a child. Whilst the participant materials refer to 'parent(s) or guardian(s)'[9], the term used within this thesis refer to these individuals as 'parents'. The establishment of parental responsibility can potentially be a legally complex issue within law, and there are many different individuals who can come to possess parental responsibility over a child within the framework of the Children Act 1989. These complexities are not of relevance to this research project, and so the simplest way to address this is to consistently refer to these individuals as 'parents'. As the participatory sheets acknowledged guardians, this ensured that whenever a participant was talking about 'parents', it was in reference to the individual(s) who possess parental responsibility over them, even if they are not a biological relative. This definition reflects that the individual(s) in question are legally empowered to function as the role of the parent, irrespective of how they came to acquire parental responsibility.

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[7] Although this definition is taken from social policy applicable to England, it does not present inconsistencies when factoring in devolution amongst the four UK countries. The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 defines a child as a person under the age of 18, as does Section 3 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 also includes anybody below the age of 18 but relies upon different legal contexts for 16- and 17-year-olds when allowing agencies to consider whether to use adult-specific or child-specific safeguarding legislation. As these legal contexts are not applicable to the scope of this research, I instead defer to the age defined within the legislation for highlighting when adulthood begins in Scotland. This means that the definition used is appropriate to all four countries across the UK.

[8] See page 98, subheading 'Accessibility and challenges to consent'.

[9] See 'participant information sheets' (items A and D) and 'consent forms' (items B and E) in the appendix section.

Parental figures: 'Parental figures' is used as a catch-all term to describe a wide variety of professions who are legally responsible for safeguarding children[10] and/or who act 'in loco parentis'[11]. Within the scope of this research, it primarily refers to educational and charity sector workers, but the vast scope of potential practitioners and stakeholders within child protection meant that a single definition was needed. This term was chosen as it describes the role practitioners and stakeholders play when exercising safeguarding responsibilities. When socialising children, a component of confessionality is encouraging the child to disclose concerns to either their parents or a trusted adult, reflecting adult-child power dynamics within safeguarding. Empowering professionals with safeguarding duties require them to undertake the welfare-based functions of a parent while the parents are in absentia[12].

LGBQ: This definition reflected one of the most challenging aspects of the project, as the expansion of queer and non-binary identities meant relevant groups beyond the LGBQ grouping would have been equally as capable of participating. For this reason, one of the immediate dilemmas was whether trans*[13] identities would be included within the research scope. It was decided that trans* identities would not be covered as part of this, as although elements of the research engage in gender analysis when examining gender differences within safeguarding, it is limited as my primary focus is on non-normative sexualities of young people[14]. A further dilemma was how to account for sexual identities beyond the acronym, such as pansexuality. My initial plan was to examine the sexual identities of the participants

[10] Other common terms used within child safety guidance are authority figures, named person, trusted adult.
[11] HM Government (2011: 31) define loco parentis as "a person who is caring for a child in the absence or death of the parent or guardian who has parental responsibility". Sections 4 and 5 of the Children Act 1989 stipulate that an individual who has care for a child may take any and all reasonable steps to safeguard and promote their welfare, irrespective of whether that individual possesses parental responsibility. This requires them to assume the responsibilities of the parent for purposes of safeguarding, and so they act as a parental figure.
[12] For a comprehensive breakdown of the different professions who fall into the 'parental figures' term, see chapter two of the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) statutory guidance.
[13] The asterisk within trans* reflects the different identities which can fall into 'trans' as an umbrella term. This will include transgender individuals, whose gender identity differs from their birth sex. Additionally, it can also include individuals who have undergone gender reaffirming treatment (transsexual) or those who identify with gender norms and stereotypes from an identity which differs from their gender assigned at birth (e.g., transmasculine/transfeminine).
[14] An analysis of this scope would not meaningfully represent the inequalities and stigmatisation experienced by trans* individuals. Furthermore, critical depth when analysing the LGBQ data would also have been lost, negatively impacting all participatory groups. For more information, see page 249, subheading 'Exclusion of groups'.

at the beginning of study, and to adopt LGBQ+ if anybody identified outside of the LGBQ grouping. This was not needed as all of the participants identified within this acronym. There are also instances when different acronyms may be used, such as LGBTQ+. On those occasions, this reflects that the literature cited, or the organisation discussed, uses a different set of acronyms, so those variations are used to reflect that.

1.6 Contents – overview of the thesis

The thesis contains a total of nine chapters, including this Introduction. This section will provide an overview of what is discussed in chapters two to eight:

Chapter Two: Context

This chapter examines how dominant constructions of childhood and sexuality utilise developmental, naturalist models to categorise childhood as a period of pre-sexual status. The role of the internet is discussed to show how it empowers young people to circumvent information barriers imposed during childhood socialisation. The backlash to this is examined, with the online moral panic, Government responses, and legal reforms to UK law all illustrated. Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding is also analysed to show how LGBQ young people's needs are excluded from consideration. The consequences of this are then examined when discussing how and why individuals access online coming out support communities, and the challenges that homonormativity can cause for closeted young people when using these communities as a safe space.

Chapter Three: Theory

I examine childhood as a social construction, focusing on the 'developing' child to identify how developmentalism is ideologically constructed to justify control and surveillance. The institutionalisation of children within education and the family is discussed, as is the construction of children's needs to ensure adult-child power dynamics are sustained within socialisation. Heteronormativity is identified as a key trait of this institutionalised socialisation and safeguarding, as is the pedagogisation of children's sex to nurture heteronormative performativity. The chapter then discusses adolescence as a period of adult-centric anxieties surrounding sex and sexuality, and the role identity policing amongst peers has on reinforcing heteronormative gender traits. The propagation of homonormativity is also examined to illustrate how politics of assimilation have legitimised the 'normal gay'. This

adult-centric focus on recognition and rights has ignored the needs of LGBQ young people, contributing to their closeted status.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological positions of the research, the ethical framework and considerations, and justifies the research design chosen.

Chapter 5: Child internet safety guidelines: a critical discourse analysis

Fairclough's (2002) three-dimensional model of CDA is used to analyse child internet safety guidelines published by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

Chapter 6: Internet access: challenging a heteronormative socialisation

This is the first chapter examining LGBQ participants' data. It starts by examining how closeted LGBQ young people use the internet to circumvent information barriers present in their physical sphere. This highlights how the internet transforms participants from passive recipients of sexual knowledge to active producers of their own sexual socialisation, as they are no longer constrained by regulations of heteronormative 'appropriateness'. However, this also presents possible challenges to their privacy and safety. The older male typology within 'stranger danger' narratives is at the forefront of anxieties regarding perceptions of online dangers, and the tensions of this safeguarding narrative are discussed from an online coming out community perspective. In particular, the difficulties they have in differentiating a catfish from a closeted individual who is concealing themselves because of concerns of being outed. They also express concerns about the potential for surveillance strategies by parents to prematurely out them and discuss technological and performative tactics to avoid scrutiny and suspicion.

Chapter 7: Surveillance

This chapter examines how surveillance strategies promoted via internet safety guidelines impact the concealment of their closeted identity. Three approaches to online safeguarding are illustrated and discussed, with each posing their own challenges for the participants. The impact of gender is also considered, with heteropatriarchy being evident in the contrasting experiences that male and female participants reported. The aim of these strategies is to address anxieties about a perceived loss of control and surveillance over children online, and

the implementation of these guidelines reflect an attempt to redress the balance in favour of adults.

Chapter 8: The impact of heteronormative online safeguarding

The final data analysis chapter outlines how heteronormativity within online safeguarding fails to account for the privacy needs of LGBQ young people. The dominant concern for a closeted individual is being outed, whereas adult-centric anxieties focus primarily on fears of grooming. Homonormativity within constructed web spaces for LGBQ young people is also discussed to show how the 'developing' child construct is embedded within the strict community regulations. This can lead to a contradictory duty for a closeted individual's safe space to be required to prematurely out them when fulfilling their legal obligations. Participants also report feeling unable to disclose or report abuse, as doing so would lead to a loss of control over their privacy. The chapter concludes by critically examining how gendered safeguarding simultaneously disempowers females and males, albeit in different ways.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

This chapter summarises each of the research questions to illustrate the original contributions to knowledge made. The limitations of this research are also outlined, allowing for the future research scope to be discussed so that the research pipeline is evident.

Context

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will examine how dominant constructions of childhood and sexuality have reinforced persistent assumptions of heterosexuality. It will outline how this has occurred within a regulatory regime, using developmental, naturalist models of sexuality to justify strict control and surveillance over a child's socialisation. Young people's embracing of technology has allowed them to subvert and transgress these controls, providing opportunities for accessing alternative information and resources. The perceived benefits from technology will be outlined, as will anxieties and moral panics regarding their perceived threats to children online. The production and distribution of child internet safety guidelines, as well as the limited legislative reforms concerning internet safety, are discussed to highlight how the reproduction of safeguarding models into the online sphere has continued to preserve heteronormative paternalism in the UK's safeguarding strategy. Finally, young people's engagement with online coming out communities will be discussed, as will the impact of homonormativity within these spaces. This project focused on a non-profit LGBQ organisation who uphold and sustain dominant orthodoxies within childhood and sexuality, and the implications of this for compliant third sector organisations are discussed, as are the contradictions these present for the privacy needs of closeted young people.

2.1 Regulating the 'pre-sexual' child

Although sex and intimacy are acknowledged as being positive, affirmative and enriching for expressing adult sexuality, dominant discourses regarding childhood and sexuality have ensured that this recognition does not extend to children and young people (Jackson and Scott, 2010). Foucault (1976) refers to this as the pedagogisation of children's sex, which is a process originating from the seventeenth century:

> A double assertion that practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that, being unwarranted, at the same time "natural" and "contrary to nature", this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers… parents, families, educators, doctors and eventually psychologists would have to take charge… of this precious and perilous, dangerous and endangered sexual potential (Foucault, 1978: 104).

This repression of sexuality is still prevalent today within legal and social regulations, which construct children's sexuality as potentially dangerous and in need of surveillance, management, and containment (Moore and Reynolds, 2018). This repression and regulation cause sex and sexuality to exist in a conspiracy of silence (Elias, 1994) and requires individuals to conceal their sexuality around children to prevent them obtaining knowledge about sex. Contradictorily, these regulations exist alongside a commercially sexualised world[15], in which heteronormative messaging is transmitted to reinforce stereotypically gendered constructions of identity[16]. Moore and Prescott (2013) argue that this allows dominant power structures to perpetuate and naturalise the symbolic order between adults and children, which has positioned childhood sexuality as dangerous and in need of control by adults. It is from these dominant orthodoxies that the key problem identified within this research occurs, as the reproduced discourses are historically specific, cultural reflections of societal values and purposefully exercise power in defence of dominant elites and interests (Moore and Reynolds, 2018).

As these discourses are socially constructed, the claims to knowledge they make reflect how the dominant social order wishes to see society regulated and structured. Weeks (1986) argues that our understanding of sex exists as a pyramidal model, with heterosexual monogamy firmly positioned at the top, and practices classified as sexual perversions located towards the bottom. This hierarchy reinforces a sexual normality governed by biological thinking, due to sex being intrinsically linked to reproduction (Hawkes, 1996). Consequently, any sex and sexuality which fails to reinforce the heteronormative, genito-centric norm is positioned further down the pyramid. The consequences of a lower positioning range from a behaviour legally permissible but lacking meaningful visibility and representation within society, to illegality with legal and cultural sanctions used as deterrence (Rubin, 2011). This enables the transmission of knowledge regarding desirability towards particular sexual

[15] This highlights the contradictory nature in which sex and sexuality are regulated. We all live in a sexualised world which we witness and attempt to make sense of, and yet children's attempts to do so are controlled and contained by adults.

[16] See chapter 6 'The Sexualisation of Childhood' in Moore and Reynolds (2018). This highlights that despite the sexualised nature of childhood, it has not been without challenge and critique within the UK. Nevertheless, this occurs in an unequal way, as discussions regarding heteronormative socialisation typically focus on the appropriateness of how to present heterosexual behaviours and relationships to children and young people. In contrast, homosexuality has primarily been denied any visible representation, with laws such as Section 28 banning the 'promotion' of homosexuality to prevent its existence being acknowledged by those outside of adulthood.

behaviours which can be nurtured through socialisation. Hawkes and Egan (2008) outline how discourses of childhood and sexuality are discussed within a protectionist framework because of anxieties about children's vulnerability to sex and perceived risk of corruption if 'exposed' prematurely. This has allowed the groups outlined in Foucault's (1978) concept of pedagogisation to take ownership of a child's sexuality, enabling them to school children whilst maintaining their pre-sexual status. It reflects a carefully constructed developmental process which seeks to socialise children from presumed immaturity and incompetency during childhood, towards becoming competent, mature and rational beings upon reaching adulthood. To accomplish this, children are simultaneously denied information about sex and sexuality, but continuously exposed to materials deemed 'age-appropriate' to ensure a continuous transmission of desired heteronormative messaging (Ward, 1995).

Hawkes and Egan (2008) state that because the agentic child[17] is lacking from sexual discourses, they are instead represented as an 'automaton' with the capability to be driven within a proper, or improper, direction. This identifies how society categorises proper and improper sexualisation, as 'proper' sexualisation perpetuates age-appropriate understandings which emerge from developmental models of childhood, reflecting Foucault's (1978) notion of the pedagogisation of children's sex. It is this which legitimises the necessity for control and surveillance over children to manage their alleged immaturity and incompetence. This creates a strict power dynamic in which adults manage the flow of information when socialising children. This is widely observable through media representations within children's programming, as well as through information exchange nurtured by the family, educators and other pedagogues (Shtarkshall, Santelli and Hirsch, 2007).

These institutions are capable of transmitting the same agreed orthodoxies because of how power structures operate to legitimise access to information[18]. This has led to power being centralised around these discursive institutions, and dominant orthodoxies have become so deeply internalised and normalised by the public that "it encourages self-regulating or self-reinforcing prohibitions against difference that ensure social conformity and order without direct conflict" (Moore and Reynolds, 2018: 36). In other words, adults who nurture children

[17] Oswell (2013) refers to this construct as a child who possesses the capacity and competency to interpret their social setting and act accordingly to accomplish their needs and wishes.

[18] Moore and Reynolds (2018) outline that because different authorities have developed specialist bodies of knowledge about social order, conventions and natural/normal practices, the foundations of this knowledge and the orthodoxies which emerge from it have been legitimised in law, professional pedagogical disciplines and cultural and social practices.

possess similar scripts for ensuring that their socialisation meets the expectations of professionals who propagate childhood orthodoxies. These professions use protectionist frameworks to intervene into family life if concerned a child is not being raised the desired way.

In contrast to this, 'improper' sexualisation reflects anxieties which powerful groups have regarding children's exposure to sex and sexuality outside of legally and socially permissible activities. These moral concerns reflect the threat seen by dominant power structures if a child can access unsanctioned materials. Their desire to nurture heteronormative behaviours in an age-appropriate manner become threatened if children access content and information which are considered age-inappropriate (Sorin, 2005). Whilst this can include access to heterosexual pornography, broader anxieties of improper sexualisation extend to anything which does not adhere to a strict heteronormative lifestyle, including homosexuality and non-heterosexual identities.

This was observed at Parkfield Community School in Birmingham after numerous protests began over their No Outsiders programme, which teaches diversity and equality and included LGBT+ rights (BBC News, 2019). Headlines regarding this focused on the messaging of parents, with Birmingham Mail summarising the protest as "Protest parents return to Parkfield School gates and say, 'it's not ok to be gay'" (Birmingham Mail, 2019). Further unsympathetic coverage focused on scrutinising the agenda of teaching staff. These included speculation of the sexual orientation of the Assistant Principal who defended the lessons (Middleton, 2019), as well as concerns regarding the hidden agenda of diversity lessons as a way of 'over-promoting LGBT movements' (Daily Mail, 2019).

Changes to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) guidelines since September 2020 have attracted criticism for being compulsory, denying parents the right to opt them out of lessons. This resulted in a Parliamentary petition which amassed over 115,000 signatures objecting to these reforms (Parliament Petitions, 2019). When former Education Secretary Damian Hinds was asked if Primary School children would be taught about gay and transgender rights, he denied this and emphasised that children would be taught about 'respectful' relationships (Meechan, 2019). These reforms are underpinned by 'age-appropriate' considerations about what type of relationship and sexual information should be available to children, and despite

it removing a parent's right to withdraw a child from classes[19], it provides religious exemptions so faith schools can teach topics from their perspective (FPA, 2019). These clashes between parents and educators, who share responsibilities for socialising children, highlight the tensions which exist between different groups and institutions when attempting to uphold dominant sexual orthodoxies.

Spector and Kitsuse's (1977: 5) notion of claims-makers is instructive here; "individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions" and are often found leading discussions about the need for taking action to protect from new phenomenon (Best, 1987). In this instance, RSE highlights an area where the alliance between two sets of claims-makers is struggling to exert regulatory control over children, but the group clearly missing from the discussion are children themselves. As Moore (2013) emphasises, children and young people are routinely excluded from discussions and decision-making processes regarding sex and sexuality, due to developmental assumptions about their immaturity, incompetence, and vulnerability. Instead, determiners for deciding what age-appropriate information children are presented with occurs entirely by adult authorities. Young people's use of technology has provided unprecedented opportunities for accessing information which would otherwise be unavailable, as well as interacting with peers outside the gaze of parents. Bowers (2013: 39) states that young people, powered by a communication revolution, use the online world in their developing relationships to communicate with their social circle, and have embraced the dissolution of barriers within online-offline communication".

2.2 Young people as agentic consumers of communicative technologies

Since 2014, over 90% of UK households have had at least one internet-connected device (CEOP, 2014), making the internet one of the most popular forms of media consumption within the UK (Bartlett and Miller, 2012)[20]. The popularity of these devices is clear within

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[19] A parent will retain their right to withdraw a child from any sex education classes in Primary School. However, it is not mandatory for Primary Schools to provide such classes as the Department for Education only recommend for such a programme to be provided.

[20] Estimates by Ofcom still continue to show that approximately 9% of children – between 1.1 and 1.8 million – do not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet device (Wakefield, 2021). This statistic, alongside the statistics provided by CEOP (2014), suggest that accessibility to computer devices has stagnated because of socio-economic factors (Children's Commissioner, 2020). This has been a particularly prominent issue during the Covid-19 public health crisis and the restructuring of schooling to online classes. It has required the Government to provide children living below the

Ofcom's media usage reports, which The Communications Act 2003 requires them to conduct to facilitate Government's knowledge of media literacy rates in the population (Ofcom, 2017). Accessibility of internet-connected devices for young people is clear within Ofcom's findings, with over 80% owning their own smartphone (Ofcom, 2019), and there being a significant rise within the use of computer tablets, increasing from 5% in 2011 to 74% in 2016 (Ofcom, 2016), with 50% having exclusive access to the device (Ofcom, 2019). This has impacted the number of young people using desktops and laptops, as the popularity of tablet computers has seen desktops and laptops usage fall from 93% in 2011 to 82% in 2016 (Ofcom, 2016). These findings support Bartlett and Miller's (2012) claim regarding the internet being the most popular form of media within the United Kingdom, as access to these devices has allowed for a significant increase in the amount of time young people reported spending online[21].

When examining children's attitudes and concerns, young people have shown awareness of basic online risks, with 74% agreeing with the statement that the internet allows people to behave differently online, and one in three stating the internet makes it easier for them to be themselves compared to offline (Ofcom, 2016). Recent findings by Ofcom, (2019: 2) identified that "children are still being exposed to unwanted experiences online, but almost all recall being taught how to use the internet safely", which challenges a dominant orthodoxy regarding their immaturity and incompetency making them vulnerable to exploitation without constant control and surveillance from adults.

Pugh (2009) refers to young people's embracing of technology as an 'economy of dignity', which conceptualises how they desire to consume communicative technologies to obtain social belonging among peers. This economy highlights how young people strive to possess the latest communicative technology, such as smartphones, and use these to innovate their social networks and transform how accessible they are to other peers. Subsequently, 'dignity' within this economy refers to the meanings young people attach to the importance of being available to be interacted with by peers. This recognises that their sense of belonging is

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poverty line with a laptop, as well as establishing partnerships with network providers to ensure internet access so that they can access their online school classes.

[21] In 2016, children spent an average of 20 hours and 30 minutes online per week compared to 13 hours and 24 minutes in 2007 (Ofcom, 2016). This date reflects the most recent statistic available for this, as more recent media literacy reports have not offered further insights into any reported changes since 2016.

obtained and reinforced by their near-constant capability to communicate with people within their social network (Davidson and Martellozzo, 2012).

This has created unprecedented opportunities for sociability and allows them to manage how they present themselves through their online performativity (Crowe and Bradford, 2006; Livingstone and Brake, 2009), thus contesting orthodoxies which construct children's technological consumption primarily from a perspective of risk and danger. Edington (2011) summarises the dominant anxieties at the fore of the risk-danger orthodoxy, with text harassment, cyberbullying, sexting and online predators being most frequently cited. Such anxieties highlight the concerns of children exercising agency and not being efficiently controlled. Sexting behaviours and risks posed by online predators demonstrate potential ways for a child to be sexual when behaving outside of a 'responsible' adult's gaze.

Issues such as cyberbullying and harassment instead invoke constructions of childhood involving the evil nature of other children who have, or are not being, raised in the 'correct' way. To demonstrate how society manages these threats, Jenks (2005) uses a dualistic model of childhood to categorise children, based on perceptions of discipline and controllability. To achieve this, he invokes the mythical views of Apollo and Dionysus to represent these constructions of childhood. The Dionysian Child is a construction which assumes an innate evil or corruption, arguing "children… are impish and harbour a potential evil. This primal force will be mobilised if, in any part, the adult world should allow them to stray away from the appropriate path" (Jenks, 2005: 63). In contrast, the Apollonian child is "angelic, innocent and untainted by the world… they have a natural goodness and a clarity of vision… such children play and chuckle, smile and laugh, both spontaneously but also with our sustained encouragement" (Ibid: 65). As the Dionysian child poses a perceived threat to Apollonian children, the system of surveillance used for containing children also attempts to mediate concerns of corruption, ensuring preservation of desired childhood development.

On the contrary, Miller (2010) argues young people's consumerism reflects a 'social good of communication'. Their engagement with internet-connected devices have allowed the construction of a sense of self to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with peers, irrespective of time and space. This is further supported by Bell, Bishop and Przybylski (2015), who state that social networking has allowed for friendship circles to be enhanced, increased the quality of relationships within these networks, and provided opportunities to meet new people. This highlights how young people have embraced communicative

technology to transform their social networks and possess the competency to use it to meet their social needs, including in ways not available to them within their physical sphere. The impact of control and surveillance is most prominent within physically located spaces occupied by children, whereas meanings attached to online consumption is so ingrained within young people's everyday life that it allows their relationships to transgress the online sphere and intertwine with their physical day-to-day life. As parents typically possess less technological confidence, this provides a space for young people to occupy, outside the constant physical gaze of parents. This potential estrangement of parent's risks destabilising the adult-child binary, as well as the presumption of competency, knowledge and skills as adult-only traits. In turn, this contributes to the sense of urgency from parents to reclaim control of their surveillance power.

One of the ways young people have used the internet is through constructing a self which they would not feel comfortable performing in their physical sphere. This is observable amongst closeted individuals, who are able to 'test the waters' of coming out through online sexual exploration (Johnson, 2020: 43). This is attributed to the way young people integrate technology into their lives and attach specific meanings to the interactions and relationships which occur within online social support. Despite their performance in the physical sphere conforming to gender orthodoxies, their online self can transgress these desired traits by being performed outside the watchful gaze of parents. Research has highlighted similar online behaviours from other groups who fall outside of dominant construction of childhood, such as disabled youth (Toft and Franklin, 2020; Asbjornslett, Engelsrud and Helseth, 2012) and children with socio-emotional difficulties (Holt, Bowlby and Lea, 2013).

Toft, Franklin and Langley (2020) emphasise the importance of intersectionality within these connected debates, in recognition of how age and sexuality intersect with other identifiers, such as disability. They identify the stark disparity which exists within sexuality research between disabled and non-disabled people's lives. It is clear from their critiques that knowledge underpinned by developmental, naturalist discourses of childhood and sexuality affect disabled LGBT+[22] people in different ways than non-disabled LGBT+ people. To highlight this, they identify how non-disabled individuals have same-sex attractions treated as a phase because of their age, whereas disabled individuals have their attractions also attributed to their disability status when having these framed by others as incompetent. There

[22] See page 20, subheading 'Definitions', for an explanation of the different acronyms being used.

is a further element of intersectionality too, as developmentalism pathologizes disabled bodies and minds beyond childhood to deny agentic competency amongst adult disabled individuals[23]. This involves the invocation of protectionist discourses attached to non-normative identities so that disabled LGBT+ individuals are protected from groups who are deemed unsuitable for them (Toft et al., 2019). Martino (2020) acknowledges this amongst different professions who work closely with LGBT+ disabled individuals. Such groups often feel uncomfortable acknowledging same-sex desires and attractions and default to regulatory stances consistent with restrictions imposed during heteronormative childhood, irrespective of the age of LGBT+ disabled individuals. Whilst the internet and online behaviours are not directly referred to within Toft, Franklin and Langley's (2020) research, the critiques provided by them highlights the potential for the internet to transgress the multiple power imbalances and social inequalities which they identify through their considerations of intersectionality. Due to the ability of the online sphere to transgress a plethora of power dynamics, inequalities and oppressions, the internet provides emancipatory potential from the 'phase' for marginalised groups. This enables them to access and offer support which would otherwise be unavailable in their physical sphere, especially when control and surveillance is motivated by multiple burdens which leave certain groups of LGBT+ individuals (e.g., LGBT+ disabled) more marginalised and oppressed than others within the grouping[24].

Failing to recognise an individual's identity and restricting access to information demonstrates the potential for technology to empower marginalised and stigmatised individuals to take care of oneself and others (Wilson, 2015). They develop a sense of community with people who would be concealing themselves in their physical sphere because of their oppressed societal positioning. Ruckenstein (2013) found that a significant reason young people seek out online resources is that it allows access to information which bypasses social and spatial boundaries imposed by parents and educators, highlighting the essential role the internet plays in circumventing surveillance and empowering stigmatised groups with opportunities. For this reason, research identifies how young people frequently

[23] By infantilising disabled adults, this positions them outside the scope of sexuality so as to preserve it as an 'adult-only' domain.
[24] See sections 9.2.3 (page 249) and 9.3.1 (page 251) for further information on how the intersectional considerations made by these researchers offer potential for this topic to be enhanced and expanded upon further. As an exploratory study, this project only undertakes a limited consideration of intersectional critiquing, whereas the work of Toft, Franklin and Langley (2020) clearly demonstrates potential for further research to occur.

engage with online spaces which allow them to explore their identities in relative safety, outside the scrutiny of parents and parental figures (Moore, 2011; Ruckenstein, 2013). This has been challenged by educational, political and societal institutions due to the perceived loss of control over children which the protectionist framework affords them in physical spaces.

2.3 Emergence of the online moral panic

Buckingham (2011: 23) argues that the consumption patterns amongst young people, particularly for internet and digital technologies, are often presented as "harmful or morally undesirable". Historical moral panics have been reproduced to the online sphere, resulting in established models of risks and threats being reconstructed for the online sphere. The growing accessibility of digital technologies within the 1990s saw the emergence of a moral panic regarding children, with societal concerns about child internet safety being fuelled by a dominant media narrative documenting instances of online child grooming (Wolak et al., 2008). This fear has been driven by the relative anonymity provided online, which has created new opportunities for young people to interact. These have clashed with pedagogical controls placed upon children, designed to safeguard them from child sex offenders who use new technologies to seek exploitative sexual relationships (Shannon, 2008).

Cohen (1987: 9) defines a moral panic as "a condition, episode, person or group of persons [who] become defined as a threat to societal values and interests". In this instance, the sexual regulation of young people has historically placed them in a dichotomised manner, which has been conceptualised through Harry Hendrick's victim-threat narrative (1994). He argues that concerns regarding child welfare have had conflicting but interlocking motivations.
Dominant constructions of childhood have sought to represent young people as incompetent and naïve, making them potential victims of sex and sexuality (Hendricks, 1994).
Nevertheless, the invoking of threat narratives demonstrates how safeguarding can often be framed as protecting them from their own supposed immaturity and incompetency[25]. This is particularly applicable during adolescence, when naïve impulses are presumed to be a significant risk for parents to manage. These concerns have also been underpinned by

[25] This understanding of children provides a range of discourses which can constitute a child being perceived as a victim of societal failings, such as experiencing abuse, starvation, squalor etc. Contrastingly, it conceptualises how a child can possess the agency to endanger "moral fibre, sexual propriety, the sanctity of the family, the preservation of the race, law and order, and the wider reaches of citizenship" (Hendrick, 1994: 8), and even the very construction of childhood itself.

anxieties regarding childhood sexuality and the threats that young people pose to pedagogical control and obedience if they participate in activities deemed adult-only (Ibid).

As the internet has provided new possibilities for exercising socio-sexual autonomy, this has reproduced moral anxieties within media and societal discourses[26]. As Cohen (1987) outlines, the emergence of a moral panic allows a particular threat to become elevated as a prominent threat amongst all others. This is observable through the deviancy amplification perpetuated by the online moral panic. As this panic is created by claims-makers, the anxieties, and solutions to them, reflect the desires and interests of those claimants, rather than the needs stated by children.

Moore and Reynolds (2018) draw attention to age-ratings on media content as a product of the dominant fears and anxieties that society has in regulating the content and, more specifically, "fears over the effects of exposure to sex and violence that underpins the debates over children's media consumption" (Ibid: 230). These concerns are expressed and legitimated by those who have emerged as institutionalised experts responsible for protecting children from such dangers. These act as 'claims-makers' and exist to facilitate and reinforce age-appropriate censorship of sexual information. Moore and Reynolds (2018) highlight that claims-makers responsible for regulating digital technologies are often recognised as 'child experts' who all make authoritative claims about threats to children online. Subsequently, these perpetuate historical and contemporary discourses to maintain the pedagogisation of children's sex, reinforcing 'proper' sexualisation (Ibid) within socialisation. A contradiction emerges at the forefront of the online moral panic, as media representations and claims-makers reinforce online threats as a new phenomenon requiring action but rely on the reproduction of historical typologies to contextualise these threats and demonstrate their expertise. This is evident from the older male offender typology, which has historically been used as an aberrant sexuality to classify a dominant threat to children (Chenier, 2011).

Constructions of the "sex deviant" and "sex pervert" have been popularised medical terms within public discourses since the 1930s (Chenier, 2008), who is a shadowy adult male who threatens a child's sexual innocence and the safety of the heteronormative family unit (Terry, 1999; Minton, 2002). The modern concept of 'stranger danger' became prominent in the 1970s, when public interest shifted from child abuse in the home to child sexual abuse,

[26] This is not to suggest that the internet is without any dangers or risks, but the role of the moral panic in raising awareness of these has caused stereotypes to be reconstructed and perpetuated.

displacing the scrutinising public gaze from the family to the 'stranger' (Jenkins, 1998). This historical offender construct has transitioned to the online sphere and is evident from the assumptions made regarding threats to children online, and the solutions for managing those threats. In other words, despite the internet seemingly introducing new dangers to children, the understandings used by experts and parents to contextualise threats rely on historically dated constructions, refreshed by contemporary cultural discourses to reproduce the same strategies. This ensures that while individual children are being safeguarded, the construction of the naturally developing child[27] is also preserved as a dominant construction of childhood, sustaining assumptions regarding age-appropriate development and the necessity for adults to control children.

This has resulted in the online moral panic relying on the same dominant stereotype regarding the older male threat, with only modest changes being made about the tactics offenders use to deceive a young person[28]. Although these threats have been digitised, the underlying assumptions for regulating children reinforce dominant anxieties regarding parents failing to exert constant surveillance over their activities. Media narratives and child-focused institutions have all continued to reinforce these dominant discourses, with parents relying on the 'bad man' typology to guide their understanding of online risks and to warn children[29]. These stereotypes have been subjected to challenge, as the Munro Review (2010) outlined that dominant social narratives rely too heavily on inaccurate depictions of online grooming, with many online offenders rarely lying about their identity, age or intentions. Such misconceptions are further apparent when considered alongside Ofcom's (2019) findings regarding young people's competency to protect themselves online when given information on how to do so. Furthermore, Wolak et al. (2013) argue that the reality of internet-initiated grooming risks is more complex, but less archetypally frightening, than claims would suggest. Despite attempts to challenge these anxieties, responses from claims-makers have been accusatory, questioning the intentions and purposes for scrutinising child safety measures[30] (Meyer, 2007).

[27] See page 62, subheading 'The 'developing' child'.
[28] These include assumptions about the specific online venues which they will access to communicate with children and deceptively obtain their trust (Bortree, 2005).
[29] These are often expressed under the belief that online sexual offenders lie about their age, identity and intentions (Boss, 2007) to exploit an unsupervised child.
[30] This demonstrates the power dynamics at play within the online moral panic. Accusations and insinuations within public discourses are common tactics for stifling discussions about childhood

The online moral panic is not solely limited to sexual concerns, but many of the anxieties regarding how young people exercise agency via communicative devices interlink with sexual discourses. These reinforce the claims that intrusive protectionist responses from institutions are necessary to protect children. Palmer (2006) reinforces this when criticising digital technologies, concluding that these have led to the formation of toxic childhoods, putting the modern family into crisis. Many of Palmer's critiques of internet dangers link back to concerns regarding premature expressions of sexuality, but her broader criticisms of these technologies are that they have led to the dissolution of adult-child barriers. This is attributed to young people integrating technology into their daily lives, which has led to a dilemma within the online moral panic. Children are simultaneously perceived as being more tech-savvy compared to parents, but also persistently portrayed as vulnerable to the wide array of harmful risks online (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2011). Additionally, the sociality and spatiality of young people adds a further layer of anxiety within the construction of the online moral panic. Giddens and Griffiths (2006) refer to this as the 'between and betwixt' of adolescence, highlighting the contradictory positionality of young people within dominant orthodoxies and the protectionist agenda. Young people find themselves subjected to ideological views of being too old to participate in certain 'child-only' activities and behaviours, but also regulated and restricted from specific adult behaviours and the social liberties which are granted to those who have reached adulthood, such as engaging in romantic and sexual relationships.

Nayar (2010) highlights the competency young people have demonstrated when seeking out desired content online and the complex and innovative ways they exercise agency to resist attempts of excessive surveillance. Therefore, it is argued that "being visible to strangers… is not so much a concern… as that of being visible to known but inappropriate others – especially parents" (Ibid: 477). Young people create zones of privacy online which incorporate their virtual identities and allows them to share private experiences and intimacies (Ibid) in the knowledge that they have deployed effective concealment strategies to prevent intrusion within that space. This includes minimising their traceability by deleting their browsing history and regulating access to devices through security measures such as

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sexuality, and this shows the power of the 'predator' label in its ability to regulate discourse. If an individual attempts to challenge dominant orthodoxies present within the status quo, this label can be used to stigmatise and discredit the individual, with institutions and inferences being used to question why they would seek to challenge current practices.

pass locks. This agentic challenge to authority and orthodoxy has been deemed a threat to the adult-child relationship within the nuclear family (Palmer, 2006). This threat reflects the anxieties evident within the online moral panic because of the challenges to parental surveillance faced by young people's pursuit of online privacy and their competency for circumventing parental monitoring. These anxieties have been exacerbated further by tensions within the enforcement of restrictions. Valkenburg, Piotroski and Hermann (2013) found that restrictive measures on internet access are effective during early stages of childhood, but less effective during teenage years as young people become more independent and use their technological knowledge to resist control and obtain increased privacy.

This is a considerable challenge to parental authority, whose responsibilities are illustrated by child internet safety guidelines (Sasson and Mesch (2014). The co-use of digital technologies between children and adults is a prevalent safeguarding technique during early childhood, but it becomes less likely during later stages. This exacerbates parental fears that they can no longer regulate internet activities as effectively, which will expose young people to online sexual risk-taking (Nathanson, 2011) and other unsanctioned 'inappropriate' content. Elliot (2012) states that the shift from child to teenager occurs within the context of a safeguarding agenda which aims to maintain a young person's pre-sexual status. She argues the pedagogisation of children's sex is entrenched in these sexual anxieties, driven by concern that young people begin to possess the capacity to be 'hypersexual' as part of their adolescent development. These have inspired policy responses from experts within the safeguarding agenda which are focused on the preservation of heteronormative socialisation. This involves criminalising the undesired behaviours which underpin the moral panic and developing uniformed guidelines which provide parents and other child-focused professionals with a one-size-fits-all strategy for resisting children's online autonomy. The aim of this strategy is to ensure the preservation of constant control and surveillance by parents across the online and physical spheres. By doing so, the dominant assumption of a child 'becoming' a heterosexual adult remains entrenched within the UK's legal responses to online risk management.

2.4 The role of Government in developing child internet safety guidelines

Internet safety guidelines have emerged as one of the most accessible and popular sources available for remaining informed of the latest online safeguarding recommendations (Savirimuthu, 2011). They are also a central strategy adopted by successive Governments

since 2001 to manage online risks facing children. The development of these guidelines is a relatively recent priority and have been subjected to numerous reforms and reviews, reflecting the rapid speed in which digital technologies, and their perceived risks, have evolved. Nevertheless, their existence is not without tensions, as the strategy is underpinned by dominant pedagogised views of children's sex and seeks to implement a one-size-fits-all approach for protecting children as a homogenous group[31]. This demonstrates a key area in which my thesis demonstrates originality, as the data highlights the failings of homogenous, heteronormative frameworks, and the tensions which permeate from them when regulating closeted LGBQ young people.

In March 2001, the Internet Crime Forum (2001) published the 'Chat Wise, Street Wise' report, which represented the first Government review within the UK specifically examining online child safety. This report was commissioned in response to a range of media stories stemming from the online moral panic, examining the dangers that social networking posed to children (Webster and Edwards, 2007). The report made claims of identifying concerns about emerging communicative features young people had access to, concluding that existing legislation and safeguarding provisions provided an inadequate framework for protecting young people effectively (Internet Crime Forum, 2001). In response, former Home Secretary Jack Straw announced the creation of the Home Office Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet, which identified the following online risks facing young people: bullying, harassment, exposure to harmful content, theft of personal information, sexual grooming, violent behaviour, encouragement of self-harm, and racist attacks (Livingstone and Brake, 2009). To address sexual grooming, a multi-agency strategy was co-ordinated by liaising with police and internet service providers (ISP's) to develop and publish educational safety awareness programmes for children and parents, as well as reviewing existing legislation to identify deficiencies in responding to new challenges posed by digital technologies (Thom, Sales and Pearce, 2007).

This Task Force symbolised the introduction of a multi-agency collaboration between different sectors and industries to jointly co-ordinate and tackle emerging safety concerns regarding online grooming (Martellozzo, 2013). Prior to publishing internet safety guidelines,

[31] This reflects a considerable dichotomy within safeguarding approaches, as adult safeguarding consistently reinforces an adult as an individual with unique personal needs, whereas children's safeguarding fails to recognise a similar status and instead relies upon developmental understandings of childhood to create one-size-fits-all safeguarding approaches (Alcock, 2014).

the Task Force successfully collaborated with the British Standards Institute to identify and promote software products which filtered and monitored children's online activities; oversaw the Internet Watch Foundation's powers to instruct ISPs to block specific websites depicting inappropriate and illegal content; and collaborated with the Home Office to support the creation of CEOP (UK National Archives, 2010). In April 2006, the Task Force successfully published the Government's first official guidelines on child internet safety, referred to as the 'Social Networking Guidance' (UK National Archives, 2010). The introduction of this guidance was the first attempt to educate the populace of the online risks facing children and provided official recommendations to parents and industry professionals on how to protect from them (Davidson and Gottschalk, 2010). The recommendations from this guidance document – legally mandating social networking communities with members below the age of eighteen to monitor and identify cases of online grooming – were not enforced due to the commissioning of the Governmental 'Safer Children in a Digital World' review in September 2007, overseen by Professor Tanya Byron (BBC News, 2008).

The 'Safer Children in a Digital World' review has played a fundamental role within the current development of guidelines, as well as co-ordinating uniformed strategies across sectors to ensure consistency within information dissemination. The completion of this report in June 2008 argued that the safeguarding parameters which the Task Force operated had become outdated due to further advancements in digital technologies. This required a broader multi-agency collaboration for tackling the significant and complex threats facing young people online (Byron, 2008). In response, the Labour Government published 'The Byron Review Action Plan', which led to the formation of the United Kingdom Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) in 2010, who remain responsible for co-ordinating with over 200 charities, Government, legal and welfare-based organisations when developing child internet safety guidelines (UKCCIS, 2014). This is an important strategy within the Government's online safeguarding approach, as the review recognised that parents are trapped within the dual burden of having the responsibility to protect their children, but likely being less technologically confident in comparison to young people (Hargrave and Livingstone, 2009). For this reason, Byron argued the council must provide clear and consistent information, as well as play an active research role in continuously examining the compatibility of safeguarding legislation as digital technologies evolve (Ibid).

In practice, this approach has led to the current 'one-size-fits-all' model for constructing guidelines, due to the agreed strategies of a single council possessing overwhelming control over the information which is disseminated to the public. This remains observable within the NSPCC's 'Share Aware' and 'Underwear Rule' campaigns (NSPCC, 2016), guidelines from CEOP (2014), as well as UKCCIS' safety guidance (UKCCIS, 2016), all of which provide uniform advice to parents and young people to ensure consistency within information[32]. As a result:

> The recommendations put forward by the claims-makers to respond to the perceived risks to both individual children and childhood as an institution is to educate children about the dangers of and restrict their access to ICT devices. In doing so, the pedagogisation of children's sex is invoked and children's proper sexualisation is restored (Moore and Reynolds, 2018: 231).

By centralising power to a single council, this provides the Government with overarching control over the distribution and dissemination of information regarding online safeguarding strategies, ensuring that their agenda remains unchallenged.

To illustrate the 'one-size-fits-all' approach further, an examination of guidelines highlights three consistent themes within safeguarding recommendations involving young people:

- Communication: Encouraging parents and young people to communicate about what type of websites they are accessing, who they are communicating with, and what online behaviours are not appropriate (NSPCC, 2016).

- Restriction: Using web filters to block 'adult-themed' content and other content deemed to be inappropriate and/or illegal, often with an ability to generate 'activity reports' which inform parents of what their children have been accessing (CEOP, 2016).

- Supervision: Encouraging parents to place computer devices in specific areas of the household and stipulating how and when children can access their devices (Ofcom, 2014).

[32] See page 139, subheading 'Intertextuality', for more information.

As previously highlighted by Valkenburg, Piotrowski and Hermanns (2013)[33], these forms of restriction decrease in effectiveness during later stages of childhood, due to the accessibility of the internet on portable devices and increased levels of privacy sought by young people. Despite guidelines acknowledging age as a factor, they are nevertheless problematic at safeguarding individuals who fall outside of dominant constructions childhood and sexuality (Warming, 2013). This problem has presented itself in two ways: First, guidelines and statutory legislation reinforce developmental assumptions regarding children being a homogenous group, justifying a protectionist framework which denies difference[34] and reinforces power relations between adult-child groups. Second, reliance on ideologically constructed knowledge and orthodoxies is embedded within legislation, which legitimises these safeguarding strategies and fails to recognise unique needs amongst children and young people. Subsequently, the UK's legal framework regulating sex and sexuality relies solely on age as a determiner for enshrining rights and triggering safeguarding responses. The frameworks reinforcement of dominant developmental orthodoxies means that it reinforces heteronormative assumptions within child welfare through the lack of recognition it provides to LGBQ children in legislation and safeguarding responses.

2.5 The United Kingdom's legal framework

Acts of Parliament and statutory guidance play a key role in propagating dominant developmental assumptions regarding childhood and sexuality. As will be outlined below, age is the primary determinant for an individual's right to engage in sexual relationships, with no consideration made to a child's right to privacy, nor the implications of a safeguarding agenda which is constructed under a heteronormative assumption of a 'developing' pre-sexual child.

Clarkson (2005) argues that prior to 2003, laws regulating sexual activity and consent were crude and incoherent. By enacting the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (SOA), the Labour Government integrated the legal classification of consent into a broad range of sexual

[33] See page 35, subheading 'Emergence of the online moral panic'.

[34] In contrast to this, the statutory framework for protecting vulnerable adults recognises each adult as a unique individual, with legislation such as The Care Act 2014 placing responsibilities on Local Authorities to put protection and personalisation at the center of its professional safeguarding practices. This provides safeguarding professionals considerable flexibility on how best to meet the needs of a service user, as the personalization agenda does not require uniformity in safeguarding responses and outcomes.

activities, including the new offence of "causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent" (Ibid: 205). This reflects an important legal dimension to how a sexual offence is committed, as a young person under the age of sixteen is deemed unable to consent legally. This provision shifts criminal responsibility onto the alleged perpetrators of sexual activity, such as an adult over the age of eighteen years of age, or a minor who acts as an instigator of sexual activity with another minor. The law fails to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual acts for young people, instead opting to regulate all sexual practices (Moore and Reynolds, 2018) under ideological assumptions of incapacity to consent. The various sections of the SOA 2003 restrict a range of sexual activities involving children in the following ways:

Section 9: Sexual activity with a child[35].
Section 10: Causing or inciting a minor to engage in sexual activity.
Section 11: Engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a minor.
Section 12: Causing or allowing a minor to watch a sexual act.
Section 14: Arranging or facilitating a meeting with the intent to commit a relevant sexual offence.
Section 15: Meeting a child following sexual grooming.

The legislation prohibits the above activities for those aged eighteen years and over, towards recipients who are under sixteen years of age. However, Section 13 of the SOA 2003 states an individual under eighteen can be liable for prosecution if they commit an offence under any of sections 9 to 12, which has been used by police to collect records of young people who have committed sexual crimes by engaging in online sexual activity (Gayle, 2015).

Hendrick's victim-threat dualism[36] is particularly apparent within safeguarding law, as an initial reading of the above sections would be consistent with dominant developmental concerns regarding the naivety of young people and their vulnerability to sexual abuse from adults [victim]. Through Section 13, the opposing trait within the duality emerges, highlighting that the sole motivation for this sexual regulation is not simply to protect young people from adult sexuality but to also control their sexual agency [threat]. By criminalising sexual activity amongst young people, the law demonstrates it is not only aiming to protect

[35] Section 9(1)(c)(i) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 defines the age of consent as 16 years of age, and the inability for a child to provide legally recognised consent means that sexual activity or intercourse below this age is either classified as sexual assault or statutory rape.
[36] See page 35, subheading 'Emergence of the online moral panic' for more information on this dualism.

young people from becoming victims of sexual abuse, but instead seeking to regulate the sexual behaviours of young people in all instances[37].

The SOA 2003 is supplemented by the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 statutory guidance (HM Government, 2018), which is used by safeguarding professionals to operate within the legislation's framework for protecting children from sexual abuse. A key challenge which safeguarding organisations have been required to overcome has been the incompatibility of safeguarding legislation when handling perceived sexual risks associated with children's accessibility to digital technologies. This is attributed to a failure by Governments to respond to this phenomenon in a timely manner, relying instead on historical pieces of safeguarding legislation, such as the Children Act 1978 or the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, despite these not being enacted to deal with the dynamics of online environments and risks (Pegg and Davies, 2016). The Labour Government sought to overcome this when developing the SOA 2003, taking advantage of existing knowledge of digital media at that time, as well as adopting legislative language which afforded the judiciary with an expansive approach to interpreting safeguarding duties with regards to future emerging technologies (Ibid). Subsequently, the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance has undergone a variety of editions to reflect changes within emerging technologies. Under the most recent version, the framework's definitions of abuse do not differentiate between online and physical abuses (HM Government, 2018), reflecting the weakening of boundaries between the online and offline spheres.

More recently, the emergence of digital technologies has seen legislative changes being enacted in response to political and social pressure from claims-makers. An example of this is the NSPCC's 'Flaw in the Law' campaign, launched in October 2014 (NSPCC, 2017). This sought to enact changes based on claims of online threats facing children within digital communication and led to the introduction of Section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. This amended Section 15 of the SOA 2003 to make it a criminal offence for an individual aged eighteen or over to engage in sexual conversation with an individual below the age of sixteen.

[37] Hendrick's (2005) victim-threat narrative offers a compelling insight into the motivations evident within the SOA's above legal provisions, and this can again be applied to the dominant constructions of childhood outlined by Jenks (2005). By seeking to restrict and regulate all areas of childhood sexuality, the pedagogisation of children's sex is preserved and the Apollonian view of childhood is maintained. If a young person is constructed as being Dionysian within their behaviours, the young person is stripped of their 'child' status and liable for prosecution under the law to mitigate the perceived threat they pose to sexual morality.

This campaign identified a loophole within the SOA 2003, which meant a provision did not exist within law to make it a criminal offence for an adult to send a sexual text-based message to a minor. The rationale for this campaign existed in two parts: First, the NSPCC used polling from YouGov to argue 80% of people wished for the law to be enacted, with a further 75% believing such a legal prohibition already existed (Dearden, 2014). This was accompanied with a petition to the Conservative-Liberal Democrats Government signed by over 50,000 people. Second, they successfully argued the lack of such a law created a dangerous safeguarding dilemma for safeguarding professionals, due to their inability to intervene at earlier stages of the child grooming process (NSPCC, 2017).

This campaign was successful, with former Prime Minister David Cameron announcing the introduction of the law in December 2014; Parliament approving the statute as part of the Serious Crime Act 2015; and former Justice Secretary Liz Truss enacting the provision in April 2017 (Ministry of Justice, 2017). Another legislative change occurred following the passing of the Digital Economy Act 2017, requiring mandatory age checks on pornographic websites to restrict accessibility. The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) were initially responsible for regulating and enforcing this statutory change, which would have required online pornography viewers to prove that they were over 18 years of age by undertaking credit card checks or passport authentication (BBC News, 2018).

This campaign was fuelled by anxieties expressed by claims-makers, with former Prime Minister David Cameron initiating the change as part of the Government's agenda to 'protect' young people from online sexual content. With this, they claimed that current verification processes were insufficient as they too easily allowed minors to circumvent age restrictions. Nevertheless, this enactment has not been without its tensions, as its implementation was initially delayed until April 1st 2019 (BBC News, 2018) and a further announcement in March 2019 again delayed its implementation due to logistical concerns with age verification software and a lack of readiness by the BBFC[38] (Cotter, 2019; Griffin,

[38] Andrew Griffin (2019) also raised privacy concerns regarding these privacy laws, as the company MindGeek would have operated the AgeID system, which would have provided them with a database of all the personal information of pornography consumers within the UK. Such measures have reinforced dominant assumptions regarding young people's incompetency, as their technological confidence would have made them the least likely to be impacted by such measures due to their likely knowledge of how to circumvent the restrictions. Additionally, by allowing a for-profit pornography company to fulfil the age verification obligations, Manthorpe (2019) and Griffin (2019) raised concerns about them having access to a database documenting consumer's desires, and allowing them and the BBFC to arbitrarily censor content based on Government and society's definitions of

2019; Manthorpe, 2019). In October 2019, former Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan announced that the plans were being dropped because of ongoing challenges in implementing them[39] and would instead be replaced by other measures to achieve the same objectives (BBC News, 2019). As of the submission date of this thesis, no such proposals have been announced.

Beyond the SOA 2003, there are further contradictions and dilemmas which arise when examining online safeguarding laws. Not all pieces of relevant legislation were implemented to reflect online-based safeguarding, as evident from the Protection of the Children Act 1978. This piece of legislation stipulates it is a criminal offence to distribute, possess or produce indecent photographs of individuals below the age of 18, with Section 84 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 updating the definition of 'photograph' to include digital imagery (Akdeniz, 2016). However, this law was enacted prior to young people having access to devices with photographic capabilities, and so the legislation's design operates under the assumption that individuals capable of distributing, possessing and producing indecent images are adults, despite the emergence of digital technologies equipping young people with the means to also violate these laws (Crofts et al., 2015). This highlights a considerable flaw within the legislation as, unlike other statutory legislation, it does not stipulate the minimum age of an offender, and defaults to the age of criminal responsibility, set at ten years of age within England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Goldson, 2013).

This flaw has been acknowledged by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) as part of their latest social media guidance to prosecutors, published in October 2016. These stipulate that cases of 'sexting' involving individuals under the age of eighteen, and who are of similar age

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acceptable sex. The Digital Economy Act 2017 provides an extensive list of examples of illegal sex, and the power given to pornography corporations also means that there is an economic motivation for restricting certain forms of sexual content, as the bias towards heteronormativity means that it is the most profitable category of pornography, thus raising concerns about whether the power given to these companies, and their primary motivation towards profit, could see any pornography catering to sexual minorities (e.g. non-heterosexuals) being inadvertently oppressed.

[39] The stages this law went through highlights the political and social power behind regulating children's online activities. Despite civil liberties organisations such as Open Rights Group criticising the law for being unenforceable in practice (BBC News, 2019), these voices were instead drowned out by the more vocal, powerful claims-makers who invoked the moral panic to elevate their concerns and demand Government action. The populist nature of these proposals was enough to cause the Government to expedite this legal change. Despite the concerns from civil liberties organisations not being heard on par with claims-makers, their position eventually proved to be correct after two years of repeated implementation delays, which ended with the Government eventually conceding its current legal approach could not be implemented despite the widespread support it had received.

to each other, should not be prosecuted unless there are other scenarios relevant to the case, such as exploitation, grooming or bullying (CPS, 2016). Despite this, there have been instances reported within the media where young people have been investigated and placed on police databases for producing, possessing and distributing images of themselves (BBC News, 2015). The expansive search powers under the Education Act 2011 have also been used within schools and colleges to forcefully search the electronic devices of young people and delete or report images deemed 'inappropriate'[40] (Moss, 2014). Subsequently, historical regulations have been reproduced to continue maintaining institutionalised standards of appropriate socialisation, and have created a unique legal space in which young people aged 16 and 17 are deemed competent to engage in sexual activity and intercourse but incompetent to engage in 'sexting' (Moore and Reynolds, 2018).

This outline of key legislation establishes the areas of law relevant to this thesis, as well as inconsistencies within the regulations of child sexual activity. The most challenging contradiction is the inconsistent application of law when deeming a behaviour to be criminal and an offender to be of a minimum age. For example, the SOA 2003 defines a child as anybody under the age of eighteen, and Section 13 of the legislation allows a child as young as ten to be prosecuted if they have engaged in activities outlined under sections 9 to 12. Sections 14 and 15 cannot be broken by a child, legally implying that only adult offenders are capable of facilitating and meeting an individual they have sexually groomed. Similar age disparities are evident within the Serious Crime Act 2015 and the Protection of the Children Act 1978, with the former applying only to individuals aged eighteen years or above who sexually communicate with a person under sixteen years of age. The latter legislation fails to define a minimum age and defers to the age of criminal responsibility, allowing anybody ten years of age and above to be prosecuted for the distribution, possession and/or production of child sexual imagery. This subjects young people to arbitrary interventions due to practical inconsistencies between the recommendations of the CPS, and the actions of police and other powerful claims-makers who are obligated to investigate reported violations of the law. This is further complicated by dominant orthodoxies which are produced and reproduced through this legal framework and the safeguarding strategies it legitimises and mandates. The dominant assumption of 'becoming' heterosexual results in the UK's safeguarding agenda

[40] See pages 222-223, subheading 'legal accountability in the online sphere' for more information on how the existence of such regulations still serve an important symbolic function.

being underpinned by heteronormative paternalism, which highlights a fundamental incompatibility for safeguarding any children and young people who do not adhere to this assumption.

2.6 Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding

A state paternalist[41] perspective allows for intervention into family life to protect children by defining what constitutes adequate and inadequate child-rearing[42] (Harding, 1991). As such, Government responses to online safeguarding have largely adhered to a defence of parents' rights, as the state has functioned as a supportive mechanism for families by focusing on providing instructional resources[43] (Harding, 1991).

The tensions which have emerged within this area of paternalism have been demonstrated by Hessel, He and Dworkin (2016), who outline safeguarding within the context of social domain theory. Individuals divide their domains into moral, conventional, prudential, and personal issues (Nucci, 2001), with morals being the preservation of welfare and rights; convention being the acceptance of social boundaries and rules within interactions; prudential relating to safety, health and comfort; and the personal being about the self and personal choice, such as identity and privacy (Nucci, Killen and Smetana, 1996). Hessel, He and Dworkin (2016) argue that the emergence of safeguarding legislation designed to maintain the pedagogisation of children's sex has led to parents and young people being socialised into accepting their respective roles. Parents and children mutually acknowledge that moral, conventional, and prudential issues within a child's social domain are to be regulated by parents. Issues of the personal domain remain within the boundaries of the young person,

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[41] Dworkin (1971: 108) defines paternalism as "the interference with a person's liberty of action by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced".

[42] This chapter has already outlined the key areas of law which label activities and behaviours deemed improper and inappropriate for children, and the enforcement of these standards is observable in Section 2 of The Children Act 1989, which requires parents to exercise responsibilities and authority over a child. Section 31(2) further enables the state to intervene if they believe a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, if this harm can be attributed to the care (or lack thereof) from a parent or guardian. In the context of online harm, this chapter has discussed the anxieties which have emerged through the online moral panic, and statutory responses which have occurred to incorporate these perceived threats to children into the significant harm threshold.

[43] This too has already been outlined in this chapter through the various Government reviews of online child safety, and the formation of the UKCCIS as a dominant regulatory body for producing and distributing child internet safety resources. It highlights the shared orthodoxies between parents and child-focused professionals when maintaining their aligned standards as safeguarding approaches continuously adapt to try and keep pace with technological changes.

allowing them to exercise autonomy, self-identity, and independence (Ibid). In practice, this frequently leads to conflicts between parents and young people, as the right to regulate this domain are often contested by both groups (Ibid). Constructions of childhood and sexuality ensure that the household remains a contested space for young people due to their rights being limited, based on assumptions of incompetency and risk (Weller, 2010).

Rights to privacy within households and family life are inalienable rights, enshrined in law under the Human Rights Act 1998 and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, but these are primarily aimed at adult citizens. Children are protected within the remit of a private space but denied the liberties of it due to public concerns within safeguarding, which construct children's participation and rights primarily from a position of protectionism (Moore, 2013). Within the context of online safeguarding, historical inequalities have been reproduced, resulting in adaptations to the way communication, restriction and supervision are used to control children and exercise surveillance. Young people are left contesting and negotiating their space, making claims to more power on personal issues than the parent is typically willing to give (Sorkhabi, 2010). Even when boundaries of each social domain are acknowledged, young people may not accept the monitoring methods used to maintain these controls and will find ways to circumvent intrusion (Vykoukalova, 2007). This has been enabled by young people's online behaviours, which challenge the surveillance power of parents through agentic competency online.

Key aspects of state paternalism are evident from heteronormative discourses embedded in the developmental, naturalist models that it draws upon to justify its surveillance. This invokes multiple constructions related to childhood, gender and sexuality, and is used to legitimise heteropatriarchal values when nurturing children in age-appropriate, gendered ways. Warner (1991) coined the term heteronormativity to describe the cultural and social processes which occur to define heterosexuality as the default:

> So much of heterosexual privilege lies in heterosexual culture's exclusive ability to interpret itself as society. Even when coupled with a toleration of minority sexualities, heteronormativity has a totalizing tendency… Heterosexual ideology, in combination with a potent ideology about gender and identity in maturation, therefore bears down in the heaviest and often deadliest way on those with the least resources to combat it: queer children and teens. (Ibid: 8-9)

Butler (1990) refers to this socialisation as the 'heterosexual matrix', which links sex, gender and sexuality into supposedly coherent identities based on observed performances. From their biological sex, they are expected to conform to female femininity or male masculinity, and adherence rewards the individual with the privileges of a presumptive heterosexual identity. This is evident within paternalistic practices of child socialisation[44], as either the parent, or the state acting as proxy parent, have normalised childhood as a developmental, naturalistic process in which this heterosexual matrix functions as a measurement of what constitutes a 'healthy' childhood. Rich (1980) refers to this as compulsory heterosexuality, arguing it is a political institution which relies upon constant enforcement of heteronormative messaging to promote and uphold it. The goal of this institution is to sustain men's patriarchal power over women, and so these power dynamics are internalised and reproduced within socialisation through constant messaging about desired gender performativity.

Heteronormativity highlights a clash between privacy needs of closeted young people and adults with safeguarding responsibilities (Harbeck, 2012). Identity concealment occurs alongside a heteronormative paternalist framework which fails to acknowledge a right to privacy and diversity within childhood. Mathieson (2013) highlights a key inequality between the positioning of children and adults, as paternalistic treatment on a 'healthy' adult is considered an intrusive and oppressive interference on their civil liberties. In contrast, there is broad support for state paternalism when protecting children. Through an examination of Fox Harding's childcare policy perspectives (Harding, 1991), the UK's online safeguarding approach aligns with key principles of state paternalism and child protection, as well as a modern defence of the birth family and parents' rights, both of which are simultaneously at play in an intertwining manner. This is evident through the statutory framework in place to outline the duties and powers of the state to protect children from perceived sexual harms, including online, and which also seeks to use the dominant orthodoxies of Government to transmit informative resources to parents. This transmission emphasises online child

[44] Moore and Reynolds (2018) highlight how heteronormative paternalism has been evident within child protection discourses online. For young girls, stranger danger narratives and fears of their sexual vulnerability to premature sexuality have been at the fore of such gendered concerns. For young boys, heteropatriarchy permits a limited roleplay of their heterosexual identity when displaying a masculine performance, and so anxieties have been reserved more to concerns regarding 'improper' displays of sexuality, such as the viewing of pornography and the impact this may have on their development.

protection as part of the remit for exercising parental responsibilities to the high standards expected by the state.

The conflict between parents and children when regulating the internet and devices have been ongoing since they became a commodity for public consumption, and current tensions are far from a recent occurrence[45]. Such concerns are widely evident amongst children as a whole, but LGBQ young people are subjected to unique challenges when navigating the internet and seeking to maintain their privacy. As developmentalism is heteronormative, the safeguarding agenda has been constructed to reproduce and enforce this (Moore and Reynolds, 2018). By relying upon heteronormative assumptions, uniformed recommendations within guidelines conflict with concealment strategies used by closeted individuals. LGBQ young people are required to actively seek out inclusive information and resources, as lingering moral panics about homosexuality remain entrenched within education, which primarily rely on a heteronormative biomedical model (Ibid) within RSE. It is this knowledge which perpetuates an assumption that children and young people are only required to know about genito-centric, reproductive sexuality, whereas deviations from this model, such as homosexuality, are classified as adult-only' knowledge which is labelled as inappropriate for minors to possess awareness of. The anxieties of these have been so heightened within child protection that Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 labelled acknowledgements of homosexuality around children and young people as promotion, and legally established the heterosexual nuclear family as the natural form of family life to promote. Within the context of same-sex relationships, the act deemed these to be pretended family relationships which radical teachers sought to promote the acceptability of, which was claimed to have a morally corrupting impact on children (Thatcher Archives, 1987). This highlights a fundamental dilemma for LGBQ young people: dominant ideologies within their physical space prevent them accessing inclusive resources and peer networks, requiring them to circumvent these barriers via the internet. Online safeguarding is itself reconstructed through these same orthodoxies, resulting in the legitimisation and promotion of surveillance strategies which are wholly incompatible with their privacy needs.

[45] An example of an older piece of research on children's attitudes to online safety is available from Livingstone and Bober (2005). They conducted research on children's experiences of parental control when online, at a time when Government responses to these risks were still relatively sparse and disorganised. They found that 69% of 9–17-year-olds in Great Britain expressed dissatisfaction towards their parents monitoring or restricting their internet usage, and a further 63% admitted having taken action to protect their privacy from parents.

These challenges to their closeted identity are further exacerbated by online safeguarding operating in overt and covert ways. Mathieson (2013) criticises these strategies, arguing that the risks facing young people are overstated as part of a ‘technopanic’, and that monitoring is often ineffective and risks leading to more harm. Instead, disclosures by young people reflect a more effective strategy for parents to obtain knowledge of their child’s needs, rather than techniques which rely upon solicitation, surveillance and control (Racz and Mcmahon, 2011; Keijsers et al., 2009). To illustrate this, Mathieson (2013) provides examples of LGBQ young people who have been outed by monitoring strategies, and who have then been subjected to homophobic parental interventions, such as increased restrictions on freedom or forced enrolment in reparative therapies. By failing to consider homophobia as a form of familial abuse facing LGBQ young people, heteronormativity within child protection unquestionably permits parental intrusion into the lives of their children. It fails to meaningfully recognise a child’s right to privacy, and so any issues which they want to keep private from parents are challenged by surveillance and could cause them to be outed at any moment.

A further consequence of this ideological paternalism is observable through research by Priebe and Svedin (2012). They conducted a study involving 4,342 Swedish high school students, finding that those who identified as non-heterosexual were more likely to engage in online sexual activity, report being sexually solicited and harassed, and be less likely to report abuse and seek support in the physical world. In most instances, the alleged perpetrator was no more than five years older than the victim. These findings not only challenge the dominant assumptions of the online offender typology, but also emphasise the potential vulnerability young people may face online when they fall outside of dominant constructions of childhood and sexuality. Guidelines consistently emphasise the importance of young people disclosing abuse to a parent or trusted adult, but this method of disclosure has clear incompatibility with the closeted status of LGBQ young people. A heterosexual young person disclosing internet-initiated harassment or grooming would do so without the risk of being outed as a sexual ‘other’, whereas a LGBQ young person must undertake a decisional balance between outing themselves to disclose, or privately handle it to maintain control over their identity concealment. One of the ways these risks have been managed is through the organic construction of online coming out support communities, which have emerged as a safe space for closeted young people to interact with peers, receive support for their closeted identity and to develop and expand their social support network.

2.7 Online coming out support communities and the impact of homonormativity

Online coming out support communities represent a transformation of the coming out process (Levounis, Drescher and Barber, 2012). Affirmation plays an important role in identity formation, and the marginalisation and invisibility of LGBQ identities have historically required in-person support groups to be created to challenge marginalisation. Physically located services, such as gay bars and social support networks, were often the first occasion where individuals could access information and resources catering for them, openly express their attractions and identity alongside peers, and obtain a sense of belonging and pride (Johnson, 2016). Fisher and Karban (2015) outline that these benefits were limited to those fortunate enough to live in an urban area, whereas those in more rural communities remained isolated. The existence of such services did not necessarily make them an accessible space for closeted individuals, as attendance required a public display of identity which could present risks to their concealment if identified by a known associate (Clarke et al., 2010). These concerns are most prevalent during early stages of the coming out process, when internalised homophobia and shame cause individuals to deploy concealment techniques. Privacy and control were inevitably lost when attending an in-person service, as their physical presence could either cause them to be recognised by another member of the group, or even be seen travelling to and from the group[46].

The internet has transformed the accessibility of these services, as the development of online communities have enabled geographical and social barriers to be minimised for closeted individuals (Swan, 2016). Chan and Fang (2007: 244) recognise that "young people will make active choices of the media they use, according to their personalities, socialisation needs, and personal identification needs", reflecting the significance that closeted young people will place on online resources to circumvent restrictions on information within the physical sphere. Instead, young people's agentic competency is used to minimise the barriers of their regulated socialisation and allows them to engage with online coming out communities to safely explore their identity and meet their social and personal needs. This ensures that they are able to be strategic with how they construct and identify themselves

[46] This risk also alludes to the politics surrounding the construction of public spaces, which are contested, controlled and heteronormative (Valentine and Waite, 2011). This has led to the creation of districts as a way of subverting these public spaces and providing an inclusive safe space for minority groups. However, such spaces were always limited by the possibility of being outed by somebody observing you travelling into or leaving a space which is known by the wider community as a 'queer' neighbourhood.

across different spheres. Their concealed engagement with online communities, as well as their proficiency using communicative technology, allows them to continuously manage complex strategies, motivational discourses, and social relationships as part of their strategic outness (Orne, 2011). Young people can simultaneously conceal their performed identities on these communities from parents and other unwanted others, whilst also performing to normative constructions of gender within their physical sphere (Gray, 2009). As acknowledged earlier within the chapter, young people's embracement of technology has allowed their physical and virtual spheres to intertwine[47], and this is evident amongst closeted young people from the significance they attach to the interactions and relationships they develop on these support communities. Miller (2016) refers to this process as a 'computer-mediated escape from the closet', which young people attach such strong meaning to that it empowers and facilitates the transformation of their identity within their physical sphere (Browne and Munt, 2016).

Research by Stonewall has emphasised the benefits that online communities have on closeted young people, as their 2017 School Report found over 90% of respondents felt they could be their true selves online (Stonewall, 2017). Their research further highlighted the challenges which they face overcoming dominant heteronormative orthodoxies, as 53% reported they did not have an adult they felt comfortable talking openly about their identity with, and 80% stating that RSE was not inclusive of same-sex relationships and sexual health (Stonewall, 2017). Additionally, the Teachers Report (2015) found 83% of schools failed to provide information and books related to lesbian, gay and bisexual people, highlighting how the internet provides them with options for circumventing the knowledge deficiencies which occur within heteronormative socialisation. This online appeal is further evident in The School Report (2017)[48], which found 96% of respondents felt the internet had a positive impact on helping them better understand their sexual orientation and enabled them to network with peers. This report emphasises why LGBQ young people can develop a sense of self through their engagement with these online communities, as well as their proficiency in circumventing information barriers, enabling them to access relevant information and explore their sexual identity (Bond, Hefner and Drogos, 2009). These opportunities show why the

[47] See page 30, subheading 'Young people as agentic consumers of communicative technologies'.
[48] Additional findings from The School Report (2017) included: 93% reported seeking advice and support about their sexual identity; 65% using online public platforms to network with other non-heterosexual peers, and 63% using communicative apps on their smartphones (Snapchat, Whatsapp etc) to form and maintain relationships with other non-heterosexual peers privately.

internet has become the most common tool for young people to initiate their coming out process (Etengoff and Daiute, 2015; Miller, 2016).

Despite these benefits, the impact of homonormativity highlights how these constructed web spaces can create conflicts for a young person's coming out journey. Homonormativity is a concept which is critical of the approach taken by the gay rights movement to obtain acceptance, claiming that it has instead depoliticised its messaging to focus on a politics of 'sameness' to establish legitimacy. Cohen (2001) refers to homonormativity as the deradicalization of queer politics, replaced instead by the aspirations and needs of white, middle-class, gay male sexuality. Schueller (2005) further highlights how the prominence of homonormativity within queer politics has been criticised by prominent queer theorists such as Butler and Gayle Rubin, who have identified how groups beyond the white gay male have been under-represented, rendered invisible and often become a marginalised minority within a minority. Duggan (2004) outlines that cisgender, white queer movements have adopted a politics of assimilation, requiring them to avoid contesting dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, and to even contribute towards upholding and sustaining them (Duggan, 2002) as a way of obtaining acceptance within a heteropatriarchal society.

Butler (1992) refers to this as performative mirroring, in which 'acceptable' gay and lesbian figures are tolerated for their willingness to reinforce dominant gender norms. Homonormativity has led to a politics of similarity in which rights are only ascribed to those willing to conform to the standards of respectability defined by dominant heteronormative orthodoxy (Mathers, Sumerau and Cragun, 2018). This has a noticeable impact on the practices of online coming out communities, as changes within societal value systems to accommodate homonormative sexuality requires conventional values to be respected and unchallenged (Moore and Reynolds, 2018) by the charities which operate these spaces. More broadly, the alliance between heteronormativity and homonormativity also requires charities to conform to the protectionist agenda to sustain their legitimacy, despite contradictions which can arise with their support objectives[49]. The right of charities to operate these web

[49] These contradictions are often known to LGBT charities and organisations, but their requirement to conform to state-sanctioned safeguarding practices reflect how Governments centralise power when legitimising organisations and deeming them 'safe' to work with the population. Stonewall (2014) acknowledges that there are unique circumstances when protecting non-heterosexual young people online, but their ability to offer solutions for it is absent due to their requirement to conform to dominant orthodoxies, which is focused on preserving power relations in their current form. This conformity to practices is mandated by Governments through the Charity Commission, who regulate

spaces are determined by their willingness to adhere to dominant orthodoxies, whereas the benefits and risks they provide to closeted LGBQ young people are dependent on how each young person exercises agency when subjected to their authoritative, homonormative gaze.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how dominant orthodoxies have created a socialisation process for children and young people which is underpinned by heteronormative, developmental assumptions of childhood and sexuality. It has outlined how young people's embracement of communicative technologies has provided them with considerable opportunities for circumventing the regulatory regimes into which they are institutionalised as part of the adult-child hierarchy, and how their agentic competency using these technologies has meant they can access information and resources which would otherwise be deemed 'inappropriate' by claims-makers. This has not occurred without pushback and resistance from institutions, who have recognised the threat that this unsanctioned independence poses to the pedagogisation of children's sex. This has led to the emergence of the online moral panic, which has reconstructed and reproduced moral anxieties and concerns regarding children's welfare and resulted in the production and distribution of child internet safety guidelines, as well as limited legislative reforms. These changes have nevertheless continued to rely on dominant constructions of childhood and sexuality within their understanding of a child's development, and online safeguarding strategies have continued to reconstruct child protection models from physical spaces into the online sphere, thus ensuring that the heteronormative paternalism embedded within the UK's safeguarding framework remains at the forefront of online safeguarding practices. Although closeted young people have displayed agentic competency when accessing coming out communities online, they remain vulnerable to this incompatible safeguarding agenda because of the presence of homonormativity within these constructed web spaces. As part of their legitimisation as a children's safe space, the loco parentis figures for these communities are required to uphold and sustain dominant orthodoxies embedded within constructions of childhood and sexuality to ensure they comply with safeguarding law. The way closeted young people exercise

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the registration of charities based on their compliance with safeguarding law and guidelines (Charity Commission, 2019).

agency on these safe spaces could have implications on how effectively their privacy needs can be upheld by the community.

Theory

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will outline the socially constructed nature of childhood and sexuality, demonstrating how they are used to position young people as incompetent, immature and pre-sexual, and who are in need of constant control and surveillance. The socialisation of young people will be examined to highlight the dominant discourses which are used to justify a narrow, heteronormative pedagogisation of children's sex. Additionally, the perpetuation of compulsory heterosexuality within adult-child power structures and dynamics will be illustrated to show how these reproduce a desired gender performativity and heteronormative policing. The chapter will further examine why an adult-oriented focus on gay rights and the depoliticization of their campaigns have contributed to the internet becoming the primary medium for closeted young people. This includes how the legitimisation of homonormative identities and politics have failed to challenge the inequalities which require LGBQ young people to use the internet to circumvent a heteronormative socialisation. Finally, it will critique how the existence of constructed web spaces for LGBQ young people are themselves potentially contested spaces, due to the coercive effects of governmentality when holding online organisations accountable to heteronormative safeguarding standards.

3.1 Childhood as a social construction

Aries (1979) provided an analysis of the constructed nature of childhood, claiming cultural portrayals of children prior to the seventeenth century presented them as miniature adults. His analysis highlights the role dominant discourses play when socialising individuals into roles, as historical accounts of children show equal degrees of participation alongside what would today be considered adult-only roles, such as employment and possessing economic capital. The claims put forward by Aries have been challenged by other scholars, who have argued that certain areas of social life did recognise a distinction between adults and children prior to the seventeenth century. Van Oudenhoven and Wazir (2006) argue that ages of responsibility for crimes and medical writings notarising diseases which only affected children identify areas of social recognition towards children and adults.

Despite criticisms, Aries' analysis remains a useful starting point for understanding the experiences of children from a historical perspective (Hobbs, McKechnie and Lavelette, 1999). The enactment of child-specific legislation during the nineteenth century reflects the

emergence and legitimisation of discourses which are still used today to justify the social positioning of childhood, and the necessity for socialisation to sustain these power relations. This is emphasised by Aries, cited in Dekker and Lecher (2008: 42) when he states "an authoritarian and hierarchical discipline was established… because of its intrinsic moral and ascetic value. The pedagogues would adapt it to a system of supervising children which, at least in theory, was constantly in operation, night and day alike". This period established the child welfare hierarchy at its most basic level, which is through the adult-child power dichotomy. Parents became empowered to exercise constant control and surveillance over children as part of the state's emerging view of what constituted good parenting practices. However, parents have also been subjected to authority and hierarchy, with child welfare professionals functioning as agents of the state to enforce the welfare standards laid out within child protection law. It is through these power relations that Aries outlines the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of the child welfare process, and yet such power inequalities remain invisible because of their naturalisation as a legitimate societal and state interest. The pervasiveness of coercion required to normalise a specific model of parenting has instead been normalised as the desired, healthy way of raising children within society, and so the population being regulated simply see it as the norm for behaving, rather than as a by-product of social control[50]. It is the nineteenth century which offers a crucial insight into the emergence of this agenda and the power dynamics which it established, which remain at the forefront of child protection today.

Socialisation theory within social constructionism highlights the process by which people selectively acquire values and attitudes, interests, skills and knowledge (Grusec and Davidov, 2010). Jarvis (1983: 88) defines socialisation as "the process by which the objective world of reality is internalised and becomes subjectively meaningful". This process reflects how the maintenance of the status quo through social replication is driven by adult-child power dynamics, ensuring the ongoing stability of heteronormativity. This occurs through the legitimisation of hierarchical roles, which are culturally defined within specific social, economic, and historical contexts (Apple and Golden, 1997) and are affected by the environmental and social contexts of the time and space they operate in. The introduction of child-specific legislation during the nineteenth century has transmitted cultural messages

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Whilst this draws clear parallels to Foucault's 'Discipline and Power' (1977), which will be discussed later in the chapter, Aries' arguments offer insight into the early stages of child-specific legislation and the orthodoxies which motivated this process.

regarding the roles of parents, pedagogues and children, and how these roles are most effectively performed (Francis-Connolly, 2003) by members of each group.

The meanings individuals attach to their role – whether it be parent, child or professional – are shaped by dominant discourses within their culture. These symbolise how social actions are not only structurally defined as desirable but are regulated by these structures to punish those who resist. The socio-economic influence which emerged from the industrial revolution is evident within our understanding of childhood and parenting, as childhood socialisation reinforces heteronormative gender norms to categorise appropriate activities and behaviours for males and females (Aldous et al., 1998). These discourses simultaneously represent a cultural ideal for understanding children and parenting, and shape how we perform our role in accordance with the opinions, advice and directives of authority (Francis-Connolly, 2003; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). Such discourses expose socialisation as a relationship between the individual and the power structures which discipline and regulate them.

Structural norms and values play a key role in influencing behaviour, but it would not be accurate to claim that children are without agency and lack capacity to challenge power. Foucault (1980: 95) argues "where there is power, there is resistance", highlighting that challenge to authority is an expected consequence within power relations, requiring disciplinary steps to mediate attempted subversions. My research acknowledges that individuals possess capacity to exercise agency, but that it does not occur through circumstances of their own making, as structures influence how they self-regulate their behaviour and acknowledge whether it is conforming or deviant. This theoretical position is shared by other prominent theorists within social sciences such as Bourdieu (1993), who views social life as a performance which is symbolic of individual agency. Social structure results from the habitus of individuals, but his theory of 'the game' and collective habitus divides the social world into fields, whose structures are determined by unique sets of rules, knowledge and capital which influence players. The agency individuals exercise still occurs under influence from societal structures, as knowledge that behaviours are unacceptable are assessed through the dominant discourses of that culture. Becker (1971) outlines this phenomenon through labelling theory, finding that teachers used specific labels to give meaning to children, group them together, and develop stereotypes on how they are viewed. This theory emphasises the importance of dominant discourses in how we understand children and childhood, as very specific sets of criteria were used for categorising positive

and negative labels, with the best outcomes being rewarded to those who conformed to idealisms of good behaviour and posed no threat to social milieu. This form of categorising occurs across a wide range of professions which interact with children, as they draw upon developmental discourses to construct and reproduce understandings of a 'healthy' developing child.

3.2 The 'developing' child

Woodhead (2013: 144) states that "developmentalism is a discourse within which children are constructed as not yet adult, as in process of 'becoming' rather than a person in their own right". These discourses rely on bodily narratives to construct understandings of children and make claims of how their bodies and minds progress through definitional stages based on age, thus providing universal models for their journey to adulthood (Rogers, 2003). These narratives focus on the body and minds of children by constructing them as being weaker, less well-developed, lacking secondary sexual features, and possessing inferior abilities and knowledge (Norozi and Moen, 2016) in comparison to adults. Qvortrup (2002) outlines how the assumptions of the 'developing' child constructs them as members of a social category who require constant care and education to facilitate their 'healthy' development, including protection from sex and sexuality. This occurs through the dichotomising of adulthood and childhood, as developmentalism constructs adults as perfection due to their independency and superiority in body and mind (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998), whereas children need to be protected and socialised to ensure that they too will develop in accordance with these normative ideals.

Prout and James (2010) problematise dominant constructions of childhood through the paradigm of the 'New Sociology of Childhood', which identify the limitations of heteronormative developmentalism for understanding children. A socially constructed childhood is different from biological immaturity, as many of the meanings we possess for understanding a human's early life are based on societal beliefs and culture. These create institutional 'facts' within social structures, which are used to justify exerting control over children. Prout and James (2010) further argue that childhood is intertwined with other social variables, such as gender and sexuality, with socialisation continuously transmitting heteronormative gender messages. This requires the dominance of the heterosexual nuclear family, as this model sustains an assumed correlation between reproductive sexuality and the

capacity to nurture children into desired feminine or masculine roles (Davies and Robinson, 2013).

Jagger and Wright (1999) expand on this further, highlighting how the containment of children into the nuclear family unit and education provides constant control over their socialisation. The nurturing of gender roles socialises ‘appropriate’ moral values consistent with their life-stage development. This developmentalism plays a key role in legitimising the power dynamics within the nuclear family unit, as the ongoing development of children requires adults to use their superior knowledge and skills to exercise control over them. This is outlined by Hendricks (1994), who argues that the ability of regimes to exert control over the regulation of children’s bodies and minds requires them to exercise power to ensure compliance.

The power these discourses have are so entrenched within knowledge of childhood that Blundell (2012: 128) states they “provide a theoretical schema that has become so engrained and naturalised that it passes as the indisputable truth about children”. Qvortrup (2009) rejects the developmental study of childhood, arguing it is nothing more than adults constructing their own understandings of competency, rather than listening to children’s voices. When rejecting the ‘developing’ child, Brown (1999: 59) emphasises “the thinking of a child cannot be derived only from innate psychological factors or from the influence of the physical environment but must also be understood as a function of those relationships which are established between the child and the social environment that surrounds him/her”. Foucault’s conceptualisation of docile bodies highlights how the institutionalisation of children into the family unit and education constructs the necessary environment to position children as passive recipients of socialisation and knowledge acquisition. By institutionalising children during their socialisation, adult-child power dynamics are sustained through the restrictions placed upon their agency, ensuring any behaviours deemed inappropriate are controlled and punished.

3.3 Institutionalised socialisation

The industrial revolution reflected a period of intense anxiety for the UK, as the state sought to play a morally reforming role in constructing childhood. This occurred through the restructuring of the family unit and the implementation of compulsory education for children (James and James, 2004), both of which function as environments for containing and

controlling children. The increasing prevalence of sexual virtue intersected with the emerging status of the 'child', resulting in a sexual moral panic regarding the developmental risks to a child's body and mind should their vulnerability expose them to moral delinquency, sexual impropriety and disobedience (Showalter, 1992; Gittins, 1993). By reconstructing the family unit, Anderson (1976) argues this placed authority and discipline at the heart of society's economic drive, creating a new social apparatus in which the populace could be subjected to control and surveillance. This is outlined by Koslowsky and Schwarzwald (2001), who highlights that obedience to authority occurs either through a distinction of their expertise or from their relative position within a hierarchy. For children, they are consistently located in subordinate positions because of their developing status towards adulthood, requiring them to be continuously obedient. The institutionalisation of childhood also reflects power struggles for parents, as women find themselves positioned as economically and socially inferior to men because of the privileging of heteropatriarchy within compulsory heterosexuality. Through state paternalism, parents are positioned above children but must be obedient to the Government, whose child-specific legislation has empowered the state to exercise control over the family unit. This power is distributed to pedagogical professions, whose knowledge and practices align with the Government's agenda so that they can operate as agents of the state.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Harding (1991) provided four perspectives evident within childcare law and policy[51]. Throughout all four perspectives, the regulatory power of the state is evident through the way it involves itself within family life (Harding, cited in Spray and Jowett, 2012). These perspectives highlight how the state has ascribed itself with the power to define crimes, leading to disciplined behaviour (Foucault, 1977). This provides the state with an apparatus to utilise its paternalist power to engage in the observation of family life (Ibid). This gazing is a way of ensuring that parents are conforming to a desired fulfilment of their roles, as defined within law. Spray and Jowett (2012) concede that even Harding's 'defence of the birth family and parents' rights' perspective provides the state with a significant interventionist scope. The prioritising of childhood socialisation requires poor families to be scrutinised, as they are often seen as the biggest threat to the social replication of middle-class values embedded within parental responsibilities. This exposes the

[51] These are: laissez-faire and patriarchy; state paternalism; defence of the birth family and parents' rights; and children's rights. See page 49, subheading 'Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding', for more information.

conflicting discourses within this socialisation, as varying professions use ideologically constructed determiners, centred around economic and social variables, for assessing what constitutes 'responsible' parenting (Woodcock, 2003). The family unit has become a key site for replicating childhood as a period of regulated and controlled socialisation. Power structures that seek to preserve pre-sexual childhood are significantly invested in monitoring households[52] to ensure parenting conforms to 'healthy' developmental standards.

To facilitate childhood socialisation, state education was established as an institution which uses age-based criterion to construct a learning environment for children (Gillis, 1996). By making education compulsory, the state limited economic capital to adults. At the same time, it reinforced childhood as a period of incompetency, requiring regimented knowledge acquisition to ensure they would become competent adults in later life (Goose and Honeyman, 2016). This is reflected within the Factory and Workshop Act 1901 which, for the first time, increased the minimum age of employment to align it with the school leaving age, ensuring education and employment were structured consecutively rather than concurrently. This highlights a key approach used by successive UK Governments to reconstruct childhood by extending the period of time in which they are mandated to attend school and remain in the family household. The coupling of education and the family within childhood regulation has provided the Government with the means to exert constant control and surveillance over children. These institutions have also allowed for knowledge to be restricted according to the ideological discourses which underpin the 'developing' child. As highlighted by Morrison (2012: 64), "the tighter control over school attendance around the turn of the century [1900] and a higher school leaving age meant a new reality for children… it created a whole new childhood" and, with this, unprecedented opportunities for society to rationalise this pedagogy through the construction of scientific knowledge of children's needs.

3.4 Children's needs within pedagogical regimes

The cultural construction of children's needs has emerged as a significant domain in reproducing childhood discourses, as "children's psychological needs are at the heart of

[52] See the Children Act 1989 and the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) guidance for a comprehensive framework of the professions and standards used to assess and monitor children. The subheading 'The United Kingdom's legal framework' also contains a comprehensive breakdown of the child-specific legislation relevant to the scope of this thesis, which also illustrate the standards for preserving childhood as a period of pre-sexual status.

contemporary public concern, part of the everyday vocabulary of countless numbers of social welfare workers and teachers, policymakers and parents" (Woodhead, 2015: 54). 'Children's needs' reflects a value-laden term, which possesses a wide-range of assumptions and demands perpetuated by medicalised discourses. For example, Kellmer-Pringle (1978) states a healthy childhood consists of four basic needs: love and security; new experiences; praise and recognition; and responsibility. These demonstrate the intersectionality of biological and psychological determinisms regarding childhood status, providing insight into how innocuous terms conceal broader pedagogical discourses which construct a permitted necessity for regulatory processes.

By taking 'love and security' as an example, this appears to be a relatively uncontroversial value judgement, but contained within it are concealed empirical and evaluative claims between power structures, such as social worker and parent (Woodhead, Light and Carr, 1991). Assumptions of need occur without the voices of children; whose assumed ignorance supposedly justify parents and parental figures making judgements on their behalf. The power this assumed knowledge has is evident from Woodhead, Light and Carr (Ibid: 62), who argue "despite the utility as well as persuasive power of applying a pathological paradigm to child welfare judgements, normative relationships are all too readily interpreted as if they were universally valid prescriptions of childhood".

Foucault (1977) illustrates how institutionalisation provides the surveillance apparatus needed for fulfilling adults' cultural construction of children's needs. In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault highlights the architectural design of schools as a panoptic apparatus of control. This is based on Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which is an institutional building that allows all of its occupants to be seen at any time by a watcher, without those contained within it knowing whether they are being watched (Kallman and Dini, 2017). The inability to detect if they are being watched causes its occupants to alter their behaviour to the assumption that they are being, thus enabling the institution to coerce and normalise specific desired behaviours amongst its population.

The consequences of this panopticon are evident in the critical summary of educational regimes provided by Stanton (2015: 248): "you become accustomed to ringing bells, regimented regimes, to spending most of your time indoors, and to doing what you are told. It's all just part of getting ready to be a grown-up one day. Once it has become so deeply ingrained in your programming, it's hard to question it". This process, referred to as dynamic

normalisation (Foucault, 1977), makes all occupants conform to the desired regiment of the institution. More broadly, the institutionalisation of children into the family unit and education reflects the construction of a regulatory regime - enforced and legitimated by a safeguarding agenda. This ensures constant surveillance, allowing discipline and ensuring a dynamic normalisation consistent with a heteronormative childhood. For this to be effective, Foucault highlights that enclosure must occur, with clear hierarchisation within ranks so that internal, articulated and detailed control can occur through these power relations (Ibid).

To achieve this, the body becomes the object and target of power, to be used, subjected, transformed, and improved, and thus made docile through subtle forms of coercion which manipulate our movements, gestures and attitudes (Ibid). This constant control is legitimated through docility and remains persistently observed by our superiors using hierarchical observation. In the context of my research, the institutionalisation of children is enforced by pedagogical discourses, and the cultural construction of their needs reproduces the necessity for constant control and surveillance. Children's surveillance is reproduced by these pedagogical roles and create acquisitions of knowledge about that disciplinary structure (Ibid). In other words, the structure is maintained not by a single authoritative rank or gaze, but a hierarchy of ranks who all keep the ranks below them disciplined towards the same goal. For children, this disciplinary power is simultaneously indiscrete, in that it operates in the two institutions where they spend their entire childhood, and discrete, due to discourses legitimising discipline as a natural and unquestioning fulfilment of their 'needs' (Graham, Treharne and Nairn, 2017). In response to this, the normalisation of judgement and examination, including the power of the 'norm', aspires to make them obedient within these power structures.

3.5 The construction of threats to childhood pedagogy

Foucault provides a conceptual understanding for the disciplinary society, and how this can be linked to the institutionalisation of childhood. The construction of threats towards this pedagogical agenda also remains at the forefront of public discourses. Foucault (1977) highlights that individuals within a disciplinary regime who behave in a non-conforming manner are subjected to disciplinary punishment, with the intention of correcting the behaviour which is considered problematic. Using Jenks' (2005) Apollonian/Dionysian

childhood dualism[53], we can outline how a range of childhood discourses use ideological measurements to coerce and discipline specific behaviours under the privileging of Apollonian imagery. This is evident through Thompson's (2006) Foucauldian analysis of schools, as he identified how the disciplinary regime utilised discourses to construct an idealised 'good student' and demanded conformity to this construction. When this dominance is subjected to resistance from a child, Dionysian imagery is invoked to construct awareness of their impending danger and threat[54].

A further threat to childhood pedagogy can be found amongst discourses which construct dominant understandings of the nuclear family as the natural, preferred family unit (Dowd, 1997). Harding (1999) argues legal, moral, political, and social discourses have focused on the preservation of the heterosexual nuclear family as the preferred means for child-rearing, believing that gender roles within this model provide all the natural qualities for healthy nurturing. These child-rearing demands place considerable constraints on family units outside of the nuclear family model, such as single-parent families, as structural inequalities emerge from these ideological family frameworks. Dowd (1997: 55) highlights that within single-parent families, "law reflects and implements stigma by means of status and structure… family law, employment law, and welfare law interact to impoverish single parents… they incorporate existing social stigma and create new stigma". For example, the work-life balance of a single parent creates barriers to being able to constantly monitor their children's activities. Financial and interpersonal factors can interfere with their involvement in primary socialisation and may require increased reliance on their support network (Amato and Patterson, 2017). This has reproduced discourses about the capability of single parents to effectively raise children. Media and public discourses possess a moral fixation on the

[53] See page 30, subheading 'Young people as agentic consumers of communicative technologies'.
[54] Alongside Jenks (2005), the victim-threat narrative (Hendrick, 1994) also provides an important conceptual understanding of how threats to childhood are constructed (see page 35 for more information). By being able to control children, society can privilege the socialisation of behaviours which constitute Apollonian childhood. This subsequently legitimises the necessity for constant control and surveillance to protect the purity of the Apollonian child, thus avoiding the invoking of victim narratives due to child protection failures. Without this constant surveillance, Dionysian imagery is invoked, and moral panics perpetuated through threat narratives due to the perceived threat that children's agency poses to dominant discourses and power structures. In order for society to deem a child safe, they must conform to the Apollonian child construct by allowing the parent to regulate their social domains (see Hessel, He and Dworkin (2016) on page 49 for more information). In contrast, the Dionysian child construct would be invoked if the right of parents to regulate and control any of the social domains was met with refusal or resistance.

perceived failings of child-rearing and socialisation outside of the nuclear family unit. Children from these 'other' households are often associated with moral panics invoking Dionysian imagery, such as behavioural deviancy, sexual delinquency, and the threats they pose to moral constructions of an idealised childhood (Morjoribanks, 2002).

Although homonormativity is discussed later in the chapter, it is worth acknowledging that legal advancements won by same-sex couples have themselves reinforced heteronormative discourses within childhood pedagogy. This is due to campaigns for family rights for same-sex couples being modelled around their ability to conform to normative ideals of healthy childhood nurturing (Jones, 2013), which Butler (1992: 724) refers to as "an imitation of an imitation, a copy of a copy". By seeking to mirror heteronormativity, homonormativity has assimilated itself by imitating the nuclear family, thus continuing to legitimise and sustain heteronormative discourses. Legal milestones won by the gay rights movement in the UK align with activities and recognition reserved for adulthood and are not indicative of improved experiences for closeted LGBQ young people. To ensure same-sex couples obtained parental rights, homonormativity required adherence to the same heteronormative safeguarding which the heterosexual nuclear family is required to obey. This meant heteronormativity within pedagogical discourses remained replicated by this performative mirroring, rather than challenged for the inequalities they produce for LGBQ young people. By only providing recognition and social validity to LGBQ adults, young people within the grouping remain disempowered and marginalised.

3.6 Construction of heteronormativity

The nuclear family unit continues to be seen as the basic unit of society (Berger, 2017), in which the promotion and preservation of heterosexual norms are nurtured into children. To facilitate this, a variety of medico-moral discourses have emerged for understanding childhood and sexuality, with the family unit being a key site in which these ideological bases have been constituted (Blau and Abramovitz, 2007). The construction of heteronormativity is intrinsically linked to the privileging of the nuclear family and refers to the process by which heterosexuality is indiscrete and discrete in representing itself as 'natural', 'normal' and the ideal way for social relationships to be organised and performed[55] (Peterson, 2013). The

[55] See Rich (1980) and Warner (1991) on pages 50-51, subheading 'Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding'.

nuclear family has enabled dominant power structures to ascribe the recognition of 'family' to those who adhere to compulsory heterosexuality. The intersecting of childhood and sexuality reflects a carefully choreographed socialisation within the family, using specific forms of heteronormative knowledge deemed 'appropriate' within public consciousness because of their reinforcement of heterosexuality as a natural norm.

Construction of knowledge for sexuality has typically been underpinned by essentialism, which implies that certain phenomena are natural, inevitable, universal and biologically determined (Irvine, 1990). This approach positions sexuality as a fixed and unchanging essence within us (DeLamater and Hyde, 1998). To outline every essentialist theory of sexuality would be an exhaustive exercise, but there are a few noticeable theories at the forefront of debate which influence pedagogical understandings of children's sexuality. It is worth outlining these to demonstrate the role they play in naturalising heterosexuality and promoting the heteronormative nuclear family.

Freud's theory of child psychosexual development, including Oedipus and Electra, involve heterosexual parents. This model highlights the potential implications which are said to occur when heteronormative child-rearing is absent, particularly when stereotypical gender roles are not adhered to[56]. Freud outlined the psychosexual stages of children's libido, and the link which the 'id', 'ego' and 'superego' place in satisfying the pleasure demands of the 'id', but in an accordance with safe, socially acceptable (ego) and moral (superego) standards (Salkind, 2004). He argued psychosexual development exists across five stages: Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latent and Genital, with each stage needing to be negotiated and satisfied to ensure prevention of mental abnormality (Ibid). The genital stage, synonymous with adolescence, is argued to reflect a revisiting of a real or fantasised form of homosexuality, with the permanent adoption of a homosexual psyche being "a form of deviance resulting from the inappropriate resolution of the Oedipus or Electra conflict" (Ibid: 132). Consequently, it is evident from this theory how the nuclear family becomes constituted as the ideal within child-rearing.

By necessitating the roles of 'mother' and 'father', through dominant assumptions of feminine and masculine traits, the model exposes the roles these play in facilitating psychosexual development in children. These gender roles are presented as natural and

[56] This also plays a key role in constructing male and female sexuality as fundamentally different, as well as female sexuality as lesser than male.

complementary to each other when facilitating the healthy psychosexual development of a 'becoming' heterosexual child. Johnson (1963) intertwined the work of Freud and Talcott Parsons, arguing the development of a child's personality requires the clarity of roles between mother and father, in the structure of Parsons' instrumental-expressive[57] distinction. This will satisfy the Oedipus, because a daughter will appreciate her instrumental father figure, and the son will accept him as a mentor. Segregating 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' within categories of 'normal' and 'deviant' exposes the normalisation of heteronormative desires within Freud's framework. This accounts for why family units outside of the nuclear model have been scrutinised for possible 'damage' caused to children's development. A popular example being single-parent families, who have been associated with 'causing' homosexuality because of overbearing mothers and absent fathers (Chang-May and Congress, 2016).

Cognitive psychology equally provides insight into the developmental role of the family. Piaget does not refer specifically to sexuality within his cognitive model of children's intellectual development, but the role of the environment draws attention to the privileging of heteronormativity for constructing a normative view of 'healthy' child development. Piaget argues children undergo biological maturation as they grow and interact with their environment (Carsaro, 2005). Through active learning, interactions allow intellectual assimilation, transmitting knowledge of how their physical and social world's function (Ibid). In contrast, Vygotsky argued for a cognitive model which was less universalist, instead emphasising the role of culture in shaping children's intellectual development, accounting for clear cognitive differences across societies (Shaffer and Kipp, 2014). Irrespective of their differences, both expose the necessity to control a child to ensure that a specific intellectual development allows them to assimilate into their environment. These models emphasise development as a natural and linear process from child immaturity to perfect adult maturity. This exposes the fragile way heteronormativity is underpinned, as a child's active learning process consistently seeks to incorporate new knowledge alongside its existing understanding of its environment. Considerable anxieties emerge from this within public discourses and highlights why concerns regarding non-normative 'exposure' require the transmission of

[57] Carroll and Campbell (2008) highlight the expressive-instrumental distinction in greater detail. The 'expressive' refers to a woman's femininity and household roles of providing affection, care, love and protection, whereas the 'instrumental' role refers to the man's masculinised obligation to provide for the family as the breadwinner.

heteronormative, age-appropriate information and media (Allred and David, 2007) to socialise children in a 'healthy' way towards adulthood. Attempts to challenge this by raising awareness of LGBQ identities has led to significant backlash by moral authoritarians and tabloid press (Ibid). These powerful figures have constructed scripts about predatory gay men and homosexual recruiters (Smyth, 2006) who are attempting to exploit a child's vulnerability.

Such dominant discourses would not be possible without Krafft-Ebing's 1886 book Psychopathia Sexualis, which represented a profound moment within the scientific pursuit of sexual knowledge. Psychopathia Sexualis represents a pivotal shift within scientific exploration of sexual behaviours, with 'perversion' emerging as a broad category to be classified and discussed within the medical-psychiatric field (Oosterhuis, 2012). Sexology also saw the emergence of a complementary two-sex model of 'male' and 'female', which recognised each as occupying "different realms of social life, performed unique social and cultural duties, and behaved with separate sets of manners" (Chiang, 2010: 43). Medical interests in sexuality intersected with legal and societal discourses to investigate how criminal acts, such as sodomy, were caused by sexual deviancy and symptomatic of their pathology (Mort, 2010; Oosterhuis, 2012). This highlighted the first time the 'homosexual' had been classified as a distinct social group. This identifies a key Foucauldian standpoint, as the psychiatrisation of perversions, as well as the specification of distinct types of individuals, are seen as exposing the collaborative effort between medical doctors and sexual scientists in creating new discourses of science and medicine (Chiang, 2010). These discourses have enabled the privileging of heterosexuality as 'natural' and 'normal' when practiced in its monogamous, genito-centric, nuclear family form. In contrast, any individuals who fall outside of this risk being deemed undesirable, unworthy of support, and even pathologically disordered (Cowan et al., 1993; Walsh, 2003).

3.7 Scientia sexualis and sexual biopower

The influence of societal structures within sexual socialisation is evident from the elaborative ways sexual acts are used as products of social power (Seidman, 2015). The construction of the 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual', as highlighted earlier within this chapter, reflect distinct labels underpinned by medico-moral discourses. Heteronormativity enables heterosexuality to maintain dominant status, whereas other forms of sexual behaviours which are not monogamous, reproductive, and genito-centric remain pathologized as an execrated other

(Seidman, Fischer and Meeks, 2011). Foucault (1976) describes this social evolution as a period in which disciplining the body and regulating the population became the primary axes, introducing sexuality as the most instrumental element within power relations. It is through this theoretical understanding that such power structures can be deciphered.

In the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1976), Foucault discusses how the construction of sexuality intersects with a variety of different power relations, deploying sexual discourses which mask its existence as a constructed entity (Trumball, 2018). To illustrate how this deployment operates, Foucault uses the term 'biopower' to describe:

> an indispensable element in the development of capitalism… it had to have methods of power capable of optimising forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them [the population] more difficult to govern. If the development of the great instruments of the state, as institutions of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as techniques of power present at every level of the social body and utilised by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operating in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them (Foucault, 1976: 141).

As sexuality became constituted as a product of biopower, deployed through 'scientia sexualis'[58], this allowed the state to regulate sexual classifications and identities, distinguishing four strategic unities which formed mechanisms of knowledge and power centring on sex (Ibid). 'Hysterization of women's bodies' and 'socialisation of procreative behaviour' are two of these strategic unities (Danahamer, Schirato and Webb, 2000), and highlights discourses which underpin the nuclear family unit as a heteronormative function. The control of women's bodies not only refers to their reproductive regulation, although such discourses would have the dual benefit of reinforcing regulation over reproductive sexuality, but also constructs the feminine traits of their sex as natural and focused on motherhood (Taylor, 2011). Further to this, 'the psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure' exposes the disciplinary way sexual scientific discourses maintain hierarchisation, with corrective

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[58] 'Scientia sexualis' refers to the scientific pursuit of discovering "true" sex in sexual sciences, which Foucault uses as evidence for rejecting the Repressive hypothesis (e.g., the widespread belief that Western societies repressed sexuality up until the early twentieth century) (Foucault, 1976).

technologies sought for sexual anomalies outside of permitted categories of 'natural' pleasures (Foucault, 1976). This deployment of sex has had a profound impact on understandings of sexual discourses, which still prevail today within essentialist knowledge of sexuality.

3.8 Pedagogisation of children's sex

The final specific mechanism of knowledge and power centring on sex, outlined by Foucault, is the pedagogisation of children's sex (Foucault, 1976). This is the result of parents and other pedagogues constructing narratives about children's vulnerability to sex. The construction of these threats is reproduced by power structures, with Moore and Reynolds (2018: 122) highlighting "it is adults who determine how children's sexuality is understood and it is adults who decide what sexual knowledge children should have access to, in what form and at what time".

The motive for this, according to Hendrick (1994), can be found in the childcare narratives of the body/mind dualism. Since the eighteenth century, childcare policy has concerned itself with a child's bodily purity, allowing the will of the adult to overrule the desires of the child (Ibid). Later stages of medical discourses sought to examine the mind of the child as a continuation of understanding the bodily whole, leading to the construction of discourses about the mental fragility and instability of the child's mind (Ibid). The invention of these neuroses became important in legitimising the necessity of regulation and surveillance. Medical discourses made the child's biological body and developmental mind a place of attendant medicalised pathologies which required strict nurturing to manage. The containment of children highlights how the pedagogisation of their sex has been a key factor in disciplining sex and sexuality. Discourses emphasise the necessity of making them docile within power structures so that they are passive recipients of knowledge, transmitted via approved RSE lessons and other forms of childhood socialisation.

Through the pedagogisation of children's sex, heteronormativity is established as the desired performance, based around stereotypical gender roles (Seidman, 2015). It is through this regimented socialisation where the masculine and feminine traits of gender become deceptively constituted as 'natural' differences in sex. By performing to these roles, individuals demonstrate alignment with the sexual norm and avoid being discredited as a

sexual 'other'[59] (Fisher, 2009). This is particularly relevant during teenage years, as this period reflects a time when the effects of socialisation become most noticeable and overt within institutions (Measor, Tiffin and Miller, 2000). Young children are able to roleplay heteronormative gender roles and have these desexualised by adults (Moore and Reynolds, 2018), whereas teenage years represent a contested space for sexual roleplay because of how anxieties sexualise their behaviour[60].

This sexualisation requires strict monitoring from parents to ensure it adheres to desired heteronormative expectations (Renold, 2005), potentially creating innumerable barriers for a teenager. Such barriers are particularly problematic for closeted LGBQ young person, whose socialisation persistently regulates them within a heteronormative structure. This requires them to circumvent surveillance so that they can access a broader framework of 'restricted' sexual information.

3.9 The sexual regulation and socialisation of young people

The emergence of the 'teenager' within constructions of childhood is intrinsically linked to socio-economic conditions and marketisation from the emerging Post-World War Two welfare state (Cawood, 2004). O'Neill (1986) highlights this was the result of fathers being deployed in battle and mothers permitted to work as part of the 'home front'. This meant control over children was significantly weakened by the wartime reconfigurations to the nuclear family functions. The heightened sense of independence and agency young people benefited from during this period continued to remain post-war and became a source of commodity and consumerism within the market. The reinforcements of teenage identity became represented within various forms of new media, with 'rock and roll' and 'pop' offering rebellious portrayals for teenagers by challenging expectations of performativity and promoting activities considered 'deviant' (Beckett and Russell, 2015; Gilbert, 1986). The acknowledgement of this new period of childhood was further solidified through the legal and social expansion of childhood, with the 1944 Education Act creating a secondary tier of education for young people. This reform recognised a distinctive stage of childhood development, providing more explicit reinforcements of heteronormative gender roles in recognition of this group being on the verge of reaching adulthood.

[59] See Butler (1990) on page 51, subheading 'Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding'.
[60] See Giddens and Griffiths (2006) on page 38, subheading 'Emergence of the online moral panic'.

The recognition of adolescence within developmental life-stage models has been used to construct moral panics regarding perceived threats to societal authority. These have typically centred around the sexual threat posed by a young person's sexual maturation and the necessity to maintain control and surveillance as a way of managing this (Kakihara and Tilton-Weaver, 2009). This again links to adolescence being a between and betwixt status, as highlighted by Giddens and Griffiths (2006). When young people have sought to subvert this control by attempting to engage in 'adult-only' behaviours, these have invoked threat narratives and the construction of moral panics to justify interventionism and prevent an adult's perceived loss of control over socialisation.

A moral panic is triggered when a substantial proportion of a population, typically a dominant majority, regard a subgroup as posing a threat to rules and moral order (Goode and Ben-Yehadu, 1994). The applicability of this to adolescence remains prominent within social anxieties about how young people can exercise agency to participate in sexual behaviours due to biological bodily changes. When confronted with biological maturation, protectionist discourses shift to concerns regarding the immaturity and incompetency of the mind, thus sustaining the adult-child binary when classifying appropriate behaviour, even despite sexual maturation of the body occurring (Kyle, 2008). This vulnerability of the mind provides the justification for continuing control and surveillance over young people. The pedagogisation of children's sex highlights how these developmental discourses have been constituted to represent adolescence as a heightened threat to desired heteronormative socialisation (Cree, Clapton and Smith, 2016). Sexual moral panics are nothing new within constructions of childhood, but adolescence is underpinned by these heightened anxieties, which invoke the 'evil' threat posed by young people when wanting independence from surveillance. Socio-historical discourses about sexual morality have also been continuously reproduced within threat narratives (Brannen et al., 1994). If unregulated, young people are portrayed as engaging in behaviours such as sexual activity, drug and alcohol misuse, and being in danger from STIs and pregnancy. This potential delinquency has reinforced moral panics regarding the ill-effects on society resulting from inadequate parenting (Coleman and Schofield, 2003). More recently, threats to and from children have centred on digital technologies and the challenges of maintaining constant control and surveillance when portable devices allow agency outside of adults' watchful gaze.

The exertion of pedagogical power over children's sex remains prominent within anxieties regarding young people's internet usage. Socio-historical discourses have been reconstructed to (re)produce 'new' strategies for regulating sexual agency (Egan and Hawkes, 2010). Such discourses on 'premature sexualisation' have been widely circulated by many different powerful groups within society (Moore and Reynolds, 2018) and are not solely limited to young people. However, the construction of this life-stage as a period for preparing for adulthood presents inconsistencies for young people. On occasions, parents and parental figures will utilise this construction to encourage healthy transitioning towards adulthood, such as setting future goals on employment prospects. On other occasions, they will instead invoke a young person's child status, such as with sexuality. This has caused social domains[61] to become contested spaces within the parent-child relationship, contributing to a child's motivations for engaging in acts of concealment. The construction of risk pivots from early childhood anxieties about children being at risk of abuse if not surveilled, to anxieties invoking threat narratives regarding how young people may choose to exercise agency and independence in undesirable and threatening ways (Cree, 2010).

Even at adolescence, confessionality[62] remains prominent within sexual pedagogy (Foucault, 1976). Control and surveillance within the family unit still impose requirements on children to inform a parent where they are going, who they will be with, maintaining regular contact, being home at a designated time etc. All of these mechanisms of control and surveillance contribute to the ongoing bodily docility which this environment enables during socialisation (Roker and Stace, 2005). This process highlights the coercive nature of this mechanism, as the power of the norm constructs a belief to young people that they are being afforded independence and privacy, but still provides parents with a surveillance apparatus. This is particularly evident when minor transgressions to this authority occur, such as arriving home after a parental curfew takes effect. Young people's performativity acknowledges this

[61] See Hessel, He and Dworkin (2016) on page 49, subheading 'Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding'

[62] Foucault (1976) argues the tradition of confession combined with scientific discourse to create our modern concept of sexuality. One of the ways in which confession and science were brought together was through psychiatry's development of a method for interpreting confessions and providing the listener with the position of authority to understand that confession and intervene accordingly to provide therapeutic benefit for the speaker. This is evident within the pedagogisation of children's sex as children are frequently encouraged to speak with a parent or parental figure regarding any sexual 'dangers', thus positioning the parent/pedagogue as the listener with a position of authority, and the child as a speaker whose therapeutic benefit comes from confessing and subsequently being 'protected' as a response to this.

transgression and accepts the legitimacy of the parent to use a disciplinary punishment in response (McNamee, 2000).

The online moral panic reflects the most recent reproduction of this surveillance apparatus, with the creation of internet safety guidelines to respond to a social change which threatens adults' preservation of control over children. Moore and Reynolds (2018: 123) acknowledge this perceived threat, stating "children's easy access to the internet means they do not have to wait for adults' transmission of sexual knowledge". To rectify this, it required a "production of specialised knowledge by concerned experts about how best to respond to these pressing dangers" (Ibid: 122). This specialised knowledge has been produced through the UKCCIS. The pedagogisation of children's sex can be identified through its functions, as dominant discourses are reproduced to legitimise the involvement of parents in regulating the activities of young people through the deployment of communication, restriction and supervision strategies (Livingstone et al., 2017). This highlights the ongoing reproduction of sexual biopower when subjecting children to regulation and continuing to legitimise their surveillance within the online sphere. The construction of the UKCCISS also represents a dominant power structure within the UK's online safeguarding agenda, as the council possesses considerable control over the knowledge transmitted to the population, including the role it has in legitimising organisations as a trusted safeguarding partner[63].

It is unsurprising that the sexually agentic child remains excluded from this safeguarding process (Hawkes and Egan, 2008), as childcare experts render this model oxymoronic when making claims and decisions on children's behalf. Hawkes and Egan (2008: 193) argue that it is "girls who are the naturalised victims within traditionally gendered framings". Imagery within state sanctioned guidance reproduce gendered child sexual abuse discourses, which causes girls to be invoked within the cultural construction of threats and subsequently policed to a greater degree than boys. Whilst girls are consistently subjected to heightened anxieties regarding sexualisation throughout childhood, these discourses become particularly prominent during teenage years. This is because naturalised assumptions of female passivity become a site of anxiety for parents, who fear that girls are more susceptible to sexualisation

[63] The Byron Review (2008) drew attention to the deficiencies traditional safeguarding parameters had in effectively regulating the online sphere and recommended that the council implement multi-agency involvement of childcare experts, businesses and children's charities. It legitimised the role of the council as a dominant power structure within children's online safeguarding, with the capacity for organisations to have a 'voice' only if they conform to the council's agenda. See page 41, subheading 'The role of Government in developing child internet safety guidelines', for more information.

(Ibid) and would therefore undermine society's desired feminine traits. Such anxieties reflect the manifestations of male power illustrated by Rich's (1980) compulsory heterosexuality. Specifically, the functioning of heterosexuality as a means for rejecting female sexuality and providing males with the power to force their sexuality onto female's through sexualisation and the male gaze.

Strictly regulating socialisation has allowed for sex education to take an authoritative approach in inculcating students with dominant values, beliefs and practices of their time (Jones, 2009). RSE remains strictly regulated by sexual biopower and used as a means of transmitting dominant ideologies regarding sexuality to maintain the status quo. This involves reinforcing femininity and masculinity within gender performance (Jones, 2011), and sustaining the undesirability of all other identities by rendering them invisible, pathologized or stigmatised (Ibid). Butler (1990) argues that by concealing sexual identities, power structures have created a rigid frame of behaviours which regulate people's gender performativity to avoid having their identity discredited. This concealment preserves heteronormativity through a combination of oppressive power structures and individual policing (Ibid). As highlighted by Foucault, power does not only reside in institutions in society, but also in the individual (McNamee, 2000). Due to this, closeted LGBQ young people are subjected to policing from peers, who use gender norms to determine categorisations of 'normal' and 'other' when policing each other (Nava, 1992).

3.10 Heteronormative policing of identity

Gender performance plays a key role in maintaining heteronormativity within societal power structures[64], with sexual biopower being maintained by normative performances from bi-gender groups within society. When contained, LGBQ young people undertake an elaborate process of normative performances to conceal their closeted status and assimilate into their environment (Ceplak, 2013). This self-policing is maintained by pedagogical discourses which necessitates the display of heteronormative, gendered roles, with sexual 'others' only recognised amongst those who have reached adulthood (Ferfolia, 2007). This concealment reinforces heteronormative power structures, allowing for prejudice, ignorance and sexual hierarchy to regulate (Ceplak, 2013) and police the gendered performances of its occupants.

[64] See Rich (1980); Warner (1991) and Butler (1990) on pages 50-51, subheading 'Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding'.

Ferfolia (2007) acknowledges that despite legal attempts to challenge anti-gay discrimination within legislation, heteronormative discourses still compel many LGBQ young people to conceal their identity. This is because these identities are still presented as socially inferior but who are deserving of tolerance, rather than being recognised as equal members of society[65].

Jackson (2006: 10) argues that heteropatriarchy plays a fundamental role within this policing, with hegemonic masculinity providing "a high status, dominant form of masculinity… and [which] influences understanding of how they [teenage males] need to act in order to be 'acceptably' male". Heteronormative structures thereby become forums for reinforcing prejudices, which manifest in symbolic ways amongst peers (Pugh, 2010) to demonstrate normative identity. This process occurs through regulated, permittable behaviours, allowing males to display overt masculine behaviours within interactions (Solebello and Elliot, 2011) thus making heteronormative identity projection vital for assimilation within peer interactions (Seidman, 2015). This demonstrates a significant dilemma for closeted LGBQ young people, as their containment within heteronormative spaces compels them to spend time with other occupants who use heteronormative performativity to scrutinise and discredit other individuals (Beckett, 1998; Epstein and Johnson, 1998). Considerable pressure is subsequently placed on young people to roleplay a presentation of self which conforms to heteronormative gender stereotypes. This causes young people to simultaneously police themselves and others (Martino, 2000). By embodying powerful gender stereotypes, such as hegemonic masculinity, this allows some children to occupy a hierarchical position. This occupation subsequently allows dominant peers to enforce heteronormative gender roles (Chambers, Loon and Tinkcnell, 2004) and stigmatise those who do not adhere to the heterosexual matrix[66].

Constructing heterosexual identity as a natural, assumptive identity makes 'coming out' necessary to provide visibility to an otherwise invisible identity, and it is only through these

[65] Jan Pakulski's (1997) notion of cultural citizenship argues that legal rights are not a sufficient way of determining how equal a group is compared to the most powerful within society. This highlights a key problem with determining LGBQ equality based upon legal rights, as there are still significant cultural and social barriers which prevent LGBQ groups from being able to meaningfully propagate a cultural identity or lifestyle. Instead, their acceptance into heteronormative society is conditional on them adopting a homonormative identity. See subheading 'The propagation of homonormativity' in this chapter (page 81) for more information.

[66] See Butler (1990) on page 51, subheading 'Heteronormative paternalism within safeguarding'.

heteronormative power structures that the concept of closeted obtains meaning (Adams, 2010). Sedgwick (2008) uses a semiotic understanding of a closet to highlight the dilemma and oppression LGBQ young people face when institutionalised into these heteronormative environments. A closet is a literal or internalised room for privacy and retirement, in which the person is not subjected to the surveillance of power structures and its agents. The label builds upon the 'skeleton in the closet' idiom, in which a private and concealed trouble is ever present but carefully hidden to avoid detection. It is these qualities which offer LGBQ young people the capacity to assimilate into their environments, without being discredited as an execrated other within such highly policed spaces. For this reason, Adams (2010) argues that gay identity has become inextricably linked to the closet metaphor, and reflects an inescapable, ever-present process for LGBQ individuals as they navigate heteronormative orthodoxies. It further represents an internalised safe space, in which individuals can escape the regulations and scrutiny which permeate from these orthodoxies.

3.11 The propagation of homonormativity

The capacity for minority groups to be ambivalent about their discredited status has been outlined by Goffman in *Stigma* (1990). He noted how the marginalisation of spoiled identities can be mitigated through an individual's rejection of other discredited persons who display stereotypical qualities and other negative attributes, supporting the norms of wider society. It is through this collective process that queer discourses have been radically reconstructed to focus on social respectability and legal victories (LeFranc, 2018). Historically, LGBQ spaces and community resources focused on spatiality to provide inclusive health and social support, such as needle exchange programmes, homeless shelters, and support for gender and sexual violence[67] (Ibid). More recently, queer discourses were reconstructed to focus on 'love' and 'equality', invoking imagery of a white, cis-normative, middle-class minority group who are committed to marriage and family life (Ibid). This has led to white gay men being at the forefront of the gay rights movement, at the expense of minimising the representation of others within the grouping (Kulick, 2013). The most widely recognised accomplishments of these movements – marriage, family rights, anti-discrimination protections – not only conform to neoliberal economics but even enhances them further (Duggan, 2004).

[67] See page 54, subheading 'Online coming out support communities and the impact of homonormativity'.

This agenda highlights how white, middle class, patriarchy has allowed for gay men to disproportionately benefit from legal reforms in comparison to other multiply marginalised groups. Homonormativity illustrates how the mirroring of heteronormativity has proven an effective tactic in constituting monogamous, same-sex couples as socially permissible relationships. This is evident within legislation against homophobia which has produced 'equalities' landscapes for sexual minorities, but in a manner which is socially and spatially uneven (Podmore, 2013): the result of a climate of equality that is underpinned by "attendant processes of assimilation, ambivalence and exclusion" (Ibid: 263). Seidman (2004) argues that homonormativity seeks to be a political and social tolerance only for sexual minorities who do not seek to challenge the dominance of heterosexuals. It is through this understanding that the normalisation of 'gay' people has been constructed within Western communities to legitimise their equalities.

Branfman (2018) highlights the socialisation of homonormativity through media portrayals, which utilise 'normal gay'. This construct is heteronormative, middle-class, monogamous, concerned with family life and contributes to a positive class structure. These have become key in unifying hetero- and homo- normativities, as their public consumption have altered perceptions of gay identity and challenged narratives of homosexuals as a 'pollutant' sexual underclass (Seidman, 2004). They have also provided LGBQ people a pathway to assimilation and acceptance, as the 'normal gay' codifies specific personal and social behaviours which must be performed to integrate into their environment (Ibid: 133). Nevertheless, the coming out process for young LGBQ people operates in the 'between and betwixt' space of emerging adulthood, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Homonormative community spaces supporting closeted young people reproduce the 'normal gay' construct when regulating information and support, thus pushing individuals in a desired direction. This enables them to simultaneously support young people as they explore their identity, whilst remaining loyal to heteronormative safeguarding by using their adult status to moderate and restrict information (Rebun and Oswald, 2009). Homonormativity simultaneously recognises gay people as culturally intelligible and legitimate individuals within society but reinforces normative behaviours of gender and sexuality as a condition for validating their personhood (Cavalcante, 2015). In other words, the acceptance of LGBQ individuals is dependent on their assimilation in mirroring heteronormativity, which sustains sexual biopower by making the 'normal gay' part of the hierarchised structure of gender performativity. By doing so, this

bioregulation of gay people facilitates the state's broader aim of producing a 'healthy' sexual population (Anderson, 2018).

By constructing dominant discourses of the 'normal gay', homonormativity has had the contradictory impact of further excluding certain LGBQ groups (Seidman, 2004), causing them to become an excluded minority within a minority. Gilbert (2009) attributes this assimilative consequence, in part, to strict bigenderism, which requires stereotypical performativity to avoid being stigmatised as an 'imperfect' male or female. As homonormativity requires the adoption of assimilationist political strategies and hierarchised identity categories (Butler, 1990), the consequences of this have been profound in how it regulates performativity to sustain heteronormative dominance. Branfman (2018) argues that the consequences of this are twofold. First, 'effeminophobic' attitudes are reinforced as part of this policing to continue preserving heteropatriarchy, and gay men with feminine qualities are subjected to further pathologizing and ridicule by heteronormative and homonormative discourses. Sedgwick (1993) argues the fixation on psychopathologising effeminate gay men stems from a broader desire to prevent gayness from existing at all. The assimilation of permissible gay identities is accepted only on the condition that heteronormativity is not threatened. This requires misogynism to be upheld through the reproduction of discourses which privilege masculinity, with a new 'genteel' homophobia used against men who do not perform in accordance with this hierarchisation (Branfman, 2018). Second, lesbians become constituted as a threat to heteropatriarchy within homonormative discourses, as they pose a potential challenge to the dominance of men by demonstrating a capacity to live independently of them (Seidman, 2004). This reinforces challenges to their legitimation, because of the perceived threat they pose to the nuclear family in modelling a lifestyle for women outside of the patriarchal roles of 'wife' and 'mother' (Ibid). A further threat to patriarchy is perceived in how lesbians are assumed to reject femininity and invoke masculine privilege by pursuing women as sexual partners, and even sometimes adopting masculine styles within performativity to claim social respect and power (Ibid).

3.12 Closeted LGBQ young people in a constructed webspace

For many closeted LGBQ young people, the internet is the first space in which they express their sexual identity, allowing them to receive support from others who have, or are, undergoing similar distressing situations (Barak, Boniel-Nissim and Suler, 2008). Accessing online support groups have been shown to have a positive impact for individuals who have

sought out online support communities (Thomas, Ross and Harris, 2007). By providing support in a group context, web spaces allow individuals to provide and receive support, form interpersonal relationships, and experience comradeship with other marginalised peers (Bane, Haymaker and Zinchuk, 2005). These outline the appeal online LGBQ web spaces have for closeted LGBQ young people. Seidman (2004) highlights that despite homonormativity providing unprecedented exposure to queer discourses, these have been resisted in certain institutions, such as schools. Despite society constructing permissible LGBQ identities, the acceptability of them remains deeply contested within institutionalised spaces occupied by young people. Instead, the lasting permeations of compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity continue to only legitimise strict heteronormative performances for now. The internet offers closeted young people an escape from this heteronormative containment, allowing them to circumvent control and surveillance from their parents.

The Online Disinhibition Effect provides an insightful framework for documenting how and why this circumvention of control and surveillance occurs within cyberspace. Suler (2004: 321) argues “rather than thinking of [online] disinhibition as the revealing of an underlying ‘true self’, we can conceptualise it as a shift to a constellation of self-structure”. To illustrate this, he identifies six factors facilitating benign disinhibition, which is the phenomenon that allows somebody to feel comfortable and safe performing a social or supportive role online. These six factors are:

Dissociative Anonymity: Individuals can hide or alter their non-virtual identities, allowing them to create and maintain clear distinctions between their performed offline and online self (Ibid: 322).

Invisibility: People are unable to see each other and are instead able to construct their own virtual identity and presence within a space. The lack of personal information, visibility and eye contact are significant contributors to online unidentifiability, allowing for the occurrence of disinhibition (Ibid: 322).

Asynchronicity: Whilst face-to-face interactions maintain a continuous feedback loop which powerfully shapes the ongoing flow of self-disclosure and discussions, people in populated cyberspaces do not typically communicate in a manner which invokes the same immediate response, and develop disinhibition by being able to control when they are ready to experience a reaction. (Ibid: 323).

Solipsistic introjection: Self-boundaries become altered by the combination of text communication and lack of face-to-face social cues. As we read text, we begin to construct a social identity of the online author in absence of their physical cues, leading to a constructed image introjected into our psyche. As we can project our own 'voice' into text as we read it, this encourages disinhibition by allowing people to understand forms of talk as existing within a social intrapsychic world which operates under their social structuring, rather than by the domineering discourses prevalent within the physical world (Ibid: 323).

Dissociative imagination: By contextualising online interactions as occurring in a social intrapsychic world, our online personas, along with the 'online others', exist in a social space which is separate and apart from the dominant structures of the physical world (Ibid: 324). This form of disinhibition is reliant on the other factors of this framework for its amplification, as it can only function because of individuals acknowledging the omnipotent control that the other factors afford them in regulating this social world. This factor is importantly intertwined with solipsistic introjection for closeted LGBQ young people, as the ability to 'log out' of cyberspace ensures this social world is crafted as a disparate space, thus ensuring that it can be accessed and maintained in a manner which preserves its concealment from the unwanted attention of authority figures (Miller, 2016)

Minimisation of status and authority: The absence of authoritative observers diminishes the status and authority of individuals, including when virtual spaces are populated with individuals known to possess authority in a face-to-face setting. Therefore, individuals are presented with an equal opportunity to perform themselves without concerns of fear, judgement or retribution (Suler, 2004: 324).

Miller (2016) found that online disinhibition had a profound impact on the coming out process, with closeted young people feeling able to perform freely on a webspace which normalises queer discourses. He concludes that this phenomenon represents a "computer-mediated escape from the closet" (Miller, 2016: 602) for LGBQ young people. Macionis and Plummer (2008: 25) highlight the endless potential of cyberspace, stating that "since access to websites is open to anybody, anything could be said with no regard to truth, logic, rationality or human kindness". This quote draws attention to the vast possibilities, negative and positive, that web spaces can possess. Such endless potential presents a myriad of possibilities for constructing online spaces. The webspace examined in my research provides insight into how the heteronormative discourses outlined within this chapter reconstitute this

supportive queer space to maintain dominant heteronormative ideals. By exercising regulatory control over childhood, the authorisation of children's services to work with young people is dependent on conformity to safeguarding standards enforced by the state. The same form of regulation which determines membership to the UKCCIS is reproduced to determine eligibility for children's charities to be recognised as a 'safe' webspace for young people to access. This creates a contradictory agenda for queer spaces: they recognise the privacy needs of a closeted young person but are also forced to be complicit in the heteronormative bioregulation of their membership base. In doing so, the community webspace assisting my research project are themselves providing a constructed webspace which operates in a contested homonormative space, with the governmentality of the state reproducing discourses to maintain its power over children and childhood.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how childhood and sexuality have been socially constructed and institutionalised to facilitate constant control and surveillance. The necessity for a regulated socialisation stems from a developmentalist approach to understanding children, requiring adults to exert constant control and surveillance so that heteronormative discourses are naturalised and replicated as a child develops towards adulthood. The work of Foucault has been illustrated for analysing the power relations which are evident within the socialisation process, as the institutionalisation of children into the family unit and education provides the regulatory means to enact bodily docility, ensuring that child occupants become passive recipients of a carefully regimented heteronormative socialisation. This form of sexual biopower is ideologically driven, relying on the privileging of heterosexuality when making assumptions about the identity of individuals, which is particularly evident within the cultural construction of children's needs.

This chapter has also critically examined how heteronormative policing in institutionalised settings has mandated a performativity from LGBQ young people to remain concealed. Their capacity for constructing and expressing their sexual identity is limited to the online sphere, as heteronormative discourses which regiment them within the family unit and education require adherence to a compulsory heterosexuality. The internet, however, subverts and transgresses this surveillance apparatus, enabling them to interact with other marginalised peers and access alternative information and resources. The role of homonormativity has also been problematised within this chapter, as legal milestones for the gay rights movement have

privileged adulthood and provided little direct benefit to LGBQ young people. Homonormativity has also reinforced heteronormative discourses within the UK's safeguarding agenda. This is apparent from children's charities which have been required to demonstrate their alliance to the Government's protectionist agenda in exchange for being designated a 'safe space' for children. As a result, this has drawn attention to how hetero- and homo- normativities are complicit in creating 'safe spaces' for young people. By utilising these theories, my research recognises the rights and agency of young people. The knowledge they possess requires a research design which enables their voices to be the guiding force for analysing the project's research questions. My research is explicit in rejecting developmental influences on its methodology, as many of the problems which are examined are attributed to the same oppressive power structures which seek to normalise and privilege specific groups of people within social hierarchies.

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology of my research, starting with its ontological and epistemological stances and its alignment within an interpretivist paradigm. The use of qualitative research methods is also acknowledged. The positioning of my research within the New Sociology of Childhood is illustrated to show how this informs understandings of childhood and children's participatory rights, which impact my ethical considerations. Asymmetrical reciprocity and ethical symmetry are also discussed as part of my ethical framework, and key ethical dilemmas are analysed. This includes examining accessibility, power, consent, risk management and privacy. Data analysis approaches are illustrated to outline Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, as well as Braun and Clarke's six-stage thematical analysis. Finally, participant demographics are outlined to show the breakdown of the 24 participants by age, gender and sexual identifications, as well as outlining the data collection stages each participant was involved in.

4.1 Ontology and epistemology within an interpretivist framework

The study of ontology is "the study of the nature of reality" (Broom and Willis, 2007:25), and different ontological paradigms exist to provide researchers with an analytical approach for understanding reality (Warwick-Booth, Cross and Lowcock, 2012). Jacquette (2002: 2) states that we must "enquire into the precise meaning of the words 'being', 'to be', 'exist', 'existence', to be 'real', 'actual', 'present', and like cognates", as assumptions about reality lack insight into what it means for the world to exist. Auguste Comte, when introducing 'Sociology' as a 'science of society' (Pickering, Bourdeau and Schmaus, 2018), believed the discipline could study social phenomena in the same way natural sciences study physical phenomena. This relied on a philosophical belief that the positivism underpinning scientific objectivity could be applied to studying the social world to produce progress and order (Adams and Sydie, 2002). This positivist stance required objectivity from the researcher, as its aim was to discover the natural truth of the social world, believing these general laws stemmed from a 'natural', single reality which influenced and shaped human behaviour and society (Mill, 2017). Although classical sociologists such as Durkheim did not subscribe to every ontological belief of Comte's, his positivist ontology remained influential. Porter (1995) highlights that because of Durkheim's early belief in a positivist study of society,

Durkheim believed a single reality existed for all of society, and it was the purpose of sociology to establish these facts and explain how they function as social knowledge. For this reason, ontological implications of positivism require data methods to be grounded in a scientific rationale which seeks 'social facts' and 'collective representations', using deductive approaches to hypothesise and measure validity of social phenomena (Bradford and Cullen, 2013).

Howe (2004) argues positivist ontology within social sciences reduces it to a performative mimic of natural sciences. Instead, he advocates for an interpretivist philosophy using a relativist ontology to embrace the differences between natural and social sciences. Relativism rejects the claim of a single reality, instead believing multiple realities exist through socially constructed meaning by individuals and groups (McLaughlin, 2006). An interpretivist framework emphasises human agency as fundamental within social life, which must be studied to understand how individuals are pervasive interpreters when constructing their social reality (Taylor, cited in Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987). Unlike atoms and molecules, human behaviour cannot be understood in similar ways because of their capacity for agency and meaning making (Howe, 2004). To illustrate the shortcomings of positivist ontology, Cronbach (1975) refers to the 'generalisation decay'[68] which often emerges within quantitative social research. Additionally, Giddens (1976:13) highlights the role social sciences have played in hastening this decay, arguing that "those who still wait for a Newton of social science are not only waiting for a train that won't arrive, they're in the wrong station altogether".

To ensure my research aligned with a relativist ontology, I accepted particular ontological positions regarding reality. These are summarised by Snape and Spencer (2003: 11) who states, "social reality does not exist independently from human conceptions and

[68] This decay refers to statistical findings which previously reflected a perceived social reality but were subjected to shifts in social phenomena that cause them to be outdated statistics reflective of a particular point of history. The ability for such attitudes and measurements to be subjected to these shifts demonstrate the ontological challenges of categorising reality as a fixed and singular phenomenon which humans are merely influenced by. This is undeniably important to my research, as social attitudes towards homosexuality have undergone considerable shifts within recent history, highlighting how historical research on public attitudes are likely to be subjected to this generalisation decay. An example of this is former Prime Minister David Cameron's public apology for the Conservative Party enacting Section 28 in 1988. Despite voting against its repeal in 2003, he later apologised in 2009 after positive attitudinal shifts were observed in UK society regarding same-sex sexual activity, anti-discrimination protections, and civil partnerships recognising same-sex couples (Watt, 2009).

interpretations, that there are instead multiple context-specific realities, and that we are not governed by natural laws which are immutable and generalisable". More specifically, Ferraris, DeSanctis and Eco (2014) discuss the implications of interpretivism through people's use of communicative technologies. They conclude an ontological stance which argues in favour of a single reality fails to capture how people's social reality has been transformed by these devices. Instead, how people understand and use such technology is a point of philosophical interest, as people's engagement online provides inscriptions of how they construct and reconstruct their identities through these tools. This ontological stance is of clear importance to my research and provided strong justification for an interpretivist philosophy, allowing the individual, subjective ways LGBQ participants used the internet to circumvent heteronormativity to be captured and analysed.

My understanding of reality inevitably impacted the epistemology of the research project too. Carey (2013:57) defines epistemology as the philosophical examination of the "theory of knowledge", which provide instructions for research design and data collection. Letherby (2003) highlights different epistemological positions advocate for certain data collection methods to be used to generate knowledge which aligns with analytical approaches of that paradigm. Within epistemology, interpretivism and positivism are the underlying paradigms of qualitative and quantitative research, respectively.

Figure 1: Relationship between paradigm and epistemological approach, highlighted by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010: 18):

	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Objective	To gain a contextualised understanding of behaviours, beliefs and motivations	To quantify data and extrapolate results to a broader population
Purpose	To understand: Why? How? What is the process What are the influences or context?	To measure, count, quantify a problem. To answer: How much? How often? What proportion? Which variables are correlated?

Data	Data are words, called textual data	Data are numbers, called statistical data
Study population	Small number of participants; selected purposively (non-probability sampling)	Large sample of representative cases
Data collection methods	In-depth interviews, observations, group discussions	Population surveys, opinion polls, exit interviews
Analysis	Analysis is interpretive	Analysis is statistical
Outcome	To develop an initial understanding, to identify and explain behaviour, beliefs or actions	To identify prevalence, averages and patterns in data. To generalise to a broader population

My research adopted qualitative data collection methods to ensure it remained committed to its interpretivist paradigm. The use of group discussions and in-depth interviews allowed participants to express the subjectively meaningful motives behind their actions (Hamilton, 1991). My interpretivist stance acknowledges that because an individual's relationship to their social world is unique, quantitative scientific methods would have been ill-equipped for generating knowledge for understanding their social reality (Hyde, McConnell and Lohan, 2004). Pascale (2011) argues interpretivist research enables social behaviours and identities to be understood as an ongoing interpretation process within an individual's socially contextualised environments. This recognises that even when multiple and conflicting forms

of knowledge are apparent, it is consistent with the ontological positioning of the research (Hars, 2003).

Using qualitative approaches to generate knowledge of children's experiences reflects a broader agenda within social sciences to listen to their voices when understanding children's needs. Flanagan (2012) argues children are often excluded from research because of adult-centric understandings of topics being perceived as inappropriate or having a negative impact on their welfare. O'Sullivan (2003) states this unwillingness to recognise children's potential restricts knowledge, as research involving them either inquires on socially condoned topics, or their voices are minimised by adult-centric claims. For this reason, my research design put LGBQ young people's voices at the heart of data collection, but also acknowledged my interpretivist stance as an adult was important to outline to ensure transparency within the methodological approach used for collecting and analysing data (Hars, 2003). The way in which social constructionism informs this research study has been outlined within the theory chapter and above, but it is also necessary to justify the positioning of this research within the New Sociology of Childhood. As highlighted by Flanagan (2012), understanding children's needs is a necessary component of research, including when examining childhood sexuality.

4.2 New Sociology of Childhood

The key principles which inform this research project came from its positioning within the New Sociology of Childhood, which is a paradigm within social sciences aspiring to empower children through research and create a unique space for their voices to be heard by Governments, non-governmental organisations and wider society (Moran-Elis, 2010). This radical repositioning of children's research represents a significant departure from historical academic research where the impact of childhood developmentalism produced research designs which treated children as homogenous entities whose cognition and behaviour were analysed through adult-centric, pedagogical lenses (Kellett, 2010). Instead, the New Sociology of Childhood seeks to transform this by promoting a research culture which recognises children as active agents who can play a transformative role within the research process, and whose voices should be at the forefront of understanding how society can best ensure their well-being and understand their lived experiences (Ibid).

By positioning my research within this paradigm, it provided insights into the most effective way of creating a research design which empowered children's voices and enabled their

active participation within the data collection. Whilst research about children has made significant strides within recent decades to recognise their rights, Moran-Elis (2010) highlights that dominant discourses which construct children as incompetent and vulnerable continue to have a noticeable impact on research, with topics such as childhood sexuality being less visible because of deeply entrenched protectionist discourses which reinforce asexual/pre-sexual identity. This was an important area of reflection for me early within the research process, as my initial research design and underlying assumptions regarding the UK's safeguarding framework lacked the critical interrogation needed to truly put children's voices at the heart of the data. For example, I had recognised that an incompatibility existed between the safeguarding agenda evident within child internet safety guidelines and the lived experience of closeted identity, but my initial assumptions leaned towards determining how young people could help make these guidelines more effective at controlling their sexual expressions as a way of meeting their needs.

This was problematic for two reasons: First, I had already accepted the legitimacy of internet safety guidelines on behalf of all children and young people, and never considered questioning whether children and young people themselves felt they reflected the best strategy for meeting their needs and making them safer. Second, the impact of developmental discourses on my academic and personal values were apparent from my belief that young people lacked maturity and competency to be sexually agentic, and the research initially reinforced these dominant discourses by wanting to strengthen internet safety regulations within the protectionist agenda so that it satisfied adult-centric anxieties. I attribute this to my academic and professional background as a social worker, as this is an occupation which is at the heart of the UK's protectionist agenda for children and plays a frontline role in regulating children and childhood, and making authoritative claims regarding their welfare, despite attempts within their professional standards and safeguarding legislation to practice in a collaborative and anti-oppressive manner[69]. The grounding of developmentalism within social work training was apparent from the knowledge and professional values I sought to replicate within the early planning of this research, and was a topic that demanded much critical reflection to ensure my research design ultimately engaged with these assumptions

[69] Morgaine and Capous-Desyllas (2014: 32) state that "anti-oppressive practice requires that social workers acknowledge the sociopolitical context of the lived experiences of their participants… to provide direct assistance to individuals affected by oppression, while engaging in change to transform oppressive systems".

and instead adopted a framework which meaningfully recognised children's participatory rights. It is for this reason that the New Sociology of Childhood was chosen, as it assisted in breaking free of the metaphorical shackles which social work values are underpinned by when understanding childhood.

Moore (2013) acknowledges this participatory inconsistency within children's rights, as the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, as well as other areas of children's legislation[70], only ascribes rights to children and young people based on age-related criteria. Consequently, developmental constructions of children being absent of sexuality is seen as justifying their exclusion from relevant discussions and research on the grounds of immaturity and incompetence, and instead rely on protectionist rights which seek to preserve the status quo through the legitimisation of sexual regulation and surveillance. I found that my professional training as a social worker had a profound impact on my initial understandings of childhood and sexuality as the conservative voices which are reinforced and embraced within the safeguarding agenda (Moore and Reynolds, 2018) are done so within professional socialisation without critical interrogation about why they are justified. This approach is instead constructed and justified solely through a developmental rationale, and the duties to repress dangers and risks are nurtured into training in an unquestioning manner. This is articulated effectively by Qvortrup (2010:88) who states that childhood indicates "how we as adults 'naturally' think of children. Their status as 'dependents' is so naturally ingrained in adult belief systems as not to be questioned at all". This professional socialisation within social work education reinforces the arguments put forward by Moore and Reynolds (2018: 3) who argue that "the dominant paradigm that positions childhood and sexuality as antithetical has also impacted on academic research". By critically reflecting on the limitations of this initial research approach, I was able to identify the New Sociology of Childhood paradigm and recognised the key potential it had in helping to develop a methodological approach which rightfully recognised and promoted children's agency, rights and voices, and acknowledged them as an active participant within the data collection (Ibid).

Prout and James (2010) outline core principles for research which aligns itself with the paradigm, and these played a key role in influencing the methodology of my research and the ethical and participatory rights of its participants. I recognised that children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, and that this must occur

[70] See The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004.

independently of the perspective and concerns of adults (Ibid). This positioned my research to recognise the participants as sexual beings and becomings, who possessed the competency to understand their own experiences, needs and thoughts. By seeing the participants in this way, it challenged dominant discourses perpetuated by developmentalism. It recognised the importance of involving children within research, rather than through adult-centric imagery that prefigures conceptions of children as subordinates who must be excluded and regulated (Qvortrup, 2010). Furthermore, children are acknowledged as active agents in their own social lives and are not simply passive subjects of social structures and processes (Prout and James, 2010).

This was a particularly important distinction to make, as it provided a conceptual framing for recognising the closeted status of the participants and the covert social lives they had online. Under a protectionist framework, these behaviours would be framed as dangerous due to them occurring outside the regulatory control of parents, whereas the research's paradigm instead recognised that participants were exercising agentic competency when constructing their online identity and concealing it from parental figures. This framed my research to examine how the incompatibilities within the protectionist agenda impeded a closeted young person's ability to manage their identity and recognised that young people possessed the competency and knowledge to voice their needs. Finally, by participating in the New Sociology of Childhood, this highlighted my aspirations for using children's voices to engage in the process of reconstructing childhood (Ibid). This aimed to occur by using the voices of participants to identify the problems within the online safeguarding agenda, and how they best feel their needs could be met to ensure they are able to maintain their own safety online. If successful, their voices would "challenge current political thinking about children and in this way challenge our existing social order" (Qvortrup, 2010: 85). Qvortrup (2010: 98) further concludes that "if we seriously mean to improve life conditions for children we must, as a minimum precondition, establish reporting systems in which they are heard themselves as well as reported on by others. This… is being kept mute by adults, the dominant group".

4.3 Ethical framework and children's participatory research

Christensen and Prout (2002) argue that allowing children within research has created new ethical dilemmas for researchers. Osborne (1998) outlines how understandings of ethics and morality have been constructed and reproduced by professions of authority. He argues this power is obtained through ethical aesthetics, with frameworks and professional standards

providing them with the ability to regulate individuals. This has legitimised professions to regulate the conduct of the population, as they claim to use professional intelligence and knowledge to practice as ethical educators and enforcers. Foucault's (1977) hierarchisation of authority has highlighted how control is regulated through power relations – pedagogical professions, parents and children – and this has historically impacted children's rights to participate within research. However, Bauman (1993) is critical of these power relations because of it privileging particular voices and outright excluding marginalised others. He advocates for ethical sensibility to ensure researchers challenge the marginalisation and oppression of the 'other'. This reflected an important area of consideration, as Christensen and Prout (2002) highlight how the sociological study of childhood positions them within Bauman's classification of the 'other'. The impact of developmental models of childhood and sexuality have an intertwining, disempowering effect on recognising children's rights within sexuality research, relying upon characteristics of immaturity and incompetency to justify their marginalisation.

Young (1997) conceptualised asymmetrical reciprocity when conducting research, arguing we should take each other's perspectives into account by asking questions rather than imagining ourselves in another's position. This had an important impact for approaches to ethics, as the asymmetry between a researcher and participant arises from different life histories and social positions, including age (La Caze, 2009). This provided scope for reflexivity, as imagining children's participatory rights from my own perspective risked perpetuating adult-child power dynamics. Instead, establishing reciprocity through asking questions and listening to their voices enabled an ethical framework for productively working with children in a research context. The alternative would have been to fall back on cultural constructions of children's needs, which reflect adult-centric forms of knowledge and would have contributed to the ongoing oppression of the participants.

To enable asymmetrical reciprocity, I utilised Christensen and Prout's (2002) ethical symmetry. This framework requires the starting point of a researcher's ethical relationship with the participant to be the same, irrespective of whether they are an adult or a child. This allows a researcher to be reflexive within their methodological approach, as any differences within ethical rights which arise can be explicitly outlined and justified. This has been used

successfully within children's research[71]. The recognition of children's participatory rights was evident from my approach to ethics, as it enabled a meaningful partnership between the researcher and children (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008) and ensured their needs as a marginalised group were consistently reflected upon. It recognised children as possessing perspectives which differ from pedagogues, such as their parents (Christensen and Prout, 2002).

The application of this model presented challenges due to its implementation being dependent on the research community it occurs in and the topic of the research (Christensen and Prout, 2002). As there is a consistency between the New Sociology of Childhood and this ethical framework, I argue they were mutually compatible to adopt within my design. This was of further benefit because it enabled the use of innovative data collection methods to collaborate with children in a manner which empowered their participation (Christensen, 2000). This was of vital importance for my project, as the closeted status of the participants would have created significant participatory barriers if my design failed to acknowledge this and sought to utilise methods which were inappropriate and intrusive. Clark and Moss (2001) support Christensen's advocation for innovative methods, arguing the positionality of children as a marginalised group means researchers must not be afraid to move beyond the parameters of traditional methodology and adopt an imaginative array of methods to overcome access barriers.

To enable children's participatory rights, Christensen (1999) concludes researchers must take children's 'local cultures of communication' into consideration when determining how best to enhance their ethical participation. This process involves deploying research practices in line with children's experiences, interests, values and everyday routines (Christensen and Prout, 2002). This provided a strong ethical basis for using virtual research methods, as it recognised the internet as a vital resource for closeted LGBQ young people. If my research had tried to obtain data from a physical focus group, this would have undermined the participatory principles of this project and created an ethical discrepancy by failing to remove avoidable access barriers. Specifically, the rights of an adult to participate in physically located research is less restricted due to possessing a greater degree of freedom over their

[71] Salamon (2015) found that the approach helped break down the distinctions between the researchers and researched, and recognised children as simultaneously being unique and yet similar to adults in their participation.

spatiality. The ability for young people to travel and occupy physical spaces is significantly regulated and contested[72], especially if that space has been appropriated as a form of symbolic subversion (Bourdieu, 2001) to make it inclusive to specific marginalised 'others' (e.g., queer neighbourhoods).

4.4 Accessibility and challenges to consent

The intersectionality of childhood and sexuality has created two distinct, albeit overlapping, dilemmas for ensuring my research was accessible to participants. The rights of children to participate within research is a significantly contested area of ethical consideration, as different disciplines adopt differing strategies for managing the ethical and legal dilemmas which arise. The shift within social sciences to the New Sociology of Childhood has provided a compelling participatory, rights-based approach for working with children and hearing their voices (Dockett and Perry, 2010). This is not without tensions, as child developmental research has provided limited information about children's capacity to consent (Keith-Spiegel, 1983) and has consistently aligned itself with normative power structures which privilege adulthood. These power structures have made attempts to mediate children's participation via assent, but parents acting as formal gatekeepers has meant that assent has historically been seen as inferior. Additionally, assent by a child typically occurs after a parent has decided they consent for their child to participate (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Ethical and legal restrictions on the capacity for children to consent also risks creating accessibility barriers for them. Research culture privileges informed consent as the gold standard for participation but does not engage critically with its restricted nature as an adult-centric concept[73].

The lack of recognition for young people as sexually agentic individuals creates another accessibility challenge. Despite young people knowing of their same-sex attractions prior to

[72] This is not to suggest that the spatiality children occupy online is not regulated or contested but it recognises that young people feel more empowered when using online spaces because of the relative anonymity and privacy it affords them compared to physical spaces. The earlier chapters have outlined how children's online activities are increasingly subjected to attempts to regulate and restrict their access, but these are also mitigated by a range of factors, such as young people being able to discreetly avoid surveillance.

[73] This highlights a clear contrast between adults and children when obtaining consent. For adults, it is a violation of Section 1 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to assume that an adult lacks the capacity for such decision-making. For children, capacity to consent is assumed to be lacking, unless they can demonstrate the competency to fully comprehend the decision they wish to make. For more information, see page 231 discussing Gillick competency.

adulthood, they remain subjected to regulations underpinned by heteronormative appropriateness (Steinke et al., 2017). This highlights why a research design privileging parental gatekeeping would not be appropriate for closeted LGBQ young people, as it would make it impossible for them to participate without being outed[74]. To overcome this, researchers must be willing to accept that children can participate within research without parental consent. This can be achieved through theoretical understandings which position children as reliable informants of their own lived experiences, who are capable of exercising agency in research conversations (Farrell, 2005).

Sancar and Severcan (2010: 244) define agency as "the power to make decisions that impact on self and others and act on them", and Steinke et al. (2017) highlight how closeted LGBQ young people demonstrate this agentic competency through their online identity management. Their research recognised that parental consent was fundamentally incompatible with research involving closeted children. Instead, they argue that because young people can consent to receiving sexual health support, this provides precedent for them to participate in research which seeks to use their voices to better understand their sexual health needs (Ibid). Children's agency needs to be understood in relation to social, cultural and political contexts, and in connection with adult agency (Dockett and Perry, 2010). I identified that participants exercised agency to circumvent parental control and surveillance, as they recognised that their heteronormative socialisation was incompatible with their sexual health needs. Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines[75] provide accessibility rights based on the competency of young people to make their own sexual health decisions (NSPCC, 2019). I argue this principle applies when navigating issues of participatory consent, allowing the circumvention of parental consent when recruiting participants.

4.5 Informed consent and power dynamics

The impact of power within research requires important considerations for obtaining informed consent. Russell (2018) highlights that some of the most prominent research within social psychology offers insight into how authority and power impact participation. For

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[74] Steinke et al (2017) acknowledge that compared to their heterosexual peers, LGBQ young people have been subjected to further exclusion within research because of accessibility barriers to their participation. In particular, the assumption that only parents can meet that gold standard for consent fails to consider how closeted young people are not out to their parents due to a lack of support, concerns about discrimination, internalised negative messages, and/or insecurities about their identity.

[75] See page 231 for more information regarding Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines.

example, Milgram's obedience experiment[76], Zimbardo's prison experiment[77] and Asch's conformity experiment[78] all highlight examples of how power can manipulate participants. This provided insight into how power relations within childhood socialisation would potentially permeate into the research because of the positionality of children within adult-centric power structures. Berns (2016) argues that childhood socialisation encourages obedience based on rank, and that society uses authoritative categories, such as age, to assign roles and rights. Children are taught to show obedience and respect for adults in adherence to these adult-child power dynamics. The implications of this on my research were twofold: First, children may have simply agreed to participate because of feeling unable to refuse the request from an adult figure. Second, the role of a researcher can exert power and influence over many ranks within adulthood, and so will have an increased impact on children, who are positioned even further down the hierarchical power structure.

My research design minimised the influence of power on consent by recognising the internet as a suitable research environment for accessing closeted LGBQ participants[79]. An online-based research design helped minimise the role of power on consent and participation, as the concerns outlined above provided a starting point for creating a research environment where the participants were recognised as a partner within the discussion, rather than a passive recipient of the researcher's wishes. By itself, this would not minimise the impact of adult-

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[76] The Milgram obedience experiment involved participants being assigned the role of 'teacher' and being told to administer increasing levels of electric shocks to the 'learner', who they believed to be another participant. The experimenter, dressed in a laboratory coat, would provide 4 authoritative prods to the teacher to encourage them to continue administering dangerous levels of shocks. 65% of participants administered the maximum shock of 450 volts, labelled as 'danger – severe' on the generator (Gibson, 2019).

[77] The prison experiment examined how participants would conform to the hierarchical roles they were expected to play. Prison officers experienced deindividuation and committed sadistic acts on the prisoner participatory group as part of the abandonment of personal responsibility and fulfilment of the group norm, and the prisoners group adopted a state of learned helplessness in recognition of their lack of power within the setting (Zimbardo, 2009).

[78] Asch's conformity experiment unknowingly placed a participant amongst a group of actors to examine the impact of social pressure on conformity. This occurred by presenting the group with a target line and asking which other line out of a choice of three most closely matched the target line. The actors agreed which incorrect answer they would all pick in advance. The findings highlighted that 75% of participants conformed at least once with the group, 32% always conformed with the incorrect answer, and 25% never conformed (Anderson and Taylor, 2007).

[79] See pages 84-85 for Suler (2004) highlighting how the internet minimises status and authority, and research by Miller (2016) who observed this phenomenon amongst closeted LGBQ young people online.

child, researcher-participant power dynamics as much as possible, and so other ethical considerations were also adopted to ensure informed consent was freely given.

Edwards and Alldred (2001) highlight that obtaining consent from children does not simply involve transferring power from one group to another or involve downsizing or simplifying research procedures. It is an ongoing partnership in which participants understand how they will contribute to the research data. Due to this, a two-tiered approach for obtaining informed consent was utilised. Vitiello (2003) states participants must give an explicit, affirmative agreement to participate. This was first obtained using participation information sheets and a consent form, which provided all of the information needed to allow the participant to make an informed decision. This process fulfilled the ‘ethical value of beneficence’, which Dockett and Perry (2010) describe as enabling children to access information regarding the risks and benefits of participation and respecting the decision they make. Further to this, Cocks (2007) conceptualises consent as an ongoing agreement, which requires a researcher to be vigilant of responses and to recognise that children will use a range of verbal and non-verbal cues to express their choices and wishes. This required me to consistently emphasise the rights that participants had and their ability to exercise them at any time. I also had to be mindful of social cues when examining private and sensitive topics, ensuring participants felt as comfortable as possible, including reminding them of their right to not answer questions.

4.6 Minimising risk and impact on privacy

The above analysis has outlined how design considerations and consent strategies allowed informed consent to be given to the same standard of competency expected from an adult participant. This same standard of ethical symmetry encountered unavoidable disparities between competent adult and child participants when having to balance risk management and respect for privacy rights. As acknowledged earlier within the chapter, it is important to outline such discrepancies to fulfil Christensen and Prout’s (2002) reflexivity requirement. Allen (2005) highlights that the governance of ethical research is regulated at an institutional level by educational providers, and their regulatory approach has evolved from biomedical research governance and extended to cover all research disciplines.

Moore (2013) analyses how, despite the UK possessing a strong legislative framework which enshrines children’s participatory rights, such rights are elusive when applied to matters of sexual decision-making. For example, the Gillick case and Fraser guidelines provide a

framework for assessing competency and consent, and Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child provide rights to have their views and expressions respected (Unicef, 2018). Despite these, assumptions of incompetency and immaturity are still invoked, relying on protectionist discourses to mediate them (Moore, 2013). Within research governance, institutional frameworks reinforce these protectionist discourses by limiting a child's decision-making rights, which Jackson and Scott (2010) criticise because of research guidance persistently reproducing developmental discourses about young people's incompetency for understanding participatory risks without adult supervision. Consequently, managing such risks are typically undertaken privately between researchers and ethics committees. This causes an ethical disparity to emerge, as institutions segregate different frameworks of ethical standards between adults and children. To ensure that a project involving children can be approved, a researcher is compelled to engage with adult-centric understandings of ethics and participatory rights when developing a project and obtaining authorisation for data collection.

As I examined sensitive topics[80], I was mindful that complex issues could arise during the research process (Walsh, 2005). Based on the topics examined, the most likely risk factor related to disclosures of abuse, specifically sexual abuse, as these were topics which were indirectly referred to when gathering data. From a perspective of ethical symmetry, I identified how any historical disclosures of abuse would respect their right to privacy to the same standard of an adult participant[81]. Instead, guidelines for adult participants recommend researchers to have appropriate referral information available so that a participant can access emotional support, if necessary, which my research mirrored to manage this risk. My ability to navigate this risk was informed by my previous experience of working with LGBQ research participants, as well as my professional registration with Social Work England as a social worker. Signposting was made simpler through the participants being obtained from an online support community, ensuring a pre-existing support network had been obtained by the participants prior to my research. The co-operative relationship between the organisation and myself meant this signposting could occur seamlessly.

[80] See Appendix Item C on page 260 for the opening questions asked during data collection.
[81] Walsh (2005) highlights that legislation requires children to be suffering, or to be at risk of suffering, significant harm. In her own research, she was able to avoid violating confidentiality and respect the wishes of participants by assessing historical cases as not meeting the significant harm threshold to justify a mandatory report.

An ethical disparity was unavoidable for handling disclosures of current abuse, as the significant harm threshold and research governance clearly outline how these would meet the criterion for a mandatory report. This highlights a key inconsistency concerning children as participants: a researcher's ethical duties require children to be protected in the same manner as vulnerable adults, but members of the latter group are only classed as vulnerable when assessed as lacking capacity to protect themselves[82] (NHS, 2018). This had clear implications on participants' right to privacy when disclosing abuse, as ethical symmetry can only be achieved alongside the rights which would be afforded to vulnerable adults, with competent adults being the only group to benefit from a legal capacity to make privacy decisions which are considered unwise, and which may negatively impact their welfare.

To address this lack of symmetry, I recognised young people's competency of being aware of the limitations to their legal rights, and to manage this when deciding to participate and when providing data. The participant information sheet and consent forms outlined this risk factor and made clear to participants that a mandatory report would need to be made if they disclosed any current abuse which met the significant harm threshold. They were also reminded at numerous points during the online discussion board and interviews. Whilst this may have impacted responses, it reflects balance between fulfilling ethical and legal obligations and recognising their privacy rights. Additionally, Walsh (2005) highlights that if a current abuse disclosure arises, it is the researcher's responsibility to weigh up the eventualities and possibilities in accordance with safeguarding obligations. They should seek as much clarity of the situation as possible, involve the child within the discussion and inform them of the decisions which they are required to make. This reinforces the criticism put forward by Moore (2013), as these requirements reflect a framework which provides limited rights to express their wishes but denies them meaningful opportunities to determine welfare outcomes.

It is also important to acknowledge that a young person's inability to consent to sexual activity created an ethical disparity when legally assessing sexual exploitation. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the age of consent for engaging in sexual activity is sixteen years

[82] Section 1.2 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 creates a legal requirement to assume an adult has capacity, requiring a high, evidence-based threshold before labelling them as 'vulnerable'. In contrast to this, the lack of legal recognition for children and young people's capacity reinforces dominant developmental assumptions that they are always lacking capacity and must be controlled as a way for adults to minimise risks on their behalf.

of age, and it was reasonably foreseeable that a participant could disclose engaging in sexual behaviour which contravened this, or other, legislation[83]. However, legal guidance by the CPS was important to consider so that disclosures of sexual activity would only be accurately reported when they met the significant harm threshold. The CPS (2019) states it is not in the public interest to prosecute children who engage in physical sex acts when they are of same or similar age and understanding. Instead, the threshold for a mandatory report is only met if there is evidence of coercion and exploitation. The CPS' social media guidance further recommends it is not in the public interest to prosecute young people for producing sexual imagery (Youth Justice Legal Centre, 2016). Due to this, disclosures of sexual activity by a minor, without evidence of coercion or exploitation, was permissible within data collection without it necessitating a mandatory report.

My research design further sought to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants by adopting a two-staged approach to data collection. Collaborations with online communities have become increasingly prominent for accessing hard-to-reach groups. These provide researchers with opportunities to interact with members similar to a focus group and allow interviews to be conducted away from the community to obtain a deeper understanding of a topic (Bryman, 2016). Dempsey et al. (2016) argued that research on sensitive topics should always minimise risks of confidentiality breaches and invasions of privacy, and the two-staged approach within my research provided this. The use of an online discussion board reflected that "childhood is embedded in groups; children are born into a primary group, learn in classroom groups, socialise in play groups, compete in group athletics, identify territorially with neighbourhood groups… and reproduce social structures in cliques" (Sunwolf and Leets, 2004: 196).

The online discussion board provided an opportunity for obtaining provisional data and developing a rapport with the participatory group, before shifting to in-depth, one-to-one interviews. Castella et al. (2000) outlines that pre-acquainted groups within data collection increases uninhibited behaviours within computer-mediated communication, allowing for a diversity of opinions to be expressed[84]. Furthermore, the participant information sheet and

[83] See page 43, subheading 'The United Kingdom's legal framework', for an outline of key legislation relevant to this research.

[84] As mentioned earlier, the Asch conformity study provides insight into how accessibility to a study, including freely contributing to it, can be impacted by majority group dynamics. By ensuring that the group operates online and is pre-acquainted, individuals display increased disinhibition to conformity

consent form emphasised respect for privacy as a necessity when participating in the study, and that mutual respect for this standard would protect their data. However, having a secondary stage allowed participants to decide whether to disclose sensitive data within the online discussion board or wait until the interview. Knox and Buckard (2009) reinforce the use of interviews for obtaining rich and meaningful data on sensitive topics, whilst at the same time allowing participants to feel safe.

4.7 Data Collection Methods

My research utilised an online discussion forum and semi-structured interviews for collecting data with the participants. My decision to engage with virtual data collection tools was influenced by the arguments raised by Christensen (1999) when arguing that children's ethical participation is enhanced when researchers consider their local cultures of communication. In this instance, engaging with participants within the online sphere logically followed the topic of the research itself. Their participation within ECCS provided observable evidence of the comfort and security they had developed from their online communications, and so using these communication tools when they have attached such positive meaning to them would be consistent with Christensen's approach. Furthermore, the two-stages of data collection allowed for different scopes for the discussion. The online discussion forum provided a group dynamic when discussing each of the questions asked, and so I was able to identify the frequency in which people agreed or disagreed with positions raised based on responses. Participants were encouraged to interact with each other, as would occur in a face-to-face focus group, and this dynamic was important for allowing diverse viewpoints to be raised, as well as identifying key areas of consensus amongst the group. Nevertheless, the inclusion of interviews also provided a crucial opportunity to simultaneously expand upon information from the online discussion board in a private setting, and also allowed the participant to disclose any accompanying information which they may not have been comfortable discussing as a group. On the one hand, using a pre-acquainted group can encourage more honest responses when undertaking research on sexual behaviours (Frith, 2000; Barbour, 2018). On the other hand, it can encourage participants to engage in selective disclosures because of those pre-existing relationships and not wanting group members to know particular information about them. The two-stage process aimed to bridge these

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due to the dissociative anonymity, invisibility and minimisation of status and authority within the data collection process (Suler, 2004).

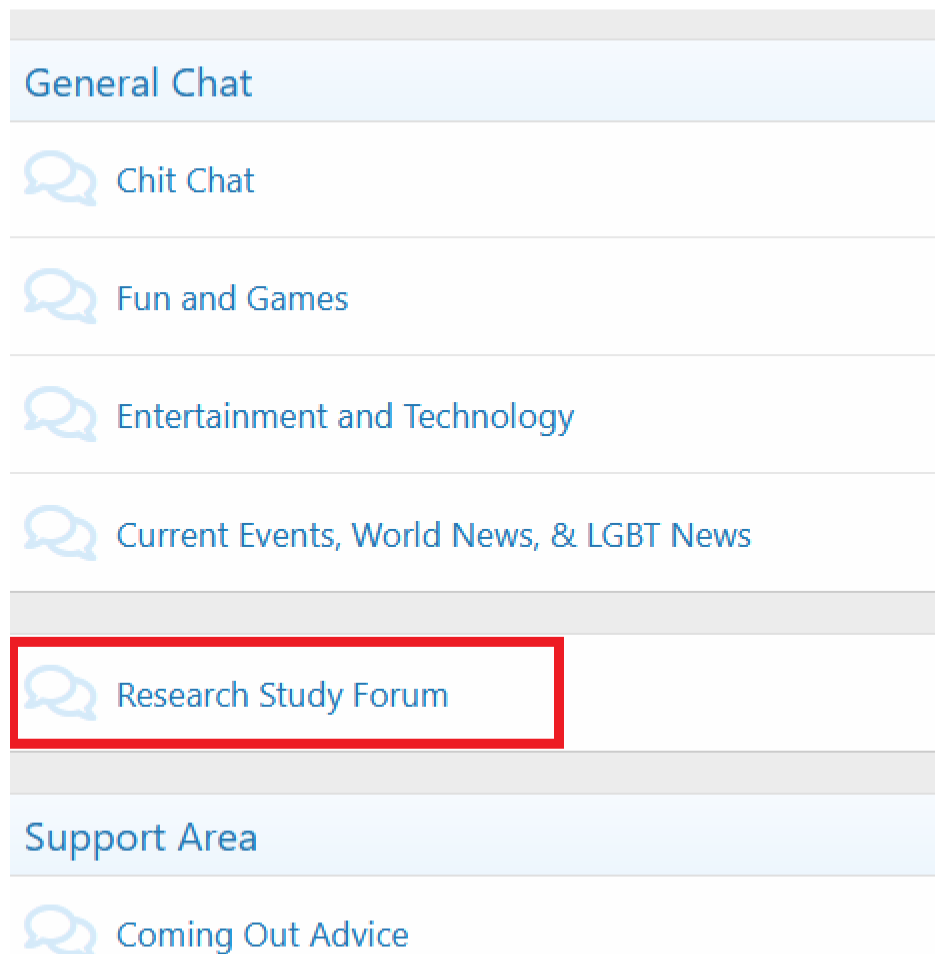
considerations, ensuring that participants had an opportunity to disclose relevant information in the environment which they felt most comfortable.

4.7.1 Accessing and observing the forum

As the forum was contained within ECCS, access permissions were used to ensure that only the researcher and participants could access it. As the researcher, I posted eight initial questions which the participants were able to answer (see Appendix Item C). Based on those responses, discussions were generated either from participants replying to each other's posts, or from follow-up questions I asked regarding their answers. ECCS also provides a notification to members when another member has quoted one of their posts, and this was used within the forum to keep discussions active.

When accessing the community, a participant was able to locate the forum on the community's landing page:

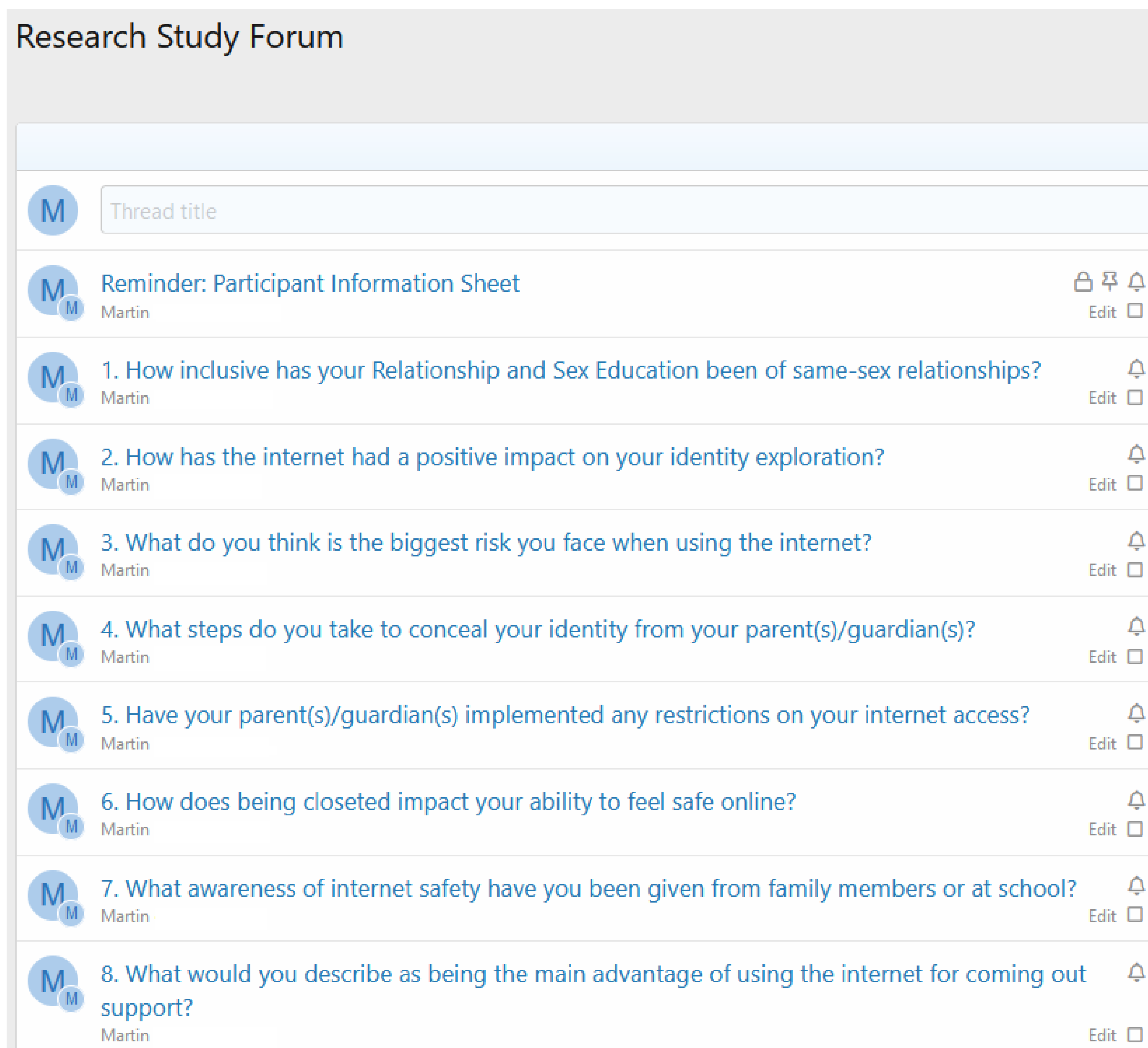
Figure 2: Community homepage – accessing the research



This was only accessible to the researcher and participants. A member who was not enrolled on the study would not have the option visible between their General Chat and Support Area forum sections. When accessing the forum, a participant was able to select any of the initial eight questions – posted as a thread – and respond accordingly. They could also go back at any time during the data collection to check the responses of other participants or the researcher to respond further.

When accessing the forum, a participant would see a display like this:

Figure 3: Research study forum display



The participant information sheet was always attached to the top of the forum display (known as a 'stuck' thread) as a reminder of the rules for participating. Below this, the threads for each research question were accessible. These displayed throughout the study in order of

most recent reply, and individuals could see which threads had received new replies since their last visit to the forum based on these timestamps. As also mentioned above, automated notifications would be sent directly to the member's forum inbox when they received a reply, ensuring they received consistent prompts for actively participating. Within the threads themselves, the discussions were displayed in order of oldest to newest, which was a default setting which ECCS used throughout its forums, thus ensuring that participants were already pre-acquainted with the structuring of information and the process for participating.

4.7.2 Developing the interviews

Appendix Item F provides an outline of the four categories which comprised the semi-structured interview, as well as the core questions which were asked of the participants within each. This overarching structure was chosen as it provided a balance between recognising the individual contributions and experiences each participant would make, whilst still ensuring that discussions remained connected to the research questions of this project. For this reason, each interview was split into four areas: relationship and sex education offline; reasons for using the internet; experiences of online surveillance; and surveillance impacting privacy.

The core questions illustrated within the interview schedule outline the themes which each section examined in order to address the project's research questions. However, a key challenge of this process was developing tailored questions based on the experiences participants had disclosed. Prior to interviewing each participant, I reviewed their contributions within the online discussion board and used the data they had provided there to further develop questions for each section of the interview. This ensured that on areas with particular relevance to the research scope, we were able to explore the depth of these topics in further detail. There are numerous occasions within the data analysis chapters when you can see extracts of tailored questions and answers during the interviews[85], which show the positive effect they had on enhancing the understanding of the participant's perspectives.

The use of triangulation between the online discussion board data and the interview schedule was an effective technique for using multiple methods to study the same phenomenon. The use of method triangulation has been widely studied within qualitative research as an effective way of enhancing the breadth and depth of data about the same phenomenon (Polit and Beck, 2012; Carter et al., 2014). Whilst a focus group dynamic can allow for the

[85] See pages 176 and 196 for examples of this triangulation in effect.

identification of shared and differing views of the same topic (Morgan, 1996), an interview represents a powerful tool for gaining an understanding of topics by obtaining rich information about personal experiences and perspectives (Russell et al., 2005). For this reason, I argue that using method triangulation brought key benefits to the research. It not only minimised the possibility of key perspectives being overlooked, as can occur from single method data collection, but it also enhanced the breadth of the findings when examining the topics. Without either method, breadth and depth would have been lost, thus impacting the quality of the data collected.

4.7.3 Reflexivity and positioning myself as an 'outsider'

Goffman (1961) argues that during encounters, individuals have a tendency to follow scripts and fall back on set roles, and this understanding has important considerations on reflexivity and self-reflexivity within a research context. Within my research, the roles were particularly heightened because of the intersecting of various power labels I had as the researcher within the adult-child dichotomy. To the young people who participated in the study, I was an adult, 'out' gay male, academic researcher, and qualified social worker. Any of these labels by themselves would invoke more power than a closeted LGBQ young person possesses within an adult-centric society, and yet I was conscious that the intersecting combination of these power labels could have a detriment on a participant's engagement with me. I have spoken previously within this chapter regarding ethical considerations, and these outline steps I have taken to minimise these power inequalities and empower their participatory rights, but they too also acknowledge the limitations placed upon me as a researcher to maintain a professional etiquette. Such expectations are particularly heightened when conducting research with children, on topics which are highly sensitive and deeply personal.

Nevertheless, I did take steps during the research to disclose key pieces of information about myself, and in preparation for the interviews, I had agreed that I would share my experiences on relevant topics if the individual asked. All of the participants could see my age, sexual orientation and 'out status' as part of my engagement with them on ECCS. Walby (2010) highlights that these identity declarations can be crucial for a participant's own reflexivity, as the knowledge that they obtain about the researcher can influence the status and trust which they bestow upon them. This, he argues, is particularly important within sexuality research as it determines whether the participant sees you as a 'sexuality insider'. As participants knew of my own identity, this provided them with opportunities for reflexivity when deciding

whether to participate, and what to disclose when doing so. I found this to be crucial as it recognised the oppression which participants were currently experiencing because of heteronormativity and potentially homophobia. I was keen to label myself as a 'sexuality insider' so that participants could see that I was not there to simply 'gawp' at them as sexual others but had a substantiated interest in generating knowledge of this topic and empathised with their situation. Grenz (2005: 2091) states that discussions of sex and sexuality occurs in a 'context that creates the desire to confess', of which the researcher and participants are both subjected to. Due to this, I categorised information I was willing to disclose into three categories: disclose beforehand; disclose if asked; and not to disclose. Prior to interviewing, I had awareness of the type of information I would be willing to disclose, based on the sections outlined by the interview schedule.

Berger (2015) states that reflexivity is affected by whether the researcher is part of the researched and shares the participants' experiences. As I have mentioned within the introductory chapter, my interest in this project stems from my own experiences of being closeted, using the internet to access LGBQ-inclusive support and resources, and trying to protect my identity in the process. Therefore, the above categories for disclosing my own experiences were an important part of the research process. Whilst it positioned me as a 'sexuality insider', I argue that I functioned primarily as a research 'outsider' during the data collection stages. This is because I sought to keep the experiences focused on the participants themselves, and instead empowered them with the opportunity to ask me questions about my experiences if they wished to do so. I argue that this ensured that it was their narratives which led the discussions, rather than my own experiences influencing their perspectives, which was a particular concern I had because of the power adult figures can have in framing children's perspectives. It would have contradicted the participatory principles of my research if I had contributed to the discussion in a way which diluted or reframed their experiences or perspectives because of my own. Instead, Walby (2010) outlines how questions from participants and declarations from the researcher can momentarily flip the established researcher-respondent roles, enabling reflexivity for the participant when establishing comfort and trust. For this reason, although I operated primarily as an outsider during the interviews, I was receptive to disclosing appropriate, relevant information if prompted by a participant. This ensured that I was simultaneously able to keep their narratives at the heart of the discussion, but also empowering them to engage in their own reflexivity and make active decisions about how they wanted to engage with the research and researcher.

As Goffman (1961) highlighted, encounters cause individuals to follow scripts and fall back on their set roles, and this was particularly apparent during interviews when both individuals assumed their roles. As Mazzei and O'Brien (2009) argue, an important part of reflexivity during an interview is knowing the gender and sex script a participant is using, and accurately following that script to create a successful definition of the situation. It is for this reason that I argue that my current approach reflected the best approach for my project. It simultaneously balanced the ethical and professional principles placed upon me, whilst also empowering the participants with the capability to ask relevant questions to me if they wished to do so. By having thought about what I was and was not willing to disclose, this ensured I could navigate this process in a prepared manner and guaranteed that my own contributions to experiences on the topic would only arise because of the direct wishes of the participant to hear them for their own benefit. It was because of this I was able to adapt to the interaction styles of each participant, ensuring the interview proceeded in a manner which meant that they were comfortable and empowered to engage with me. This is not to suggest that my approach is the only way of doing it, and it may be that research of this topic with a researcher who functions as an 'insider' would generate new and relevant insights. I did, however, make these decisions based on the professional and research values which I am most comfortable and competent with, and so I argue that this approach is one which worked effectively for me and this particular research study.

4.8 Data analysis approaches

This section focuses on the respective approaches taken for analysing collected data. This process required the identification of two separate models, in recognition of the different ways in which the respective data was generated. The first approach utilised a CDA, following Fairclough's (1992) model of three-dimensional analysis. This relied upon secondary data accessible to the public via CEOP and the NSPCC. The second approach focused exclusively on the analysis of primary data collected directly from the participants. To analyse this second category of data, Braun and Clarke's (2008) six phases of thematic analysis was used. Both of these approaches are outlined and discussed below to illustrate how they structure the analysis of data.

4.8.1 Critical discourse analysis

Fairclough, cited in McHoul and Rapley (2001: 25) states that:

> Critical Discourse Analysis is the name given to and accepted by a rather diverse and loosely affiliated group of approaches to language… these approaches have in common a concern with how language… interconnect with other elements of social life, and especially a concern with how language… figure(s) in unequal relations of power, in processes of exploitation and domination of some people by others.

The exercising of power and perpetuation of social inequalities are not always immediately apparent from discourse and language but can occur through ideological manipulation via the discursive creation of ideologies by powerful groups (Fairclough, 2010). For this reason, CDA is interested in the connections between discourses, language and power (Thompson, 2002), and provides the means for critically examining how powerful groups use this connection as a way of exerting control over less powerful individuals and groups within society (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

Fairclough (2000) argues there are three central tenets to CDA. The first and second are that discourse is used and shaped by social structures, as well as by culture. The third tenet acknowledges that within society, discourses shaped by structures and culture help to shape and constrain our identities, relationships and systems of knowledge and beliefs. For this reason, "our very sense of who we are, where we belong and why, and how we relate to those around us, all have language at their centre" (Joseph, cited in Llamas and Watt (2010: 9). Alvermann et al. (1977) identify discursive practices as playing a key role in governing socially acceptable rules, as well as normalising particular behaviours and standards for undertaking specific social roles in society, such as parenting. These serve as spoken and unspoken conventions which govern how we ought to act and speak. Such discursive practices involve ways of being in the world, signifying codes of conduct for individuals and groups to follow to perform specific and recognisable social identities (Gee, 1990).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) identify social practices as being the bridge between the perspective of the social structure at the macro level, and the perspective of social action and agency at the micro level. Within the context of internet safety guidelines, the desire of powerful groups to ensure childhood remains oppressed by adult-child power relations becomes evident when scrutinised using CDA. One of the ways this is accomplished is through privileges afforded to powerful groups within the production, distribution and consumption of text. Henry and Tator (2002) identify these discourses from powerful

individuals and groups as a 'dominant' discourse, which possess the power to interpret conditions, issues and events in ways which favour the elite. Examples of these powerful claims have been outlined previously[86], but a CDA analyses how the powerful are able to simultaneously make claims which are taken as self-evident truths, and dismiss the concerns of the less powerful as inappropriate and propagandist threats to social order and decency (van Dijk, cited in Schriffin, Tannen and Hamilton, 2001). As power is "exercised and negotiated in discourse" (Wodak and Fairclough, cited in van Dijk, 1997: 272), texts are produced to communicate social actions and language in a way which reinforces existing power relations. The text seeks to influence others to conform with the desired behavioural traits necessary to sustain those embedded power relations. By conducting a CDA on internet safety guidelines, the analysis focuses on how parents become the target of more powerful groups. Parents already benefit from power over childhood, but the disciplinary apparatus which regulates heteronormative socialisation empowers agents of the state to exercise control and surveillance over parents if necessary.

Although Habermas (1984) does not discuss this power conflict within the context of online safeguarding, the distinctions he makes regarding types of discourses are applicable. He differentiates between institutional discourse, which is a type of strategic discourse which is power laden and goal-oriented, from communicative discourse, which requires the speaker to distort the power and inequality embedded within their words by attempting to obtain mutual understanding with the reader. This became an important point of acknowledgement within the guidelines, as the data analysis identified the linguistical techniques used within textual practices to construct a sense of alliance between reader and speaker. Foucault (1980) identifies this as the functions of a regime of truth, requiring effective discourses to organise and regulate power relations, which is a key motivator for the production of these guidelines so as to sustain dominant approaches about how best to protect children. Rose and Miller, cited in Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard (1989) refer to this as the technologies of Government. These are the strategies, techniques and procedures used by authorities to connect their aspirations and desires with the activities and groups of the population. By conducting a CDA on the specific strategies disseminated by the Government, the analysis

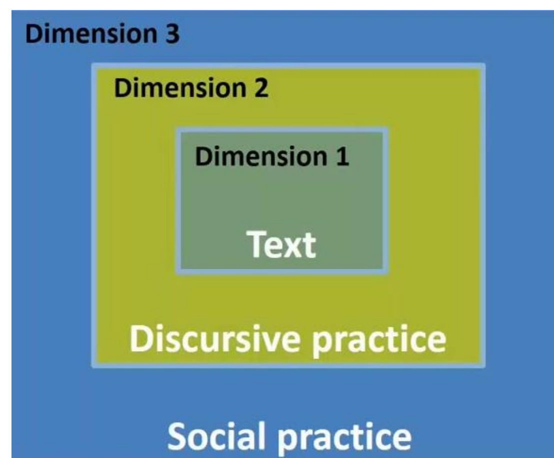
[86] See subheadings 'Emergence of the Online Moral Panic' and 'The role of Government in developing child internet safety guidelines' in the Context chapter for more information on how these powerful groups have made claims regarding children's online vulnerability, and the attempts made so far to address perceived threats to their ability to exercise control and surveillance over children online.

identifies how unbalanced power relations are framed positively by protectionist discourses, but surreptitiously mask a reality underpinned by inequality, injustice and oppression (Henry and Tator, 2002).

4.8.1.1 Three-dimensional analysis model

To conduct the CDA, I utilised Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model, which involves conducting three levels of analysis[87]:

Figure 4: Three-dimensional model of analysis (Fairclough, 1992)



Merkl-Davies and Koller (2012) state that textual analysis is a micro-level analysis concerned with the specific linguistic features of text. At this stage, my analysis focused on identifying and unpacking how single words and grammatical tools had been used to align the text with naturalised truths replicated by social structures. This analysis focused on the vocabulary and cohesion within the text, as well as analysing modality and irrealis moods to examine how the expressions of the speaker's authority were communicated to convey ideological discourse. This is referred to by Fairclough (1992) as the ideational function, which allows language to be examined for ways it uses linguistical devices for constructing a social reality.

The second level of analysis examined how discursive practices were used at the target of text and reflects a meso-level analysis. This dimension focused on practices such as utterances, coherence, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity (Ibid). Written text still remained

[87] More information of this three-dimensional model is also available throughout the Critical Discourse Analysis chapter. Before commencing each level of analysis, I outline what each dimension is and why it is analysed at this level.

a significant scope of the analysis, but this level also analysed imagery as a source of text alongside the written guidance. This enabled these two forms to be examined to show the relationship between the two, as well as the ideologies they seek to maintain normalisation of at the macro level. The analysis of intertextuality was a particular feature which overlaps with social practice, as the networking in which these guidelines are built are illustrated at this stage to show how the normalisation of ideologies within the text are amplified using speakers from other allied child welfare organisations.

The final dimension is the social practice level, which is a macro-level analysis focused on the wider social context in which interpretations of text occur. At this stage, situational context and discourse types were examined to contextualise child internet safety guidelines within a broader social structure, which seeks to exert constant control and surveillance over children. The two social practices scrutinised at this level were the adult-child power dynamics embedded within social structures, and heteronormativity within dominant developmental, naturalist bodies of knowledge for understanding childhood and children's needs.

4.8.2 Thematic analysis of LGBQ participatory data

Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) state "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data". Within qualitative research, thematising meaning is one of the few shared generic skills which occurs throughout qualitative data analysis (Holloway and Todres, 2003). This can position thematic analysis in a contested space as a method for analysing data. It is not a named method which comes with a clear structure or framework for conducing such an analysis but is instead an analytical process which occurs across other named methods which use varying approaches for identifying thematical patterns.

To analyse the data provided by the LGBQ participants, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of thematic analysis. This framework was consistent with the theoretical lens which this study used and is promoted by its developers as providing balance between demarcating thematic analysis clearly – explaining how to conduct it – but also providing flexibility so that it does not become limited and constrained by a lack of theoretical freedom. As this research has used social constructionism as its theoretical paradigm, this has allowed the analysis to explore how experiences, meaning and perceptions were socially reproduced

based on dominant socio-cultural and structural conditions (Burr, 1995). When analysing the data, I used the six phases outlined in the model:

Figure 5: Six stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006: 87)

Phase		Description of the process
1.	Familiarising yourself with the data:	Transcribing data… reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2.	Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3.	Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4.	Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5.	Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6.	Producing the report:	Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

The transcription process automatically occurred as and when participants responded to questions, either via the online discussion board or within the interview. The use of virtual research methods enabled participants to be involved without requiring verbal contributions[88]and it was imperative that the right to privacy afforded to participants also extended to their physical environment. This enabled me to obtain familiarity with the data before the formal analysis began, and this was used to strengthen the structure of the interview for each participant[89]. It is important for a practically suited transcription convention to be used (Edwards and Lampert, 1993), and this provided the best means when weighed alongside the ethical considerations made to protect participants' closeted identity in their physical environment[90].

The generation of initial codes required me to document a range of relevant words, phrases, sections or sentences. These were codified based on how they documented the actions, behaviours, opinions or perceptions of the participants, and I began to identify how closeted individuals undertook behaviours to manage their performed physical and online selves, and what their motivations were for doing so. When coding the data, I was mindful of common criticisms which can arise, such as ensuring extracts are coded inclusively so that context is not lost or additional codes are not missed (Bryman, 2001). As an example, some of the codes acknowledged actions or perceptions such as 'assumed to be straight', 'online removes barriers' and 'female = increased surveillance'[91].

[88] This is consistent with the earlier ethical concerns raised in this chapter regarding the privacy and sensitivity implications of their closeted identity.

[89] Gillham (2005) acknowledges that involving a participant within a data collection process prior to interview, and familiarising oneself with their contributions, allows a researcher to use their familiarity to enhance the depth and quality of data by asking targeted interview questions.

[90] It is acknowledged that this automated transcription process prevented documentation of non-textual utterances which can be important analytical points, such as body language (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

[91] The 'female = increased surveillance' code identified an important scope of data which required an inclusive understanding of the identity and context in which participants were giving data. This evolved at later stages into a theme examining gender distinctions as well as the impact of

Phases three and four involved collating individual codes into categories to search for themes and analysing these groupings at stage four to label them as either main themes, sub-themes, or to disregard them entirely (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It was at this stage I began to construct themes and sub-themes which are presented in the thesis. As an example, earlier stages had identified various coding discussing online safeguarding strategies. These ranged from abstract concerns which could unfold, such as 'content tracking', whereas other concerns focused on concealment strategies being deployed to protect the online self from discovery. It was at these respective stages of analysis that these varying concerns became categorised, with Surveillance being an overarching theme within the analysis map.

Finally, phases five and six focused on defining and naming the themes which had emerged and ensuring that the 'story' the analysis told flowed in a logical and cohesive manner. Kuckartz (2013) notes that this stage has a high degree of complexity because of the need to manage recurrent themes, ensure connections are hierarchised or structured appropriately, and that relevant extracts are used to illustrate data. The earlier considerations by Bryman (2001) again come to the fore at phase six, as it is important to ensure context is not lost when isolating extracts. It was at this stage I identified an appropriate structure for the data, which is used within this thesis.

This structure is presented across chapters six, seven and eight, which displays the overarching themes of that chapter within its title, as well as the sub-themes within it which are illustrated as sub-sections. The context and theory chapters are also instrumental in analysing the participant extracts as they provide the societal context in which this topic is being explored (e.g., within the legal and public discourses of the UK) and the theoretical lens for analysing a participant's experiences. Key areas illustrated within the context and theory chapter are further discussed alongside participatory extracts, and the findings from the CDA in chapter 5 are also referenced at relevant points to show how the deployment of ideological online safeguarding measures impact the direct experiences of the participants.

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heteronormativity in regulating the masculine male versus the feminine female. Although this interpretation had not been identified at this stage of the analysis, it supports the arguments put forward by Bryman above regarding inclusivity and multiple coding for extracts. Without such considerations, it is possible certain key themes would have been missed.

4.9 Participant demographics

In total, there were 24 participants within the online discussion board, and 6 proceeded to the semi-structured interviews shortly after the online discussion board had concluded. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym, and these are used when their extracts are quoted and discussed in the data analysis chapters of this thesis.

Figure 6: Participants Table

Name	Age	Gender	Sexuality	Interviewed?
Joe	15	Male	Gay	
Matthew	13	Male	Gay	
Liam	15	Male	Gay	✓
Ciaran	17	Male	Gay	
Lewis	14	Male	Gay	
David	16	Male	Gay	
Callum	16	Male	Bisexual	✓
Zach	17	Male	Gay	
Hayley	14	Female	Lesbian	
Oscar	15	Male	Gay	
Isaac	13	Male	Questioning	
Declan	16	Male	Gay	
Emily	15	Female	Bisexual	✓
Jonathan	14	Male	Bisexual	
Mohammad	17	Male	Gay	
Ben	14	Male	Gay	✓
Grace	13	Female	Lesbian	

Louis	14	Male	Gay	
Calvin	14	Male	Gay	
Ruby	15	Female	Lesbian	✓
Alfie	15	Male	Gay	
Harry	13	Male	Questioning	✓
Daniel	16	Male	Bisexual	
Alia	14	Female	Lesbian	

Of these 24 participants, the demographics for age, gender and sexual identity were:

Figure 7: Participant Demographics (Online Discussion Board)

Totals:					
Participants:	24 Discussion Board Participants and 6 Interview Participants				
Ages:	13: n=4	14: n=7	15: n=6	16: n=4	17: n=3
Gender:	Female: n=5	Male: n=19			
Sexual Identity:	Lesbian: n=3	Gay: n=15	Bisexual: n=4	Questioning: n=2	

Of the 6 participants who were interviewed, the demographics for age, gender and sexuality identity were:

Figure 8: Participant Demographics (Interviews)

Interviewed:					
Ages:	13: n=1	14: n=1	15: n=3	16: n=1	
Gender:	Female: n=2	Male: n=4			
Sexual Identity:	Lesbian: n=1	Gay: n=2	Bisexual: n=2	Questioning: n=1	

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology of my research project, as well as the methods which have been used for collecting data. By positioning my research within an interpretivist paradigm, this has allowed me to pursue a qualitative design using CDA, online discussion boards and semi-structured interviews for collecting and analysing data. I position my research within the New Sociology of Childhood, illustrating how it influences the approach to design, methods, and theory. The impact of this has been considered from an ethical standpoint, as this enabled the ethical framework of the study to utilise asymmetrical reciprocity and ethical symmetry to enhance children's participatory rights and voices. However, these were not without tensions, as discrepancies between the rights of young people versus the rights an adult would benefit from have also been illustrated, ensuring adherence to the reflexivity principles put forward by Christensen and Prout. The data analysis approaches have also been discussed, outlining the respective models used during the CDA of internet safety guidelines, and the thematic analysis of the closeted LGBQ participants' data during the online discussion board and interviews. Finally, the participant demographics have been presented to show the age, gender, and sexual identity breakdown of all 24 participants, including the 6 participants who progressed to the interview stage of data collection after participating in the online discussion board.

Child Internet Safety Guidelines: A Critical Discourse Analysis

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will undertake a CDA of child internet safety guidelines. It follows Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which requires analysis at the textual, discursive and social levels. The guidelines selected are web-based, from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) [Accessed 30th September 2020] and the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) [Accessed 30th September 2020]. These each belong to organisations possessing statutory powers within children's safeguarding and are members of the UKCCIS. By selecting these organisations, my analysis will illustrate how the UKCCIS centralises power within its social practices[92], and how protectionist discourses informing the production of guidelines trickle down at the meso and micro levels. For the purposes of this analysis, it only examines guidelines written for an adult reader – the parent of a child – so that the focus can analyse how these organisations work in alliance with parents to persuade them to exert control and surveillance. The selection of these organisations will also allow my analysis to illustrate how, despite the organisations coming from the charity and law enforcement sectors respectively, they still provide a uniformed strategy because of their conformity to the ideological standards of conduct laid out by the UKCCIS. When analysing the guidelines, the textual and discursive components produced the most relevant material for illustrating. This is reflected in the depth and breadth contained within each of the three dimensions discussed.

5.1 Textual analysis

The first stage of Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis occurs at the textual level, and this examines how single words and grammatical structures have contributed to the construction and reconstruction of social structures (Fairclough, 1992). It first analyses the vocabulary and cohesion within the text, before analysing grammar through the linguistic concept of modality. This focuses on verbs and transitivity, and how the speaker uses subjective

[92] See page 41, subheading 'The role of Government in developing child internet safety guidelines' in the Context chapter for more information. This identifies how the Byron Report (2008) recommended the formation of the UKCCIS to bring together different agencies and industries. This was framed as providing consistency and uniformity within the production and distribution of online safety guidelines but has also led to this board possessing considerable power over the social practices recommended to parents when encouraging them to engage in surveillance strategies.

modality to develop alliance with the reader (e.g., parent) and to provide instructions on how to protect the object of the text (e.g., the child). Instructions are conveyed through a combination of modal auxiliaries and irrealis moods, which are illustrated within the analysis.

5.1.1 Vocabulary and cohesion

This focuses on specific words frequently used to represent the processes of the text. These are 'children' [210 references], 'parents' [74 references], 'risks' [43 references] and 'safety' [40 references]. The high frequency with which 'children' are mentioned is linked to their connection with other key processes within the guidelines. When combining the frequency of parents, risks and safety, these account for 157 references. In each of these, children are always referenced in connection to them[93].

Table 1: Words used to describe key processes in child internet safety guidelines

Children	**Parents**	**Safety**	**Risks**
Curious	Ask	Action	Danger
Exposed	Protect	Communicate	Explicit
Not as well equipped	Responsible	Control	Inappropriate
Trusting	Safeguard	Monitor	Porn
Vulnerable	Safe	Supervise	Sexting
	Talk		Stranger

By connecting children with terms such as *curious, exposed, trusting* and *vulnerable,* guidelines invoke dominant constructions of childhood to frame children, and particularly young people, as willing to engage in experimentation. By using these adjectives to modify

[93] See figure 9 for the relationship between these identified key processes.

the noun, childhood is constructed and reconstructed in the text from power discourses which underpin protectionism. The use of 'not as well equipped', despite being the sole passive verb in this category (see table 1), still functions cohesively within the text, as it relies on the adverb 'not' to modify the verb 'equipped' negatively. This symbolises the broader structural dichotomy which inform this text, as the use of 'not' and 'as well' infers that comparisons can be made regarding the competency of adults versus the incompetency of children. In this instance, it reinforces adults possessing superior knowledge to be categorised as 'equipped', whereas 'not as well' strips children of that understanding and contributes to the legitimisation of protectionist discourses.

Accompanying this category is the key process of 'risks', which seek to illustrate how negative characteristics attributed to children using the internet construct a fear of vulnerability from adults, reinforcing assumptions of adolescence as a period for risk-taking behaviours. To achieve this, nouns such as *danger, porn and sexting* are deployed to represent dominant anxieties attributed to children's online activities, and the noun *stranger* is frequently invoked as one of the most prevalent negative terms used to characterise a key threat to children's welfare: stranger danger. Whilst the term *danger* can be considered to rely on a negative emotion as a standalone noun, the same cannot be said for *porn* and *sexting*. Instead, these terms have to be accompanied with the adjectives *explicit* and *inappropriate* to emphasise the supposed fear and threat attached to these nouns when referring to children, thus requiring the invocation of age-appropriateness to categorise the desirability (or lack thereof) of the hypothetical action occurring by the object.

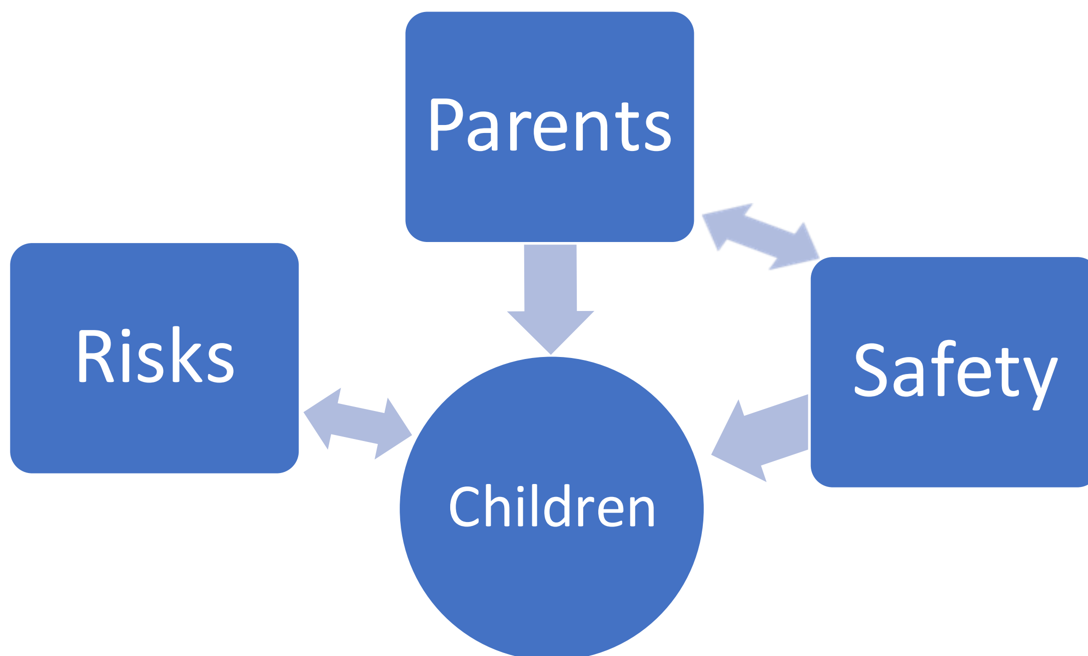
In contrast, words accompanying parents are positive, reflecting the position the guidelines advocate and seek to legitimise. Children are often described using adjectives which imply vulnerability and a lack of agency, whereas parents benefit from positive adjectives such as *responsible* and *safe*. These not only reinforce the positive character traits denied to children, but also shows how interventionism from this group is promoted by the speaker. These reinforce the construction of the family unit as a place of safety and security for children[94]. The reliance on verbs such as *ask, protect, safeguard* and *talk* further introduce instructions for parents, and accompany them with positive adjectives to contextualise their legitimacy

[94] Research has consistently challenged this construction, identifying this environment as one of the most likely environments they would be at risk of harm because of most instances of abuse occurring by a perpetrator within it. See Rudolph and Zimmer-Gembeck (2018); Hebert, Lavoie and Parent (2002); Reppucci, Jones and Cook (1994) and Finkelhor (1984).

and reinforce their necessity. Such practices are indicative of the pedagogisation of children's sex which underpins safeguarding practices, with these verbs representing key techniques for parents to ensure they exercise effective control and surveillance over children. Emotion plays a part of this process too, as the desire for parents to 'protect' their child and keep them 'safe' are important traits within dominant constructions of the family and the exercising of parental responsibility under UK law.

The final process, safety, is accompanied by the 'parents' category and utilises a range of verbs to instruct parents on how to fulfil this responsibility. These are actions which align with interventionist strategies within safeguarding, and their efficacy and justification are supported by the three other processes which have been outlined:

Figure 9: Relationship between key processes



As shown in figure 9, words used in each of the processes frame the relationship between them. As children are primarily represented using a range of negative adjectives, they are only understood within the text from a position of risk, which rely on specific adjectives to frame their agency as threatening. To counter this, the speaker uses positive adjectives and verbs for the parent, who benefits from being the subject of the text. Positive verbs are used to legitimise the parent role in exercising power because of their connection with the other key processes. This is represented in the figure chart above, as all the processes point back to the object, and yet that object only has access to an external process which is itself built upon

negative verbs, nouns and adjectives[95]. From this chart, we can observe how adult-child power dynamics are naturalised into the text, as the relationship of the parent to children and safety demonstrates the role they are required to play by protectionist discourses within the text. Despite the online sphere presenting perceived threats to parental control, this ensures that the key processes embedded within the production and consumption of this text aims to ensure the ongoing reproduction and perpetuation of existing power structures.

5.1.2 Modality

Fairclough (1989) argues that modality relates to the expression of a speaker's authority when communicating with others, and how such expressions relate to truth and reality. The guidelines relied on a subjective modality when communicating with the reader. Fairclough (1992) states that this is when the presence of the speaker is known, and the perspective being offered is clear to the reader. This is an important element of the guidelines and, Foucault (1976) illustrates how the pedagogisation of children's sex has led to a range of powerful pedagogues making claims on how to protect children from sex and sexuality. This requires the active presence of the speaker in these guidelines, as it demonstrates an integral way that they communicate their perspective and become a trusted source. The NSPCC and CEOP are powerful organisations within UK child protection, and the power they wield when producing text comes from their recognition as an authoritative, trustworthy perspective.

Nouns have been referenced above to show how 'children' were represented as an object and 'parents' recognised as the 'subject', but the use of subject pronouns play a different role in relationship building. The text used the pronoun 'you' to develop an empathic rapport, making the reader susceptible to their power of suggestion when attempting to invoke specific emotive responses:

"you may feel upset, angry or confused" (NSPCC, 2020).

The use of those adjectives to modify the 'you' reinforces the behaviour the speaker expects parents to enact when discovering their child is sexually active online. This extract was taken from a page regarding sexting, and the speaker's perspective simultaneously legitimises a set of negative emotions, but also uses the text to show empathy and understanding. Empathy is an important quality within relationship building and an effective way of establishing trust

[95] See page 123, 'risks' in Table 1 of this chapter.

(Eisenberg and Strayer, 2009); so, the role it serves is to develop an alliance between the speaker and reader to enable susceptibility to suggestions. This ensures the text is consumed in a way which reflects the desire of the reader to be educated, rather than being commanded by a stranger. Such approaches are common amongst claims-makers, whose attempts to raise awareness of social problems are accompanied by calls for moral action (Spector and Kitsuse, 2000). These actions rely upon dominant constructions of parenthood as people who are morally caring and responsible towards their children, and who will act against any social problems which threaten their ability to protect their children from harm. The encouragement to form an alliance is also evident in the deployment of 'we', which seeks to further embed a position of empathy within the text:

"We are here to listen, offer advice and support…"
"We are here to help and take that worry from you…"

(NSPCC, 2020)

These extracts show the use of 'we' in two different but important contexts. First, it illustrates the confidence of the speaker in having knowledge which is presumed to be superior to the reader, hence the offer functioning as a one-way dialogue. Second, the use of 'we' to symbolise alliance alters the forcefulness of the proposition being stated using inclusive pronouns. This shows how the subjective modality of the text inscribes a relationship on behalf of the reader, which minimises the likelihood of power being resisted. By constructing an alliance built out of a mutual obligation to protect children, this helps mask the power inequalities between parents and pedagogues working on behalf of the state. The establishment of an alliance is vital, because the recommendations within the 'safety' process make use of transitive verbs and irrealis moods which are more forcefully instructed as an obligation. The use of such language is evident only towards the end of the text, ensuring the demands are seen by the reader only after the relationship has been established. This allows the speaker to use their power of suggestion to put forward more forceful obligations, without risking challenge or resistance.

When analysing the use of adjectives, they can be categorised into positive and negative modifiers. The table below shows these categorisations (as well as the frequency of them), identifying words which were found across the web pages examined:

Table 2: Adjectives table

	Positive	Negative
Children	Healthy [4]; natural [4]	Embarrassed [2]; uncomfortable [4]; unsure [2]; upset [10]
Parents	Calm [3]; careful [5]; positive [3]	Angry [2]; anxious [3]; confused [2]; disgusted [2]
Other	Appropriate [8]; difficult [4]	Explicit [14]; inappropriate [42]; risky [4]

The use of these adjectives is consistent with protectionist discourses which inform the perspective of the text. Despite child developmental models acknowledging sexuality as a healthy and natural process, it does so in a way which requires a conspiracy of silence, with only a permitted schooling of sexuality allowed to break that silence. This illustrates why adjectives such as 'careful' and 'appropriate' persistently accompany the text, as regulated and permitted expressions of sexuality will be spoken about in an affirming and positive manner. However, the conditionality of this is evident within the text, as the agency of young people is often accompanied by negative adjectives to characterise perceived transgressions as 'explicit', 'inappropriate' or 'risky'. As such transgressions also challenge parental control, the speaker empathises with the reader by recognising the negative emotions which they may be feeling, and even rationalises them as understandable responses to their child's indiscretion. One of the most apparent failings within the text is that despite recognising that children may feel 'awkward', 'embarrassed' or 'unsure' about talking to their parents about sex and sexuality, it does not challenge the role it – the speaker - plays in constructing and reconstructing these negative attributes through protectionist discourses.

Table 2 also provides an understanding of how connotation plays a key role at the textual level in ascribing understandings of behaviour. Chapman and Routledge (2005: 193) describe connotation as "propositions where both subject and predicate are connotative… meaning is determined on the basis of the connotation of those terms".

"you may feel upset, angry or confused. It's natural to feel like this" (NSPCC, 2020)

By relying on negative feelings, the speaker conjures specific emotions which are contextualised as being natural to experience. For parents, these emotions are overwhelmingly negative and reflect the speaker's desire to commit the reader into deploying surveillance strategies as a way of protecting their child. The above extract is an example of that connotation, as it simultaneously uses negative adjectives to list the emotions which the speaker considers most likely and seeks to empathise with them through reinforcements of such feelings being appropriate for the situation. CEOP engage in similar linguistic techniques when deploying connotations. Within their guidelines, they use cartoons to create a video of a nuclear family who act out a hypothetical, relatable safeguarding scenario regarding a young person online. The script of the parents within the video includes remarks such as:

"I was so shocked and horrified! I could have screamed there and then…"
"I felt like we had let Harry down by not talking to him sooner"

(CEOP, 2020)

When examining verbs, the action processes within the text are evidently targeted at parents as the active agents for reaching the text's goals. This is evident from Figure 9, which links the key processes of parents and safety as synonymous to hold the reader accountable. These verbs usually functioned as an imperative, reinforcing to the reader that these are instructions for them to follow. When considering synonyms of 'imperative', these include words such as 'demand', 'instruct' and 'order', thus emphasising the forcefulness of the text. The most frequent imperative verbs used within the text were:

Ask; explore; limit; listen; reassure; remind; talk; tell.

The relationship between parents and children is evident from the use of transitive verbs, which require a subject, object and verb. Within the guidelines, parents are consistently the subject of the sentence, and children framed as the object who received the action:

"Tell your child they can always speak to you"
"This will allow you to limit the material your child can see when online"

(CEOP, 2020)

When considering deontic modal verbs, the text further exemplifies the obligatory modal force which the speaker attempts to convey when transmitting their modal base. Deontic modals use expressions such as 'can', 'may', 'must' or 'should' to demonstrate the standard of conduct to which the reader is being held accountable (Suikkanen, 2018), and these were evident throughout the guidelines:

"This may stop them from opening up to you" (NSPCC, 2020)

"You should consider using them [parental controls] to restrict access"

"You should advise them…" (CEOP, 2020)

In these instances, we see the use of 'may' and 'should' being used in different instructional ways. The first extract is part of the guidelines recommending that any negative emotions regarding their child's behaviour should be hidden from them, otherwise it may prevent discussion. This symbolises the anxieties the speaker has when promoting action by the reader, as encouraging parents to exercise power in a particular way requires the caveat that power may also be resisted by the object being discussed if the situation is not approached in an appropriate manner. Direct instructions aimed at the parent often comes with the modal verb 'should' to emphasise both its importance as an instruction and inferring the ramifications of not following its recommendations. Whilst this verb may have connotations which are less forceful than 'must', it is nevertheless an obligatory modal force which emphasises the importance of such strategies as a standard of conduct. In contrast, modal verbs such as 'can' utilise a permissible modal force, indicating they are advisory rather than necessary[96].

Finally, standards of conduct are further transmitted using irrealis moods, which Palmer (2001) describes as being the relationship between mood and deontic modality within grammatical markers[97]. When examining the guidelines, it is apparent that different forms of irrealis mood are used, consistently relying upon subjunctive mood verbs to construct threat.

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[96] A statement which reads 'you should' will understandably convey stronger connotations of obedience than a statement which says 'you can', and so the use of 'should' to ensure it establishes an obligatory expectation between speaker and reader is intentional within the text.

[97] The examination of irrealis moods as a modal category is supported by linguists such as Mithun (1995), who argues that there are theoretical difficulties with the concept of 'reality status', and contexts of irrealis markings in language are often influenced by culture to identify hypothetical and conditional constructions within text and speech (Rech, Brandao and Wit, 2018).

Certain recommendations within the guidelines did rely on other moods to reinforce instructions to the reader:

"Talking to your child about healthy relationships can help them understand the differences between porn and real life" (NSPCC, 2020)

In this extract, we see a present indicative mood clause. The use of 'can' relies on a permissible modal base, which indicates the tensions within safeguarding on how to manage porn consumption as a negatively labelled behaviour. Other aspects of the guidelines provide clearer instructions on managing porn outside of communicative contexts (e.g., parental controls to prevent such behaviours), whereas the recommendation to openly initiate a discussion with a child relies on a weaker permissive modal to support its strategy. In doing so, it presents a conditional mood in defence of deploying this method, as it argues that communicating about porn can benefit the parent with ensuring their child's safety. The inference acknowledges that children can understand the difference between pornography and real life but reinforces the importance of the parent in achieving this so as to minimise the risk of misconceptions. Nevertheless, this mood is noticeably weaker than the recommendations supporting more restrictive messages, which instead rely on imperative moods to direct the reader to conform to the standards of conduct:

"Ask your child to show you…"

"Have parental controls or filters installed"

"Block apps that may have inappropriate content"

(NSPCC, 2020)

The above extracts are more ambiguous in how they present a mood because the auxiliary verbs are absent from the sentences[98], leaving the reader to interpret the degree to which each of these recommendations are being pushed by the speaker. Nevertheless, the imperative mood of these extracts not only come from the meso and macro levels which promote these strategies, but also from the visual texts of these organisations which consistently showed parents enacting these measures as part of a recommended best practice for protecting their

[98] An example of a strong auxiliary verb is 'must' which, if it had been used, would transform the text to "You must ask your child to show you…". This would display a much more overt, imperative instruction from the speaker onto the reader.

child. My analysis argues that despite the auxiliary verbs being absent from these extracts, the ambiguity this causes still does not strip them of their deontic obligatory power. Instead, power discourses at the meso and macro levels reinforce the imperative nature of these extracts, and the messaging transmitted at the textual and discursive level via video media shows parents acting as a matter of necessity. This ensures that even when there is ambiguity, readers are still pushed towards an obligatory understanding to act through their engagement with other forms of speech by the speaker.

The use of subjunctive moods to represent hypothetical concerns of vulnerability was the final irrealis mood evident within the guidelines:

"This could lead to more pressure for them to send nudes"

"Let them know they can come to you if someone's pressuring them"

(NSPCC, 2020)

The use of 'could' in the above extract is used hypothetically to construct risk and vulnerability, ensuring that dominant constructions of childhood are evident within the grammatical moods of the text. In the first extract, 'could' functions as an auxiliary verb to speculate about the action of being pressured to send nudes. In the second extract, 'can' functions as an auxiliary verb so that the child knows they can speak with the parent if the risk of pressure occurs. This demonstrates that the deployment of subjunctive moods is designed to equip parents with solutions for addressing risks which the speaker considers most likely to occur, and so the construction of these risks and safety strategies are instead reflective of the speaker's ordering of them, rather than based on factual events or inevitabilities.

5.2 Discursive Practice

This stage of analysis focuses on how discursive practices influence the target of the text. By targeting parents, the text teaches the reader how to engage in 'appropriate' acts of parenting, as determined by dominant norms of society. These instruct how their roles should be performed (Gee, 1990), and a focus on production, distribution and consumption identifies how communication functions as a discursive practice (Fairclough, 1992). By examining these, my analysis can identify the relationship between social and textual practices, and how individuals at the meso level come to think, act and speak when performing a social identity

(McGregor, 2003). To achieve this, the analysis will focus on *utterance, coherence, intertextuality and interdiscursivity* (Fairclough, 1992: 75).

5.2.1 Utterance

The force of utterance refers to "illocutionary acts… explained in terms of the speaker's judgement of the value of the present utterance… the speaker is conscious of what communicative move she is making to the hearer, and how the utterance should be taken" (Fetzer and Oishi, 2011: 181). This ensures the illocutionary force of the speaker uses appropriate techniques within textual practices as a way of encouraging a desired reaction from the reader (Levinson, 1983).

The utterances within the guidelines are apparent, as the intended purpose for these documents is to encourage parents to keep their children safe, therefore it is clear the perspective of the speaker is favoured towards reinforcing protectionist discourses. The guidelines are a strategy which have emerged as the internet has become increasingly accessible to children, and the agreed social practices by UKCCIS to focus on their production requires textual practices to function appropriately to meet those goals. To achieve this, the text frequently conveys illocutionary force written under the guise of instruction. This includes frequent use of words such as *ask, communicate, control, explain, limit, monitor, supervise, talk, tell*. As action verbs, the utterance expressed uses a range of terms which a parent will recognise as being part of their broader responsibilities for keeping their child safe. The utterance of pronouns such as 'you' are frequently accompanied with obligatory modal verbs such as 'need', to form instructional utterances like:

"You need to make sure that they can come to you" (CEOP, 2020)

The earlier discussion on modal auxiliaries further emphasises the broader use of these instructional utterances within the text, and the authority of the speaker to make such demands is apparent from how they construct themselves as authority figures when communicating to the reader. The speaker conveys instructions through the use of imperative verbs and uses pronouns such as 'you' and 'we' to develop alliance. When accessing the NSPCC guidelines, the landing page states, "everything we do protects children" (NSPCC, 2020) and extensively advertises their helpline as a support service. In contrast, the ThinkUKnow guidelines provided by CEOP consistently reminds the reader they are

produced and published by the National Crime Agency (2020). Both organisations benefit from being recognised as powerful pedagogues within child protection. They make frequent utterances of their identity status to instil confidence in their claims regarding children's online vulnerability, and this plays a key role in influencing the reader to conform. The reader's experience is fundamentally different, reflecting the unequal role they play within the consumption of these documents. They are always the recipient to whom action verbs apply within the text, demonstrating the passive role they adopt when consuming recommendations. There are also frequent reminders for the reader to contact the speaker at any time for further 'help' or 'support', which again reinforces the unequal distribution of power within the relationship. Nevertheless, the speaker does appear to express anxieties regarding resistance to their power, and so their utterances often mask the illocutionary force of their instructions. The reader is likely not to resist the instructions because they are not being interpreted as a dictatorial intrusion, which is further helped by the avoidance of strong obligatory modal verbs such as 'must'.

Figure 10: Lucy and the Boy (NSPCC, 2017)

With the utterances of the speaker being primarily delivered via written text, a significant proportion of the illocutionary force can still be found in the videos which accompany and support the written text. Figure 10 shows a concise timeline of the hypothetical events which unfold in the safety video 'Lucy and the Boy'. The sequencing of events plays an important role within the form of utterances, and we begin by seeing the key processes of an unsupervised child accessing the internet, without displaying a competent awareness of the risks. This situation quickly escalates, as her belief that she has agreed to meet a boy of a similar age turns out to be an older male, who embodies the 'stranger danger' typology which adults invoke to warn children. The situation is only defused when Lucy's mother unexpectedly (to the viewer) arrives, causing the stranger to leave quickly off-camera. The prevalence of this form of storytelling continues to perpetuate a dominant stranger danger

trope that all child sexual abusers are male, and all child victims are female, thereby reinforcing the notion that the only risks children need to be aware of are heteronormative.

The lighting of the scenes plays an important role in reinforcing concepts of risk and safety. When being approached by the male stranger, the environment within the scene significantly darkens to allude to the imminent threat Lucy has unexpectedly created. However, Lucy's mother remains brightly lit throughout, symbolising the importance of her presence as a protector during a moment of peril. Although Lucy has the independence and agency to access the internet unsupervised, it is the consistent safety practices of the mother, online and offline, which allows these risks to be mediated. The connotations of this are that unless a parent is constantly monitoring their child, they could become victim to the ever-present risk posed by strangers on the internet. This plays an important role in reinforcing the utterances of the text itself, by bringing the risks to life and applying it to a scenario to which any parent would be capable of relating. This deploys an emotionally persuasive technique for coercing desired behaviours by complementing the written text that surrounds it on the webpage. Whilst the text alongside the video uses modal verbs such as 'should' to grammatically represent a weak modal base in language, the combined impact of the text and video reinforces the necessity for the parent to act. As the overarching message of the video is to practice safety in a preventative manner, the utterances which reinforce those instructions are explicit in order to emphasise the importance of conformity to those standards of conduct, even if the written text accompanying the video appears to utilise language which is less forceful on ensuring conformity at first glance.

5.2.2 Coherence

Fairclough states that coherence is about examining 'property of interpretations' (Fairclough, 1992: 83), and so the coherence of a text should be examined for how it uses markers for helping the reader to understand its parts.

It is clear from the guidelines that reference markers are deployed throughout the text to identify the intended audience for the document. These are consistently used before the guidelines are even accessed, as the organisations producing and distributing them are simultaneously required to convey these instructions to different adult groups involved in protecting children. The way these instructions are structured and presented to the reader will

understandably differ depending on who the target audience is, and so the markers within guidelines written for parents will differ from those written for children or professions.

Table 3: Coherence markers

	Communication	Pornography
Children	"Talk to someone you trust" (Childline, 2020)	"Lots of people watch porn, which is okay. But it's also okay if you don't want to watch it, or if you're not sure. It's important to remember that porn is made for adults." (Childline, 2020)
Parents	"Tell your child they can always speak to you" (CEOP, 2020)	"You should consider using them [parental controls] to restrict access to pornography" (CEOP, 2020)

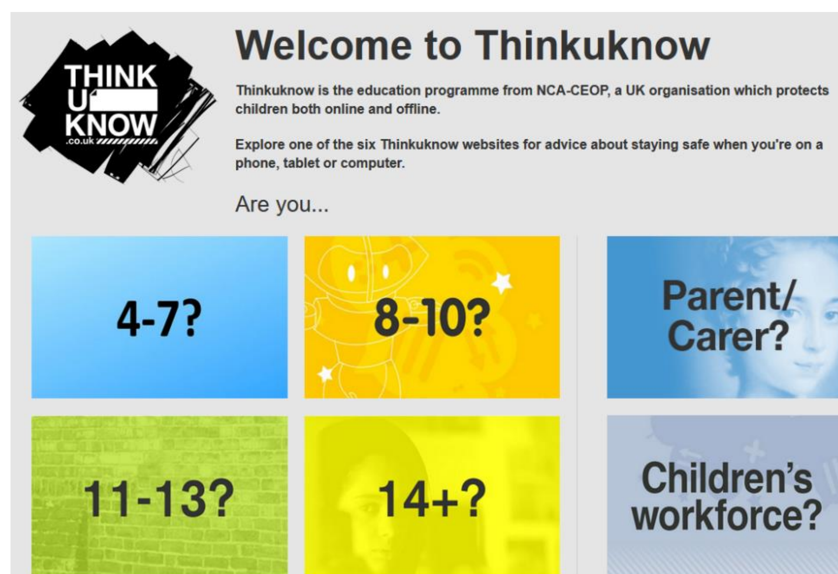
We can see the effect of coherence markers in Table 3, as similar forms of instruction are reconstructed to ensure coherence for the intended reader. This shows how protectionist discourses from social practices are used to establish coherency within the text, as guidelines tailored for parents acknowledge their capacity to exert control and surveillance over children. In contrast, when presenting instructions on identical issues to children, the perspective is altered and reflects the hierarchical position children have within society, as they are frequently encouraged to abstain from behaviours and encouraged to speak to somebody who they 'trust'. This is a key term used prominently within the guidelines for children[99], implying the importance of established relationships between adults and children, as well as the assumption for an adult to possess knowledge of how to keep a child safe. The use of markers when structuring instructions also shows how certain recommendations are noticeably absent from those written for children. Children's guidelines consistently focus on

[99] The analysis of children's guidelines is to identify how the role of the parent is presented to children when being educated on online safety, and to analyse how that coheres with the responsibilities and duties set out in the adult guidelines.

raising awareness of risks and reinforcing the importance of communicating with a trusted adult[100] when a risk occurs, which is consistent with the relational key processes outlined in Figure 9. On the other hand, guidelines for parents focus on preventative measures, and invoke a wider variety of instructions to ensure that such risks have minimal chance of occurring. Safety recommendations which align with monitoring and supervision strategies are excluded from children's guidelines and only appear to be promoted, or even acknowledged, in those marked for parents. As an example, parental guidelines on pornography actively promote the use of web filters and monitoring software, meanwhile the equivalent page marked for children makes no reference to such things and fails to acknowledge the existence and/or perceived necessity of them.

CEOP:

Figure 11: Homepage for CEOP

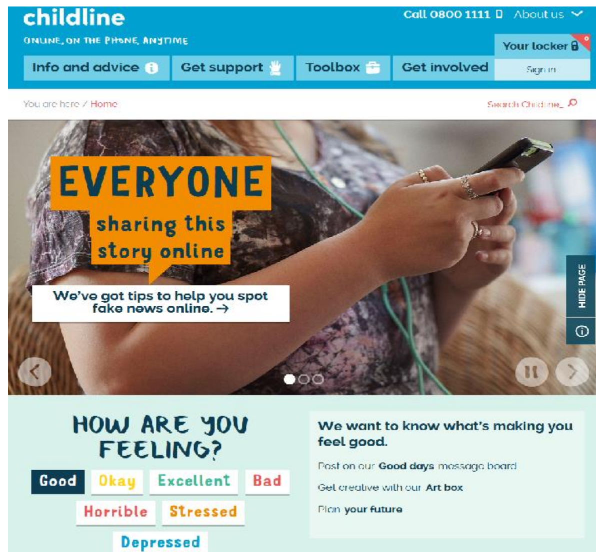


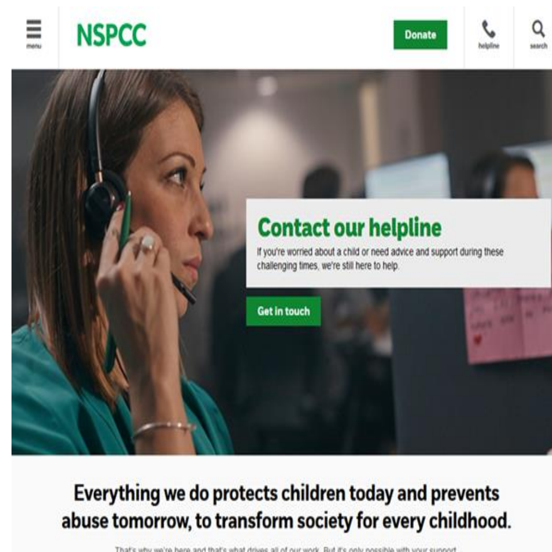
(CEOP (https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) [Accessed 14th October 2020], 2020)

[100] Children's guidelines specifically define a trusted person as an adult. Childline has a page dedicated to this issue called 'Asking an adult for help'.

Figures 12 and 13: Homepages for Childline and NSPCC

Childline: **NSPCC:**





(Childline (https://www.childline.org.uk/) [Accessed 14th October 2020], 2020)

(NSPCC (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/) [Accessed 14th October 2020], 2020)

As mentioned above, markers are utilised before the guidelines are even accessed, which ensures that the overall experience different groups have when accessing resources is tailored to their respective roles within the protectionist discourse. As organisations often produce and distribute guidelines for multiple groups, they effectively deploy different techniques to ensure that readers are directed to the text which contains their appropriate markers. This is evident from Figure 11, which shows CEOP's landing page using filters to ascertain who the reader is. By asking 'Are you…' and providing a series of age- or role- based options to direct the reader to the appropriate area of the website, this ensures that the reader is effectively directed to guidelines which contain the appropriate markers for a coherent text. The NSPCC (Figures 12 and 13) engage in a different tactic, as they use the dichotomy of adulthood-childhood within social practices to construct a segregated webspace solely for children. The style of each show how understandings of that dichotomy feed into the presentation of information, as the Childline website has a landing page which is bright, colourful and avoids using terminology associated with the protectionist discourse. Meanwhile, the NSPCC website is formal, has a large picture depicting a woman answering a

welfare call, and uses key protectionist terminology such as 'protect' and 'abuse'. By placing their adult and child guidelines on different websites, they use a similar filtering approach to ensure that readers are able to access guidelines which contain the appropriate markers for their age or role.

In addition to the textual markers, the images also provide coherence to the parent reader through the positive emotions they promote alongside the guidelines:

Figure 14: Coherent images (NSPCC, 2020)

Across these three pictures, we see a parent or parental figure interacting with a child in different ways, and it is implied in each scenario that they are playing an important role in ensuring that child's well-being. The left and centre picture show young children who are being affectionately held by a trusted adult, and the right picture shows an older child who is engaging in happy conversation with her (presumed) mother. Each of these provide strong coherence to the guidelines, as they actively promote parental intervention and frame it in a positive manner, and the pictures provide a consistency with that messaging. The children are not only displaying signs of emotional comfort from adults' involvement, but the facial expressions indicate feelings of safety and security associated with protectionist discourses. These types of images are apparent across webpages promoting online safety and contributes to the forming of intertextual chains which keep readers engaged with a network of resources which conform to the same safeguarding practices and principles.

5.2.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the interrelationship of discursive features in a text and can be examined through manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1992). This first requires an examination of how the text draws upon other texts and patterns within the discourse type to create an intertextual chain.

The production and distribution of these guidelines are organised by the UKCCIS[101], who function as a central multi-disciplinary body on behalf of the Government to monitor emerging online risks and ensure safety strategies remain current and uniformed. The formation of this council stemmed from a key concern expressed during The Byron Review (2010), which recognised that parents lack technological confidence to competently protect children from online risks, and that a strategy was necessary to educate children and parents of these risks. The patterns which these guidelines follow is consistent with the broader measures to which children are subjected within the protectionist discourse. As this agenda relies on developmental models of childhood to reinforce dominant understandings of sexual innocence, these constructs are the knowledgebase in which the safeguarding agenda is built and is one of the key reasons that sexual anxieties regarding children's perceived vulnerability are so prominent within society. This is observable at the textual practice level within these guidelines, as concepts such as porn, sexting and stranger danger feature extensively. This reflects similar patterns of social practice outside of the online sphere, with the regulation of children in the physical sphere largely following similar discursive practices to mediate these anxieties. These patterns show that rather than being an isolated sphere with its own unique safeguarding strategy deployed, it is instead part of a larger intertextual chain which seeks to construct and reconstruct mechanisms of control and surveillance. By doing so, this ensures that the power of this protectionist discourse remains preserved in the face of challenges, as professional pedagogues and allied claims-makers (e.g., parents) seek to preserve its power structures by reconstructing strategies which avoid the discourse being destabilised by unchallenged agency of children online.

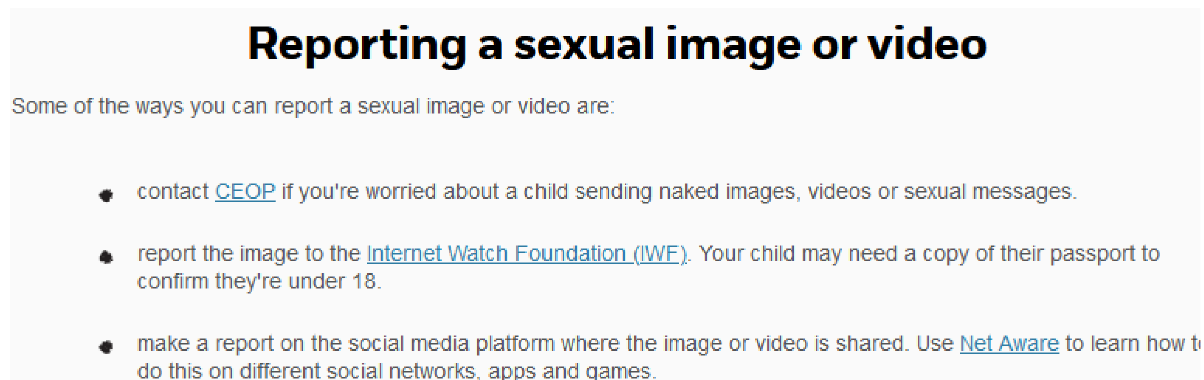
However, the centralisation of guidelines through the UKCCIS also serves another vital intertextual function. The Byron Review (2010) expressed concern that attempts to educate parents on how to protect their children online would be ineffective if the instructions within those recommendations were not consistent. In other words, the power these guidelines have to influence desired behaviour from parents would be undermined if different organisations suggested contradictory advice. To counter this, the UKCCIS council brings together over 200 organisations from different sectors, and they all agree a strategy to which their guidelines must conform. The power this has within consumption is wholly apparent, as this uniformed approach means that the intertextual chain can easily be reproduced in other texts,

[101] See page 39, subheading 'The role of Government in developing child internet safety guidelines'.

such as through mass media. This intertextual chain also allows for recommendations to obtain further credibility through amplification:

NSPCC:

Figure 15: NSPCC referrals



CEOP:

Figure 16: CEOP referrals

Sexual exploration: It's natural for children to start exploring their sexual feelings, and talking to people online can feel exciting. Adults can exploit this natural curiosity by talking about sex and introducing new things that might be inappropriate. Direct your child to age appropriate information about sex and relationships at Childline or Brook.

(NSPCC, 2020; CEOP, 2020)

As can be seen from the above images, one of the techniques deployed in reproducing the intertextual chain is through distributing the guidelines in a co-ordinated, networking manner. We can see that the two organisations who are the subject of this analysis actively promote each other's respective publications and services, and so the reader becomes part of a consumer network when engaging with these materials. This is a key trait of the UKCCIS network, as membership of this council is a symbol of that organisation's commitment to 'keeping children safe' via their agreed strategy, and so organisations will network with each other to signpost their readers to different but similar materials and services. For the reader, this has a powerful impact on legitimising these recommendations, as the amplification which occurs when accessing different organisations helps to aspire confidence in the authority and suitability of those recommendations. As these are the only strategies which are authorised to be mass produced and distributed by the network, this plays an important role in constructing a sense of reality, as any questions or critiques of them which would challenge this

dominance are restricted from consumption by the public. Consequently, the naturalness of these guidelines become evident: they are not only the recommendations which are freely accessible to the public, but all the organisations which are recognised as reputable services for children's welfare share those same instructions within their textual practices, thus enhancing their perceived credibility as trusted strategies.

5.2.4 Interdiscursivity

The final analysis at this stage is called interdiscursivity, which examines form, genre and structure within the discursive features of a text (Fairclough, 1992). These guidelines are easily attributable to child protection, as even the categorisation of them as 'child' internet 'safety' guidelines signposts the reader to the genre and form that the structure follows. As acknowledged earlier, the utterances of the text are required to take on an instructional tone in order to hold the reader accountable to desired conduct, and it is unsurprising that the overall tone of these documents is authoritative. This tone serves an important purpose for this mode of discourse, as it ensures that the writer utilises a formal, monologic discourse when establishing a connection with the reader (Cook, 1989). The formal tone of the text conveys authority, but its structuring acknowledges a desire to avoid resistance through the establishment of an alliance. To achieve this, the guidelines consistently do two things. First, before providing recommendations to the reader, it constructs the risk and uses this to establish an empathic rapport with the reader, often by appealing to their emotions and legitimising any negative feelings they may be having. Second, by structuring instructions towards the end of the text, it allows for a sense of alliance to be established between speaker-reader, with phrases such as 'we are here to help' and weak modal auxiliaries like 'should' being deployed within instructions to avoid perceptions of commanding the reader. My analysis of utterance has acknowledged this already, but there is an additional component to this discursive practice when examining interdiscursivity:

Figure 17: Tone within imagery

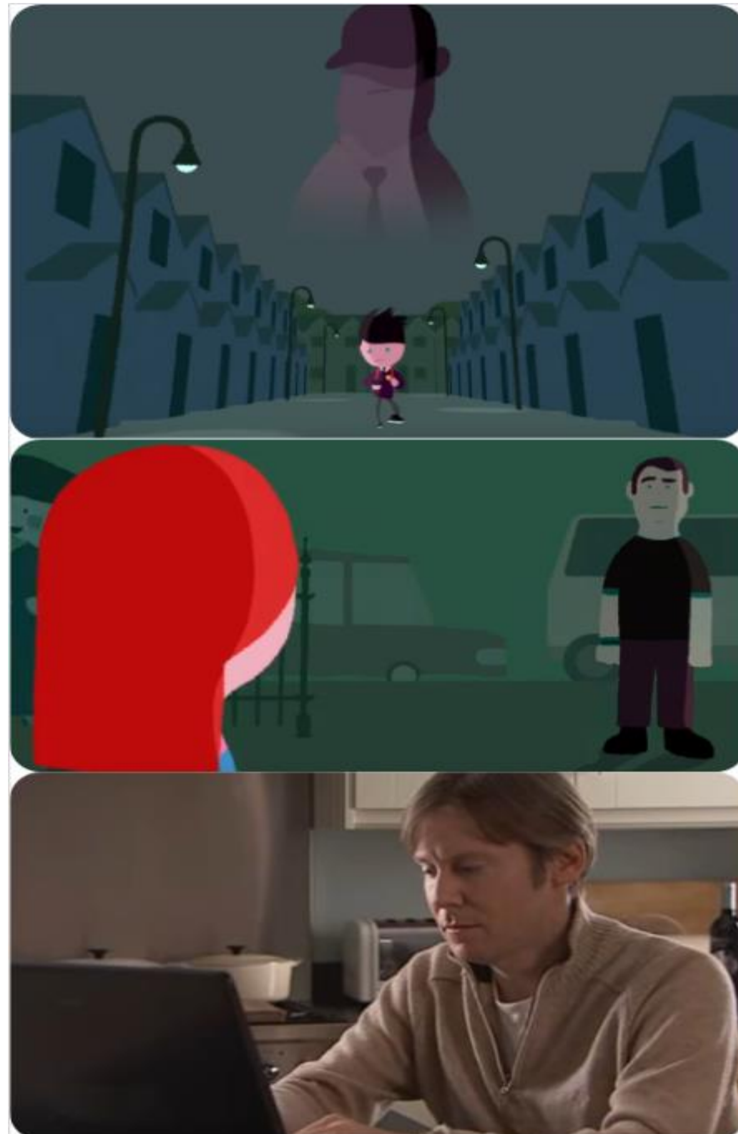
The formal tone accompanying the text is also evident through the imagery used in the guidelines to evoke concerns about danger and vulnerability. These images are particularly powerful for achieving this form, as they show young girls who possess stereotypical femininity and passivity, and who are using a mobile phone unsupervised. The tone of these images conveys a sense of risk and danger using mood lighting, as they are consistently present in a dark environment to construct a sense of risk and are being consumed by the darkness to represent the creeping threat that their agency may pose. It is also unsurprising that each of these images rely on young girls to influence the tone of the speech, and this is consistent with wider social practices which significantly restrict the sexual agency and sexuality of girls in comparison to boys (Pickens and Braun, 2018). Nevertheless, the tone of these images is mediated through further visual media which shows the risks defused through the intervention of parents:

Figure 18: Mediating the tone

The contrast between Figures 17 and 18 is readily apparent and serves as an important mechanism of persuasion when trying to convince the reader to adopt the speaker's stance and implement their recommendations. By focusing consistently on the depiction of the 'ideal' middle class family, this provides a powerful narrative device within the text to encourage parents to be as engaged with their children as possible to ensure they are kept safe. If this is not done, the scenarios depicted in Figure 17 are pushed onto the reader, and the risks facing their child are presented through negative tones as hypothetical inevitabilities stemming from the parent's failing to exercise their responsibilities in the speaker's desired way. However, if they conform, the tone is altered to invoke text which shows positive outcomes which satisfy both the desires of the protectionist discourse, as well as the parent when holding themselves accountable to the standards which that discourse dictates.

The final imagery device to examine is the form in which the older male typology is represented:

Figure 19: Older Male Typology



The narrative device that portrays the older male typology is one of the most powerful techniques deployed within the guidelines, and one of the most prominent intertextual chains we see reproduced regularly by pedagogues and tabloid media. This reflects the prevalence of this stereotype within the protectionist discourse, and this reconstruction allows for this threat to be digitised to provide a continuous bogeyman figure to justify the ongoing need to control and surveil children. To achieve this, the typology relies on multiple threat narrative techniques which we see being performed above. The first threat narrative is seen through the blending of the physical and online spheres. The first and third pictures demonstrate the

threat that these figures have on the child's safety, with the first male looking down from the sky as he monitors the reaction of the child after having sent a sexually inappropriate message to him. The third picture shows an older male using an electronic device to communicate with a young girl, who he has deceived into thinking that he is also a boy of a similar age[102]. This individual is also able to recognise the location of this girl from pictures of her online in her school uniform, which provides him with the means to stalk the girl without her knowing. The second picture contains a similar, albeit more physically overt, threat, with the older male waiting in the school yard for the child and approaching her as she leaves school. All three of these scenarios demonstrate how the tone of these guidelines emphasises the sense of urgency the speaker possesses in encouraging parents to think about how the online sphere is not isolated from our lives – the threats it presents can quickly and unknowingly spill over into our physical sphere and may even jeopardise the safety of the family unit. This is evidenced by presenting the older male as an omnipresent figure: you cannot know when you are talking to him, how many of them exist, or whether he is watching you. Instead, the recommendations are only able to mediate these anxieties through preventative steps, by requiring the parent to ensure their child does not behave in a way which would make them accessible and identifiable to such threatening figures.

The cumulative effect these images have offers compelling insights into the textual practices deployed by the speaker. Specifically, the written guidelines rely on authoritative but empathic form to minimise the likelihood of resistance, and this is evident through weak modal auxiliaries such as 'should' being the primary modal base for conveying a sense of obligation. However, the accompanying imagery alters the overall form of these guidelines, as it is the textual practices we see in visual imagery where the more emotionally coercive practices are presented. By deliberately constructing characters who are designed to be relatable to the reader, this enhances the power that these discursive practices have in influencing our behaviour. Despite the use of 'should' within written text, the strong emotions evoked by the imagery plays a key role in altering that sense of obligation for the parent so that these guidelines are instead interpreted as a 'must'. If this is not done, the

[102] The Office for National Statistics (2019) reports that girls account for 80% of the victims of child sex offences reported to police, and that 92% of the perpetrators of abuse were male (4% experienced sexual abuse by a female and 4% experienced sexual abuse by both males and females). Victims of child sex abuse were most likely to have been abused by a perpetrator known to them (37% of cases). For females and males, the most frequent reason for not disclosing abuse was 'embarrassment' (53% to 58%).

imagery consistently provides negative depictions on the hypothetical, inevitable consequences which the child will experience as a result. This demonstrates the overall power that these textual practices have, as they are simultaneously able to construct a sense of authoritative alliance between reader-speaker, and yet cleverly deploy coercive forms of utterances to reinforce a strong sense of obligation for the reader to conform to the speaker's ideology and practices.

5.3 Social Practice

The final stage of analysis focuses on how interpretations of situational context are established by readers of discourse, and how they recognise which discourse type is appropriate to consume and perform. This analysis will focus on two dimensions of situational context and discourse type, which are adult-child power dynamics and heteronormativity. Whilst children's agency and LGBQ identities may be subjected to procedures of exclusion within protectionist discourse, they are not extinguished by such exclusion and instead proliferate as a threat which must be managed and controlled. The process which we have seen within the production, distribution and consumption of child internet safety guidelines is part of a broader agenda to regulate and control a section of the population using institutional social orders, such as the family, to reinforce hierarchy and identity scripts. In this instance, policy narratives from the UKCCIS function as a truth[103]. This allows their policy narratives to be constituted as truths, with the readers of their guidelines binding themselves to the direct institutional practices contained within. Ideological dominance plays an important role at this level, as power is only ever achieved partially through ideological means, and the reproduction of the guideline's intertextual chains are vital for ensuring that this power is as far-reaching as possible. This is achieved through the ongoing naturalisation of protectionist discourses, which aligns with Fairclough's own interpretation of discourse dominance: "if a discourse type so dominates an institution that dominated types are more or less entirely suppressed or contained, then it will cease to be seen as arbitrary (in the sense of being one among several possible ways of 'seeing' things) and will come to be seen as natural" (Fairclough, 2001: 76).

[103] Foucault (1980: 133) describes truth as "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements".

5.3.1 Adult-child power dynamics

These guidelines function within a society which puts children's needs at the heart of its public health concerns (Woodhead, cited in James and Prout, 2015). They are part of a long-standing tradition within child protection to enforce an idealised view of childhood, and to protect children from dangers which challenge that dominant viewpoint. Child protection is a social practice encompassing many different activity types, but the ideologies which underpin this agenda places clear constraints on the situational context in which social practice is performed. For example, Francis-Connolly (2003) outlines that the development of child-specific legislation has played a key role in constructing and reconstructing social order and has placed standards upon the family unit as an institution for nurturing and protecting children in ideological ways. This includes transmitting cultural messages regarding the paramountcy of protecting children and ordering discourse so that pedagogues and parents assume roles which enable and sustain this.

As this agenda focuses on mechanisms of control, we can establish its purpose within a situational context: protecting children who are understood, through discourse, to be vulnerable and at risk. Woodhead (2013) states that this emerges from developmental discourses, with children being constructed as opposites to adults, using attributes such as 'immature' and 'incompetent' to reinforce this dichotomy. The obligation to protect them is borne out of concern that their 'becoming' adult status would cease to have meaning if their behaviours risked destabilising the adult-child power dichotomy. On a socio-cultural level, childhood has become so naturalised into our society that obligations for adults to protect them passes as indisputable truth (Blundell, 2012). This highlights how policies play such an important role in reconstituting this truth, ensuring the ongoing preservation of institutional practices which privilege adulthood. This anxiety has been reflected in concerns regarding children's agency in the online sphere and is a primary motivator for producing and distributing these guidelines. By responding this way, social practices have conceded that constructions of children as less competent are not a natural representation, otherwise the threat posed by their technological competency would not have been possible if superior adult competency was demonstrable in all instances. Instead, the policy narratives seek to reconstitute this 'truth' by reproducing discourses which reinforce the dangers of children behaving without control and surveillance. Despite a contradiction being present, it ceases to pose a destabilising threat to power structures, as the prevailing truth which trickles down

from these policy narratives reflect attempts by society to reconstruct safeguarding practices to keep children contained and subordinated.

We can observe this process extensively within the guidelines, as the speaker's targeting of the parent as reader/subject is a deliberate one. It signifies how broader social context privileges adulthood and sustains hierarchies around this structuring. Adults, as speakers and readers, serve as active agents to discuss children, who are treated throughout the text as passive objects. This aligns with analysis by Koslowsky and Schwarzwald (2001), who state protectionism relies upon obedience and authority, the roles of which are established either through social identities of expertise (e.g., social worker) or their relative position in a hierarchy (e.g., parent). Again, this is evident throughout the guidelines, as the recommendations are hierarchically produced and distributed. Their development reflects the speaker's ideological adherence to dominant standards laid out by claims-makers, and parents' engagement demonstrates both their inferior positioning in relation to the authoritative speaker, but their superior status in relation to the child.

As children's perspectives are excluded from safeguarding, it is unsurprising the guidelines reflect this too. The textual and discursive practices analysed have demonstrated how adult perspectives overwhelmingly influence the knowledge transmitted by these documents. This was most noticeable when comparing the different instructions provided between parent and children's guidelines within coherency markers: for children, the instructions focused on the importance of confessionality to a trusted adult, preserving the hierarchical relationship which adults have over them. Guidelines for adults did acknowledge the importance of reinforcing confessions from children, but also provided further instruction on what measures ought to be deployed to ensure that monitoring and surveillance were maintained too. By denying children access to this information, these illustrate how societal context influences the structuring of text so that only certain practices are relevant to children, whereas more covert and overt strategies are only discussed with the parent. One of the other keyways in which protectionist discourses are informed is through heteronormativity, as the power relations enshrined within heteronormative discourses highlight how these adult-child power dynamics are normalised within the family unit. Additionally, the intersecting of age and gender plays a key role in perpetuating developmentalist understandings of dangers and threats to children within these power structures.

5.3.2 Heteronormativity

The family unit has consistently been a target for ideological bases to constitute understandings of sex and sexuality (Blau and Abramovitz, 2007), and is widely seen in society as giving situational context to the desirability of heterosexual monogamy. Societal structures have deliberately organised themselves to represent sex and sexuality in this supposedly natural way, and privileges are rewarded by these structures to those who conform to desired standards of sexual conduct. These include but are not limited to a recognition of the right to privacy and family life within human rights law; socio-economic rights for married couples; extensive socio-cultural representation; and powers to exert control over children. Harding, cited in Jagger and Wright (1999), argues the preservation of the nuclear family and marriage are seen by these power structures as an essential goal to ensure that children continue to be socialised in an ideologically desired way.

Threats to this model are embedded into the guidelines in numerous ways. First, the stranger danger narrative relies on the representation of an external threat to the safety and integrity of the nuclear family (Smyth, 2006) and has come to embody a powerful narrative device for parents to protect their child. As shown in the guidelines, this threat has been reconstituted to present this danger as an imminent threat to children online and relies heavily on historically reproduced typologies of the older male. In this version, the typology has been digitised, with the character reproduced in discursive practices as an invisible online threat. This presents an omnipresent danger, as they are simultaneously absent from the physical space of the household but have also penetrated its sanctity using deceptive techniques to unknowingly groom a child. This narrative relies on sociohistorical discourses of stranger danger to ensure this threat is reconstructed in a coherent manner, but this has nevertheless been done in an effective and powerful way. This is not only one of the most dominant areas of concern for encouraging intertextual chains to be reproduced in media, but it also demonstrates a key focus within textual practices to coerce parents to conform to desired standards of conduct. Terry (1999) acknowledges that the stranger danger narrative has allowed discourses to portray the offender as an ever-imminent threat to children's sexual innocence, but it also provides justification for parents to exert control and surveillance to ensure the safety of the family is structurally maintained. These anxieties have manifested at the societal level for several decades, and so this figure being digitised to serve as a driving force for producing

these guidelines was a predictable cause of action to ensure the regulation of the online sphere for children.

Nevertheless, stranger danger is not the only prominent narrative to reinforce heteronormative ideals. The analysis has also shown textual and discursive practices which rely on stereotypical understandings of gender norms. In particular, the pedagogisation of children's sex has ensured ideological expectations of identity and behaviours are enforced (Renold, 2005). Pedersen (2013) identifies that media imagery used within child protection documents are more likely to portray girls, and this was evident from the analysis undertaken. Figures 10, 14 and 17 consistently utilised stereotypical understandings of femininity to reinforce sexual dangers facing children, and these are consistent with a society which functions on heteropatriarchy at a structural level to regulate females more stringently than males. This can be observed at every level of practice, as the production and distribution of these guidelines reinforce gendered assumptions about the risks facing young girls, and it is even practiced at the micro-level by parents when deploying safeguarding strategies.

Finally, an inevitable consequence of structural heteronormativity, and its reliance on heteronormative developmental models of childhood sexuality (Rosario et al., 2011), is the exclusion this causes in recognising the needs of LGBQ children. Moore and Reynolds (2018) acknowledge that the pedagogisation of children's sex legitimises different adult roles to decide what sexual knowledge children may have, and the form and timing it is given to them. By relying on sociohistorical discourses, the needs of LGBQ children are deliberately excluded from consideration and categorised as 'inappropriate'. As this analysis has addressed, concepts of 'explicit' and 'inappropriate' possess subjective meaning, and so the utterances of the speaker to reproduce heteronormative ideologies for childhood create a challenging situation for closeted young people. Alldred and David (2007) highlight how such discourses have been used to restrict content seen as threatening to heteronormative socialisation.

The overblocking of LGBQ websites by web filters reflects a contemporary example of this discourse, due to the high rates by which such sites are mistakenly miscategorised as 'inappropriate'. As these ideologies trickle down to textual and discursive levels, they reinforce a lack of consideration for 'closeted' young people by failing to acknowledge their existence at all. As an example, the instruction for children to communicate with their parents demonstrates this point. First, it fails to acknowledge the privacy needs of children, and

creates a situation where they must engage in a decisional balance over whether to report abuse and out themselves in the process, or internalise it and hope they can manage such risks privately[104]. Second, it draws upon legitimised power structures between adults and children, unquestioningly accepting the suitability of parents to be the protectors of children[105]. Encouraging parents to exercise control and surveillance assumes everything they may discover about their child, even covertly, are things they will possess the competency and values to accept. It fails to consider risks which may arise should these strategies cause a child to be outed to a homophobic parent, as the notion of a parent being ill-equipped to protect a child would represent a subversion of the ideologies which legitimise their power within this protectionist discourse. These guidelines present a tangible risk to the privacy and welfare of closeted children, as the ideologies they draw upon to produce the text fail to acknowledge children's voices and do not adequately understand the needs of those who are closeted.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has utilised Fairclough's three-dimensional model to conduct a CDA on child internet safety guidelines. It has outlined how, at a textual level, children are consistently treated as an object within the guidelines to be controlled by parents. The documents use a range of linguistic devices to develop an alliance with the parent and use obligatory modal auxiliaries to reinforce a sense of obligation onto the reader. At a discursive level, the text highlights that it has been produced with the intent to provoke a desired actional response from the reader, and it uses stereotypically gendered representations within its media to portray risk and coerce these responses. The texts also function as coherent pieces, with age-based markers used to ensure different consumers are signposted to appropriate texts. Figures 11, 12 and 13 show the importance of this practice, as children's guidelines were able to focus on instructing the child to communicate concerns to an adult, whereas intrusive methods of surveillance were promoted solely with parents, in recognition of how society defines hierarchical roles within protectionist discourses. My intertextual analysis illustrated how the production and distribution of these texts function as a network, and that signposting occurs to amplify the UKCCIS's strategy across organisations. At the social level, my analysis has illustrated how discourses draw their naturalised power from how frequently

[104] See page 226, subheading 'A perceived inability to disclose'.
[105] See page 173, subheading 'Balancing the online and physical spheres'.

they are repeated and practiced in society. The family unit is privileged in society as a bedrock of child-rearing and healthy sexuality, and so policy narratives are overwhelmingly influenced by such ideologies when seeking to maintain regulatory control over children and childhood. In the context of heteronormativity, this poses significant and unique problems for closeted LGBQ children, as the guidelines fail to acknowledge their existence or needs, and they are noticeably excluded from being able to challenge this because of how adults restrict their right to participate in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the presupposition that parents are always best equipped to protect children is further problematic, as it unquestioningly empowers them to exert control and surveillance over children, thus increasing the potential risk that a closeted child may be outed by the very discourses which claim to protect them. The findings from this chapter have provided critical insights into the ideological construction of internet safety guidelines and the role they play in perpetuating heteronormative power dynamics, and these will feed into relevant areas of the three remaining data analysis chapters which analyse the findings from the participants.

Internet Access: Challenging a Heteronormative Socialisation

6.0 Introduction

This is the first of three chapters which use a thematic analysis[106] to analyse the empirical data provided by the 24 participants within this study, and it will begin by examining how the internet has provided broad opportunities for closeted LGBQ young people to circumvent heteronormative socialisation. It will discuss how agency is exercised online to construct an online self, and how this process occurs to directly avoid dominant adult-child power structures which restrict the information they receive as part of a desired socialisation. By subverting and transgressing this regulation, participants engage with virtual communities catering for sexual minorities, and transform their own learning from passive recipients of knowledge exchange to becoming active producers of their own sexual enquiry and identity development. When exercising this agency, the impact of their narrow socialisation emerges to show how 'stranger danger' discourses reinforce a narrow understanding of typological threat. This has the effect of creating a potential vulnerability to children by failing to prepare them of the risks beyond the 'older male' typology. Finally, the analysis discusses how participants recognise threats towards their privacy when maintaining the separation of their online and physical spheres, and what steps they take to preserve their closeted identity and minimise the risk of either sphere conflicting with the other.

6.1 Overcoming information barriers

The delivery of RSE occurs within an institutionalised setting, in which heteronormative developmentalism make assumptions regarding children's needs when delivering a narrow RSE curriculum. The suppression of non-normative enquiry occurs through this ideological narrowing of knowledge transfer, along with rigid gender policing which create boundaries about what and why individuals would need to know information[107]:

[106] See page 115, subheading 'Thematic analysis of LGBQ participatory data'.
[107] Seidman (2015) highlights that in order to assimilate within a heteropatriarchal institution, a closeted individual will make a conscious decision to avoid enquiring about topics deemed non-normative as a way of avoiding identification as an 'other'.

Declan: "I cant[108] think of a way somebody could ask a question about gay people without it creating suspicion. If it was a homophobic question it might avoid attention but genuine questions would be really risky."

Declan, a 16-year-old closeted gay male, highlights the difficulty LGBQ young people such as himself have accessing information. Within a school's heteropatriarchal structure, the adherence to stereotypical constructions of gender performativity restricts an individual's capacity to enquire about non-normative identities. Whilst heterosexual pupils can ask questions about RSE without attracting attention, Declan and other closeted individuals would threaten their assimilation and concealed identity by asking about same-sex intimacy. Instead, they seek to overcome these information barriers by accessing the internet, which is seen as being better equipped for meeting their privacy needs.

Alfie: "The best thing about the internet is I decide what I want to look at. I don't have somebody else saying I need to know this and that control is what helps. I learn more from accessing this site and talking to real people than I do at school. Here it feels like I define who I am and people talk and support me based on that."

Joe: "Meeting other people like me makes me feel less alone. When I feel low I know I can reach out and talk to people who understand and feel the same… The thought of coming out scares me but seeing other people talk about their experience helps…"

Oscar: "School can feel like the loneliest place in the world when you don't fit in but the internet offers me an escape. If I feel lonely I just go on my phone and talk to other people…"

Alfie, Joe and Oscar outline the benefits young people can obtain through their internet usage, as each of them have effectively integrated communicative technologies into their lives and are able to use it in ways which benefit their social support needs. Pugh (2009)

[108] The extracts are presented as submitted by the participant to enhance the authenticity of the participants contributions. Any spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes are left as is, so readers should be mindful of this throughout the participant data analysis chapters. On occasion, I use square brackets when either a mistake is significant enough to foreseeably cause confusion on what the participant is saying (see footnote 114), or when an acronym is used for the first time and its meaning is provided (see footnote 117).

refers to this process as the 'economy of dignity'[109], as it allows them to develop social support networks for obtaining a sense of belonging and community with peers. It is recognised young people can use these networks to expand and strengthen the relationships they develop within their physical world, but the impact of this 'economy' on Alfie, Joe and Oscar highlights how it allows closeted LGBQ young people to circumvent the information barriers which contribute to their sense of social exclusion within their physical institutionalised spaces. Each of them possesses an acute awareness of their needs and utilise communicative technologies to access information and networks which are otherwise excluded from their physical spaces.

> Martin (Interviewer)[110]: "Are there any other LGBTQ+ people in your school?"
>
> Emily: "Not that I know of but that means they are hiding like I am."
>
> Martin: "So the internet is the only place you are able to talk to other people who are closeted?"
>
> Emily: "Yeah and others who are open which is also important."
>
> Martin: "What was it that made you feel the most comfortable about using the internet to begin exploring your identity?"
>
> Emily: "I like the privacy that it gives me and how everything can be found on search engines. I can go from talking to my school friends to talking to my online friends and also post threads asking for coming out advice or any other problem I am having. I don't worry about what people will think of me because I know they have experienced the same and wont bully me for it."
>
> Martin: "And how does that compare to what you feel able to ask offline?"
>
> Emily: "The internet gives me the freedom to figure things out for myself. School just decides what I need to know puts me in a class and expects me to listen and ask questions. It doesnt consider some of us may not feel able to ask questions because it will let other people know things about us and they can use it to be mean. I feel safe online because I know the people I am asking have had those same experiences and want to help."

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[109] See page 31 for more information.

[110] When providing excerpts between a participant and the interviewer, my first name will be used from this point onwards.

As the internet allows individuals to access information beyond their social and spatial boundaries (Ruckenstein, 2013), it has also offered unprecedented virtual opportunities for marginalised and stigmatised social groups within society who are seeking community networks. Emily, a 15-year-old closeted bisexual female, illustrates the advantages the internet has in comparison to physical spaces, as she argues that education enforces a passive socialisation experience in which she is expected to listen to knowledge transmitted to her. Hawkes and Egan (2008) refer to this as 'proper sexualisation', as pedagogues maintain control over knowledge transfer when schooling sexuality, whilst also continuing to restrict undesired agency from those who are denied access to sexual rights and recognition. The shortcomings of this 'proper sexualisation' are exemplified through Emily's arguments, particularly when showing awareness regarding the importance of circumventing adult-led restrictions. Considerable awareness of social and spatial boundaries is exhibited across participants, as the power of heteronormativity within these spaces are recognised as inhibiting their ability to ask questions which are more aligned to their social support needs. In contrast, participants recognise that the internet provides them opportunities to explore their true self and to construct a sense of identity in a manner which lets them feel comfortable and safe (Downing, 2013). This can be attributed to the disinhibition which young people display when talking about why they use the internet in this way, as various areas of the participants' contributions align with the 'Online Disinhibition Framework' conceptualised by Suler (2004)[111]. Dissociative imagination is evident from the way participants highlighted how they keep their online selves contained within this social intrapsychic world, and Emily refers to this behavioural balance when discussing how the internet provides her freedom from the regulations of her physical sphere. The impact of 'dissociative anonymity' and 'minimisation of authority and status' are also observable within their experiences:

> Alia: "nobody knows who I am on here so I dont worry about saying things I would be ashamed about offline."
>
> ---

[111] As part of this framework, he specifically refers to 'dissociative imagination' as being a phenomenon in which people view their online activities as occurring in a social intrapsychic world which is separate and apart from the norms and values regulating their social space.

David: "It feels more equal when you talk to people online. I don't find myself worrying about how they will react or whether they think it is appropriate for somebody my age to identify this way or to ask questions about being gay. If somebody is a dick I just block them and they are gone forever."

Alia and David identify how online virtual spaces are constructed in much more fluid ways compared to physical spaces. In a physical space, the prevalence of heteronormative discourses regulates their behaviour and requires adherence to a strict performativity. Consequently, same-sex affection has frequently been met with verbal and physical condemnation. To overcome this, the development of queer spaces has been a keyway of establishing neighbourhoods which subvert heteronormative discourses and permit public displays of intimate same-sex behaviours and identities. However, Alia and David highlight why self-disclosure within those spaces make them inaccessible for closeted young people such as themselves. Dissociative anonymity would be significantly limited as they travel between heteronormative and queer spaces, and the prevalence of authority is constantly encroaching on the physical borders of the queer space, even if the neighbourhood itself provides a sense of security for individuals[112]. In contrast, Alia and David reported obtaining the same social support benefits of queer physical spaces when engaging with their online sphere, and they recognise that accessibility and anonymity are most enhanced within these virtual queer spaces. The impact of authority is simultaneously minimised by the space being inclusive of their identity and needs, as well as the sense of disinhibition which is obtained through the construction and presentation of the online self.

Martin: "Do you worry about encountering homophobic people online?"

Callum: "Not really. Homophobes are everywhere but it feels easier to ignore them or argue back when you are online."

Callum shows that the confidence he has in performing to his closeted identity is empowered through his engagement with the online sphere. As a 16-year-old closeted bisexual male, cyberspace transforms heteronormative power relations and provides him opportunities for accessing information and networks which would otherwise be invisible and categorised as

[112] A consequence of homonormativity is also apparent from restricting recognition of LGBQ behaviours and identities to adults, as queer spaces are predominantly occupied by businesses who provide recreational services – pubs and bars – to adult patrons. LGBQ young people will be excluded because of their inability to obtain money to be a patron at such establishments, and because of laws restricting them from spaces which have been reserved as 'adult-only' establishments.

'adult-only' behaviours within his regulated physical space. Goffman (1990) outlines that our performance when 'on-stage' is regulated by the expectations of the audience observing us. Similarly, Butler (1990) has intertwined the impact of heteronormativity into this performative concept to exemplify how gender performativity is regulated to ensure it complies with the expectations of a dominant heteronormative audience[113].

In cyberspace, the disinhibition participants experience transforms this performativity and breaks down the barriers which have disempowered and marginalised them within their physical space. This is due to Callum feeling better able to challenge homophobia on a more equal footing, as the minimisation of power dynamics results in authority being seen as less frightening. Instead, a sense of anonymity and security is obtained because of the online self operating in an intrapsychic world, rather than the regulated and contested physical space occupied by powerful adults. Within this intrapsychic world, the participants have recognised that the audience are no longer observing them through the lens of heteronormativity – the impact of those who do is nevertheless greatly diminished – but that they themselves are able to construct the audience so that it caters to their online performance. David and Callum both illustrated this when discussing how they regulate their audience, either through the medium of 'blocking' from their social intrapsychic world or using their newly acquired power to challenge heteronormativity and homophobia. This allows closeted young people to explore their identity and needs in a virtual world which transgresses the limitations of their physical space and empowers them to exercise agency, without surveillance from parents. The internet provides them with all the information and opportunities they require for obtaining a sense of identity, taking control of their sexual socialisation, and obtaining confidence and clarity of who they are through the practicing of their lived identity within this virtual social world.

6.2 Agentic producers of sexual socialisation

Young people's enthusiasm towards communicative technologies has provided them with unprecedented opportunities for circumventing dominant power structures and empowering them to exercise agency. More specifically, closeted LGBQ young people are no longer passive recipients of a heteronormative sexual socialisation process, but instead possess the tools and knowledge to utilise their electronic devices so that they can access 'restricted' resources. Gilbert (2014) argues that because of the narrow focus education uses to control

[113] See page 51 for more information.

RSE, young people will always encounter some version of an ‘adult no’ when trying to explore their sexuality within the physical sphere. By reducing young people to passive recipients of knowledge exchange, and only catering for an assumed dominant construct of a developing child, those outside of this mould have displayed considerable competency in overcoming these information barriers and subsequently taking control of their own learning. Participants no longer settled for the limitations of heteronormative socialisation within classroom and family settings. Instead, they have transgressed these dominant power structures and transformed the role which they play within their own sexual socialisation. Rather than being the passive recipients of knowledge exchange desired by dominant adult-child power dynamics, the participants have rejected this model and exercised agency so that they can access their own desired materials. Participants have refused to recognise the necessity of the ‘audience’ role required by adult-child power dynamics when receiving a regulated sexual socialisation in physical spaces and have instead assumed the role of ‘producer’ within the online sphere. This manifests in the way young people seek out content and ask questions about any issues which they have experienced, thus allowing them to pursue their own self-defined socialisation based on any enquiries, curiosities and desires they have. They also demonstrate a clear awareness of why they are seeking out such information and make clear decisions on how information accessed online is accepted to become part of their sexual exploration and identity. This transforms sexual schooling, as the passive model of knowledge exchange within RSE is transgressed and superseded by the online sphere, which has unlimited potential for them to exercise agency in a way which works exclusively for their own perceived needs. Due to this, young people are no longer the passive recipients of sex education but are empowered to produce their own internalised body of sexual knowledge to fit their identity exploration. Subsequently, the sexual socialisation they experience is the product of their own journey, rather than the by-product of a desired childhood constructed by adults’ heteronormative moral anxieties.

The pursuit of sexual health information and resources was one of the most prominent examples of how young people display agency online, as participants possessed considerable awareness of how they had gaps in their own knowledge prior to accessing online resources. By accessing these materials online, Ben goes from being a passive recipient of regulated information, to an active producer who accesses resources which cater for his sexual health needs:

Ben: “it helped seeing info about safe sex for gay guys. in school they teach about condoms how they prevent some disease but so much of it is about avoiding pregnant.”

Martin: “You said that they mention condoms as helping to avoid some diseases. Can you elaborate more on that?”

Ben: “basically we talked about klamidia [Chlamydia] siflis [Syphilis] goneorear [Gonorrhoea] [114]and thats it.”

Martin: “And how has accessing sexual health resources online helped improve your knowledge?”

Ben: “ive been able to read about hiv hepititus [hepatitis] hpv and safe sex advice for blowjobs and anal its no longer just about the vagina.”

Martin: “It’s interesting that none of that was covered in your classes. Do you have any thoughts why that is?”

Ben: “people dont think its relevant for guys… it feels like hiv is seen as a gay disease.”

The limitations disclosed by Ben within RSE are a consequence of the compulsory heterosexuality evident within medicalised approaches which inform this area of schooling. Non-normative identities have been significantly pathologized in the past within health discourses (Rosario, 1997) and Ben has provided insights into how the consequences of this continues to inform our knowledge and practices today. The pathologizing of LGBQ people has prevented queer-affirming knowledge and skills being evident within healthcare services, resulting in disparities between sexual minorities and their heterosexual peers (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014). These barriers have contributed to the reconstruction of these pathologies to reinforce stigmatising assumptions about the health and well-being of LGBQ people (Muller, 2018). For example, the emergence of HIV resulted in gay and bisexual men being further marginalised and stigmatised for allegedly being carriers of the virus, as discourses were constructed around the belief that it only affected same-sex relationships. Within medicine, the virus was falsely labelled as Gay Related Immune Deficiency because of misconceptions surrounding the origin and transmission of the virus. Whilst these medical discourses have since been reconstructed to acknowledge the threat of the virus to any sexually active

[114] As highlighted in footnote 112, this is an example of a square bracket providing the correct spelling alongside the original version of what the participant said during the research.

individuals, the historical narrative of it being a 'gay disease' has meant that it has largely been represented as an abstract, imaginary horror for heterosexuals (Horne and Lewis, 2002). This is a result of monogamous idealisms within heteronormativity constructing heterosexuals as a 'low risk' social constituency. This inevitably impacts the ideological lens which is used to construct a regulated sexual socialisation within physical spaces, and LGBQ young people remain excluded from this sexual health awareness because of normative constructs which portray all young people as 'developing' heterosexuals and thus not requiring information which is only seen as a relevant risk factor for sexual minorities.

Despite this, closeted LGBQ young people overcome the limitations of these constructs by actively using the internet to seek out information which educates them on these resources. As Ben highlights, the way he has exercised agency and produced his own sexual socialisation has meant that he now possesses considerable knowledge of safer sex practices for same-sex sexual activities, as well as knowledge of how sexual intercourse occurs outside of the narrow heterosexual, reproductive focus he was formally taught in school. This control over sexual socialisation was consistently recognised as a strength across all participatory groups, irrespective of gender and sexual identity:

> Alia: "i have talked to other girls on here who have the same worries i do about sex."
>
> ----
>
> Harry: "am able to ask questions without worrying about people judging me or labelling me… I dont know my identity but being open about my feelings is helping me understand."
>
> ----
>
> Emily: "I felt like I only understood part of who I was. School helped me understand straight relationships but it provided no information on gay relationships accept [except] acknowledging them… I did not understand how to express my interest in both when everything I was being told made them sound like it was 1 or the other."

These experiences from Alia, Harry and Emily are consistent with findings from Stonewall's 2017 School Report, which identified similar limitations within educational teaching and the appeal of online resources for young people to circumvent this. For example, Stonewall (2017) found that 40% of students were taught nothing about LGBT issues, only 20% learnt about safe sex in same-sex relationships, and that 75% of students received an education

which had no acknowledgement of bisexuality[115]. In contrast, the report also found that 96% of students felt that the internet had helped them to better understand their sexual identity. The consistency between Stonewall's data and the experiences provided by the participants highlights the wider social practices which are occurring amongst LGBQ young people, as an overwhelming majority of them are utilising their communicative devices to overcome barriers, therefore highlighting the competency and creativity young people possess when faced with marginalisation and restriction. By challenging the conspiracy of silence which exists within the physical sphere, Ciaran, a 17-year-old closeted gay male, provides a thorough outline of the benefits he obtained by using the internet to transgress RSE knowledge barriers and develop a sense of self:

> Ciaran: "I could not imagine myself coming out before I got support and made gay friends online. The thing that worried me most was how I had all of these feelings inside but everyone around me was different. I would listen to my mates chatting about girls they fancied and I just realised how alone I was because none of it was relatable. It was only when I started meeting people like me on here that I got the opportunity to understand my feelings and have conversations without worrying I might say something too gay. I went from being a guy who could never imagine being out and open to being happy with who I am and feeling more confident to tell people. I still havent told my parents yet but my friends at college know and they are fine with it. The hardest part was having to accept it myself and it was made worse because of how invisible you feel when your in the closet. You have all these people understanding who they are because their identity and feelings are normal but we are expected to come out without getting no information on who we are and how to do it. How

[115] Since September 2020, RSE as a compulsory curriculum requires schools to teach in relation to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Ofsted (2020) have been required to provide a resource webpage for schools in recognition of the volume of questions asked about how schools should fulfil this duty, "particularly the sexual orientation and gender reassignment characteristics". However, there is clear evidence of heteronormativity within the practical application of these duties and how the guidelines interpret them. Ofsted outline that they will assess the quality of RSE based on how it contributes to the 'personal development of pupils'. They acknowledge that age-appropriateness is a component of this, and specifically refer to this within the context of gender and sexuality. When teaching about sexuality, as a protected characteristic, their webpage guidance stipulates that a primary school may wish to teach about sexuality in regard to the types of family groups which exist within society. At secondary school level, they may wish to expand upon this characteristic further by discussing the legal rights afforded to LGBT people. Despite these being considerable advancements within educational policy since Section 28, they are nevertheless still underpinned by adult-centric understandings of age-appropriateness and 'proper' sexualisation. It is still too early to assess the efficacy that these reforms have, but initial guidance on their introduction for this school year demonstrate that historical barriers because of heteronormativity remain.

can you be happy with yourself if everybody else acts like who you are is something that does not even exist? That's why a community like this is so important. It provides information and lets you know your not alone and you are normal."

Mohr and Kendra (2011) highlight that identity development amongst LGBQ young people is more challenging because of the privileging of heterosexual identity within society's heteronormative expectations. This has created a significant challenge for the participants to overcome, as figuring out 'Who am I?' is one of the central and normative developmental tasks of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Ciaran attempts this process but encounters barriers within his identity development due to his internalised awareness of how his attractions fail to correspond with the heteronormative messaging in his physical environment. This is noticeable when he relates himself to his peers, who he describes as fulfilling heteronormative gender roles through their discussions about being attracted to members of the opposite sex. The coercive attributes of heteronormativity are apparent within the invisibility he feels, which requires him to avoid disclosing information about his own attractions and feelings out of fear that it would compromise his assimilation. It is clear that the regulatory structures influencing these behaviours are a further representation of the controlling apparatus which forces young people to be passive recipients of their sexual socialisation. Although Ciaran's friends express a sexual interest in members of the opposite sex, the permissibility of this by pedagogues is dependent on it being seen as a verbal performance of masculinity amongst peers and not leading to physical sexual activity before adulthood.

Toomey, Anhalt and Shramko (2016) argue that identity development occurs in two distinct stages. First, identity exploration "is the process of seeking information about one's identity" (Ibid: 488) and second, identity resolution refers to the "commitment one has about the meaning of one's identity" (Ibid: 488). Both stages provide a further demonstration of how LGBQ young people become agentic producers of their sexual socialisation, as their inability to achieve these stages within their institutionalised physical sphere requires alternative means for doing so. This has been demonstrated by the participants through their capabilities for using technology to overcome heteronormative information barriers. This first stage of identity development is evident across all the participants by virtue of their participation within the research. As the sample was obtained from a coming out community online, all the

participants are only interacting with the research because they had previously undertaken this first stage of identity exploration prior to their involvement within the project.

The occurrence of identity resolution was more difficult to ascertain amongst the participants, but there was an emerging theme of them working towards this:

> Alfie: "I have been focused on coming out to my friends first… support I have received on here has given me the confidence to tell people."
>
> ----
>
> Joe: I like how natural it feels for me being out to people online. At school I will talk to friends but will constantly think about what I say and how I say it but I don't online. Somebody above mentioned being out on here is a good way of getting experience for being out in real life and I agree with that. This community helps us find ourself and be confident enough to eventually show that side to other people outside of it."
>
> ----
>
> Hayley: "friendship was something I really needed and it has let me find that some of my closest friends are from here."
>
> ----
>
> Oscar: "…sometimes conversations can get flirty but it doesn't mean anything. It is just nice to be able to do that with people without worrying they will react aggressively and I guess its good practice for real life."

Alfie, Joe, Hayley and Oscar each discuss the differing ways they are using their online activities to facilitate their own identity resolution, and their behaviours are indicative of what their heterosexual peers can do in their physical environment. In a heteronormative institution, those who align with the dominant majority can engage in intimate relationships, albeit strictly regulated, as well as form close friendships with peers based on their shared identity. By transgressing the regulatory structures within education and family households, closeted young people can obtain these same social benefits by exercising their online agency when interacting and networking with those who are undergoing similar identity development. Goffman (1990) identified this phenomenon when discussing stigmatised groups who, he argued, would develop a sense of community as a way of overcoming their marginalised status and legitimising their 'other' identity. Alfie, Joe, Hayley and Oscar have

shown how their online selves provide broad opportunities for exploring and 'living as' a LGBQ individual, as well as empowering them to prepare for the transition of their online self into their physical self by coming out to family and friends. This online agency has provided them with broad opportunities for constructing their own sexual socialisation, but their capability to exercise agency has also resulted in the emergence of significant moral panics and socio-political backlashes within public discourses. One of these is evident from the digitisation of the 'older male' predator, which was prominently discussed within participants' understandings of online risks.

6.3 Perpetuating typologies

The regulated socialisation which young people experience can be accounted for as a consequence of anxieties in ensuring that all information is considered to be 'appropriate'. Hawkes and Egan (2008) categorise sexualisation using the labels 'proper' and 'improper', which reflects how society uses strict moral diktat to determine the appropriateness of knowledge transmission to children and young people. This categorisation provides a framework for assessing child-rearing and parental competency – the 'improper' is often associated with inadequate parenting or successful attempts by the child to access sexual information beyond what is sanctioned by pedagogues – but this generalised model also treats all children as a homogenous social grouping with the same needs. An institution will only be legitimised to work and interact with children and young people if they align themselves with the dominant ideologies which regulate 'proper' socialisation and agree to transmit those values to sustain the illusion of this framework being the natural norm, rather than a constructed system which can be challenged or destabilised.

A key implication of this 'one size fits all' approach to sexualisation is that these allied institutions – family, education, media, Government etc – all transmit similar messages within their educational warnings to children and young people. Jenkins (1998) highlights that the focus on child sexual abuse since the 1970's has led to the formation and sustainment of the 'stranger danger' narrative, and it is this offender typology which has taken on a greater significance when warning children of societal dangers because of the opportunities afforded by developments in ICT:

Matthew: "the internet is full of strange men and they can pretend to be anybody."

Zach: "I think strangers is the biggest thing we get warned about growing up. We are taught to not get in cars or talk to them and the internet challenges that because everybody is a stranger. My mum hates computers and thinks they allow bad people to get away with things because they are anonymous. I remember when she was buying me a laptop for school and she got stressed that so many of them had webcams and she thought creeps would hack into it and watch me without us knowing."

Matthew and Zach highlight the impact of the moral panic which has emerged because of the integration of technology on our daily lives. Wolak et al. (2008) emphasise that media and social narratives regarding young people's technology usage has been met with considerable negativity and fear and is consistent with previous technological advancements which too have attracted similar reactionary fears and moral panics. These narratives have overwhelmingly relied on the 'stranger danger' panic to justify their concerns about the loss of control parents and parental figures have over their online activities. Developmentalism perpetuates assumptions of naivety to guide adults' understanding of young people's vulnerability, thus reinforcing constructions of youth as naively impulsive and in need of controlling by parents and parental figures in order to protect them. This is evident from the adult-child dichotomy and how society represents the dominant characteristics of each group. For adulthood, this period of life is underpinned by assumptions of competency and maturity, therefore enabling informed decision-making when exercising agency. In contrast, young people are portrayed as susceptible to danger through their agency because of their presumed incompetency and immaturity, such as lacking awareness of the consequences of their actions. To mitigate these perceived shortcomings, protectionism empowers adults with the ability to use their 'superior' developmental skills to prevent children from becoming victims of their own lack of adult development.

The offender typology which underpins the 'stranger danger' narrative has become digitised as part of the safeguarding agenda's reconstruction of risk management. These are often presented as being 'new' risks requiring innovative new approaches for the online sphere, whereas my analysis has highlighted that regulatory measures have largely relied on existing

discourses and protectionist frameworks to sustain pedagogical control. This has led to the dominant offender typology taught within physical spheres being reconstructed into the online sphere to ensure young people are consistently regulated regardless of which sphere – physical or online – they are engaging with.

> Martin: "A few of you have mentioned that you are worried about strangers and the risks they pose. If I asked you to imagine what that stranger looks like in real life, how would you describe them?"
>
> ----
>
> Louis: "a old man… there the ones you always see being exposed."
>
> Ciaran: "Yeah I have seen a few videos of people who have been recorded getting confronted by groups who hunt online and it is always a man. In school you would always be taught about strangers being men to… dont get into a strange mans car or dont talk to strange men."
>
> Ruby: "it was not always men though we were told not to talk to strangers and that also included women."
>
> Martin: "So do you imagine a woman then when you are picturing a stranger?"
>
> Ruby: "I admit I am more likely to think of a male but theres no reason a female could not be the stranger."
>
> Ciaran: "Isnt that the point? I think we are all aware that a female can lie about who they are [online] but we dont think of them when asked. We assume it must be a guy."

The discussion between Louis, Ciaran and Ruby during the online discussion board demonstrates the impact that a gendered offender typology has on educating young people to assess risk. The construction of the sexual deviant as a shadowy male figure who threatens the safety of children and the family unit (Terry, 1999; Minton, 2002) remains entrenched within the communication between adults and young people when educating them about safety. The reliance on this reconstructed typology remains clear from the participants'

acknowledgements that this was how they visualised the presumptive offender. In the case of Ruby, she did attempt to engage critically with this dominant typology by conceding that there is no reason a female could not fall into the 'stranger danger' narrative, but even this was qualified with her acknowledgement that she would still likely think of a male as the perpetrator. As Ciaran emphasised, despite knowing that an offender can have characteristics beyond the fixed typology, we continue to make assumptions which reinforce that typology and thus create the illusion that it is the most prominent risk when nurturing children and young people. The strategy here may be simplistic in focussing on this specific offender, but it does reflect the importance of teaching of such dangers during early education whilst requiring the messaging to be kept simple for young children. However, the simplicity of this strategy is more contestable at later stages of education, as Louis, Ciaran and Ruby have shown that such prevalent discourses still fail to reconstruct this danger in a way which would meaningfully broaden a young person's awareness of the scope and prevalence of other online risks. Therefore, it is unsurprising that this typology continues to reflect the narrowed lens used by children and adults when assessing risks posed by strangers[116].

The restricted knowledge identified from participant perspectives is a consequence of the pedagogisation of their sex and sexuality (Foucault, 1976), which allows authoritative claims-makers to regulate and restrict their access to, and knowledge of, information. Moore and Reynolds (2018) highlight that this form of control over their sexuality allows parents to dictate what access children and young people have, including when engaging with the online sphere. As it is not practical to simply restrict access outright, parents and parental figures utilise a safeguarding strategy which relies on these specific, overarching characteristics throughout childhood. By not engaging with a differentiated and age-appropriate education of risk, these limited, overarching characteristics continue to provide the dominant means in which young people use to protect themselves from defined risk factors:

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[116] See Zaman et al. (2020) for more information on how children's digital media use has shifted from emphasising the social advantages of the internet, towards a risk and safety paradigm, warning parents about the contact risks from strangers. In particular, the media focus on cases involving an older male sustains adults' perception of stranger danger being communicated across childhood as a narrow risk offender. This is attributed to these anxieties being based on a fear of such crimes, rather than direct or indirect experiences of them. Adults' knowledge of such incidents is typically limited to sensationalised stories reported within media, or through conversations and gossip amongst their community.

Isaac: "Its important i meet people my age… it will let me feel less alone knowing other people have the same questions I do."

Calvin: "am friends with people the same age as me on here but I do have concerns they might be fake. You hear about old men pretending to be young all the time and you have to trust people you talk to that they are telling the truth and theres no way to know."

Martin: "What concerns do you have about other people you talk to?"

Callum: "I do worry a lot about how genuine they are and that makes me careful about what information I tell them."

Martin: "How might they not be genuine?"

Callum: "You need to trust that what they are telling you is the truth. People lie all the time on here about things happening to them so why would they not also lie about who they are?... it's the perfect community for lying because nobody questions why you are hiding information about yourself and assumes it is because your closeted. A peedo [paedo] could easily stay hidden and get a lot of info about a person and use it to manipulate them."

Martin: "So because the community is supporting a group of people who require anonymity to get coming out support, you are worried that this increases the likelihood of somebody lying about their identity when talking to other people?"

Callum: "yeh… everybody on there is lying about their identity in some way but most want to be helpful and supportive. The old dudes pretending to be a teen are ones people just need to watch out for."

Martin: "And how do you ensure you do that?"

Callum: "If I become friends with someone I usually add them on sc [SnapChat][117] and you can see on snaps that they look like they say."

The impact of this 'stranger danger' socialisation is evident across the contributions from Isaac, Calvin and Callum, as it consistently highlights the same dominant constructions within offender typology across all of the participants. Wolak et al. (2013) have drawn attention to the dominant representations of threat which are constructed within media and societal discourses and argue that the reality of internet-initiated grooming is more complex, but less archetypally frightening, than the claims and narratives present. This finding has been further reinforced within the UK's safeguarding agenda by The Munro Review (2010), which also concluded that safeguarding strategies and educational campaigns rely too heavily on inaccurate depictions of online grooming. The consequences of this are evident from the contributions by Isaac, Calvin and Callum and raise critical questions about how prepared closeted LBBQ young people are at assessing online dangers when accessing community spaces outside the surveillance of parents. As they have shown, their assessments of risk overwhelmingly rely on the same stereotypes which are perpetuated to them within media and education, as the 'online groomer' is considered to loiter around children's online spaces and uses deceptive tactics and coercion to develop a child's trust (Bortree, 2005). To accomplish this, the typology of the offender is constructed and warned about as an older male who is lying about their true age, identity, and intentions so that they can initiate contact and develop a relationship based on a fraudulently constructed persona (Boss, 2007). These representations of risk are noticeable in how the participants are assessing online dangers and seeking to ascertain whether a person is genuine. Callum specifically acknowledges the heightened risk of danger of online coming out communities, as they are a constructed webspace which allow for anonymous individuals to hide their identity and avoid disclosing information. Due to this, behaviours which would otherwise be considered suspicious and show signs of a potential 'groomer' can instead be explained as a legitimate performance within the context of their closeted identity and supportive needs. Callum even acknowledges that to overcome this barrier, he requires interactions outside of that environment so that more open forms of communication can occur. He specifically refers to the social media platform SnapChat, which allows individuals to send pictures of themselves to friends and

[117] As highlighted in footnote 112, this is an example of a square bracket providing the definition of an acronym used by the participant in the original version of their extract.

attach text-based messages to them. This acknowledgement alludes to an assumption that by engaging with a 'friend' on social media channels such as SnapChat, this removes the risk of befriending a deceptive online groomer, as their identity can be ascertained through their interactions (e.g., ensuring that how they look in selfies corresponds with the information they have presented prior). This, however, requires both parties to make themselves more vulnerable by disclosing information they may not want to, so as to prove the legitimacy of their reported online identity.

The risk awareness and safeguarding strategies reported by Isaac, Calvin and Callum does attempt to address a tangible risk facing children and young people, but it is doing so in a problematic way. It is clear there are instances of crimes involving children and young people being sexually harmed by an older stranger, and so a legitimate purpose is being served, but most cases involving an adult perpetrator is an individual who is known to the child rather than a stranger (Office for National Statistics, 2019). It is the dominance of this narrowed focus within participants' perspectives which inadvertently creates safeguarding dilemmas, as educational awareness and media depictions rely on a reductionist approach which privileges scrutiny of this specific type of crime, at the expense of reducing the visibility and significance of other tangible sexual risks facing children and young people (Akindole, 2013). The consequence of this is that young people are socialised to measure risk under this reductionist framework, and this inadvertently exacerbates risks facing them online because of the narrow lens through which they have been taught to assess online dangers and risk factors. Stranger danger crimes are often the most sensationalised and visible, and this creates a false assumption about how prominent these forms of crimes are. More prominent risks facing young people are subsequently ignored and remain less challenged within educational awareness, and Priebe and Svedin (2012) provide an example of this within the context of high school students online. Their research found that of those who reported internet-initiated sexual solicitation and abuse, most of the perpetrators were of a similar age to the victim. This can be attributed to the lens in which we are socialised to measure risk: when an older male who fits the typology attempts to solicit a child, the participants have demonstrated sufficient awareness of how they have been taught to respond to that scenario and will even scrutinise a stranger's identity to ensure they are being truthful. Young people specifically seek out individuals who are of a similar age to them as a way of sharing experiences and developing their social networks (Priebe and Svedin, 2008), and will make clear attempts at

ensuring the person they are communicating with and developing trust for is legitimately representing themselves. However, the perpetuation of dominant stranger danger discourses amongst the participants also ignores the risk of the peer: many instances of abuse, harassment and solicitation occur by a perpetrator of a similar age to the victim, but the focus on the 'older male' typology inadequately prepares young people to be aware of this. When a person of a similar age engages in flirtatious and sexual behaviour, it does not trigger the same safeguarding response as the 'stranger danger' narrative but is instead perceived as a form of peer flirtation, which carries significantly less concern and safety awareness:

> Mohammad: "I am good at figuring out who is real and who is lying… I trusted my boyfriend straight away he looked like a guy my age and had real pics… once I spoke to him on social media I could see everything he post here was real and had no reason [to] not trust him… once I can see there [they are] telling the truth about who they are I can relax and get to know them."

Despite research highlighting that there is a higher frequency of online abuse and harassment involving people of a similar age to the perpetrator, Mohammad has shown how this form of online danger tends to be less prioritised within safeguarding strategies deployed by young people to protect themselves and is instead overshadowed by the dominance of the 'older male'. The effects of this are further illustrated by him, as he describes the process of first scrutinising an individual to ensure they do not meet the danger typology, and then letting his guard down once verification of their peer status has been obtained.

The competency of young people to measure risks once given information, nevertheless, is still prominent across the participants. A considerable amount of attention and resources are devoted to educating parents and young people about online dangers, with a strong emphasis being placed on stereotypes about who the 'risky' offenders are and how they will behave. These problems have been emphasised above, and the ability of young people to comprehend these risks and exercise awareness of them within their everyday online activities challenge assumptions of incompetency which they are considered to possess. On the contrary, participants have highlighted that when given the information on how to assess risks and protect themselves, they can put that knowledge into practice in a competent manner. The dangers which they face outside of that can instead be attributed to the shortcomings evident from regulated, incomplete knowledge transmission when conforming to 'proper'

sexualisation, as well as internet safety guidelines focusing primarily on encouraging parents to exercise control and surveillance so as to prevent children's agency. By privileging the 'stranger danger' narrative within representations of risk, this has contributed to young people practising the same reductionist assessments of risk as is taught within safeguarding strategies. Yet, the consequences of this structural failing are reconstructed as evidence of young people being incompetent and thus in need of protection and control. In contrast to this, the participants have identified that when given information and the ability to exercise autonomy, they can behave in accordance with what they have been taught is 'safe' when interacting with peers, rather than them being reckless and immature by seeking out communications with 'dangerous' individuals online. The fault appears to lie with the reductionist strategies which provide incomplete information for young people to comprehend and act upon, of which the consequence is failing to provide them with the appropriate knowledgebase to protect themselves from broader instances of online dangers.

6.4 Balancing the online and physical spheres

The necessity for closeted LGBQ young people to use the internet to take charge of their sexual socialisation, and to do so in a covert manner, can be attributed to the heteronormativity which they are exposed to within their physical sphere. Foucault (1976) outlines how sexual biopower has centred power and knowledge around sexuality as a way of pedagogising the sexuality of children, and to socialise procreative behaviour by presenting such knowledge as the natural norm within 'scientia sexualis'. This has historically been facilitated through the othering of non-normative heterosexuality through the psychiatrisation of 'perverse' pleasure, of which homosexuality has been historically associated because of its perceived threat in destabilising the dominance of procreative sexuality within sexual discourses. The subsequent effect of this has been that these three power/knowledge domains within the deployment of sexuality has created a dominant heteronormativity within the physical sphere to which young people are compelled to conform and perform to avoid scrutiny and stigma. In particular, the pedagogisation of children's sexuality has stripped young people of a recognised sexual agency, rendering the sexually agentic child as an oxymoronic concept (Hawkes and Egan, 2008). Instead, they are constructed as perceived threats to the sexual cohesion which exists amongst the dominant majority who conform to desired performativity.

The consequence is that children become excluded from discussions and decision-making processes (Moore, 2013) involving sexuality, and are instead understood through the lens of 'becoming' sexual by individuals and groups who classify themselves as possessing superior knowledge than the population about whom they are making authoritative claims (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977). The staged-managed process of childhood constructs young people as passive recipients of a carefully orchestrated sexual education. It assumes that the control being exerted equips them with all of the necessary information needed to become a 'normal' sexual adult later in life but ignores that this very process is underpinned by dominant ideologies and restricted deployments of sexual knowledge. The process of normalisation is referred to by Foucault as one of the ultimate goals and effects of disciplinary technologies (Hook, 2003). Heteronormative messaging is consistently reinforced by parents and parental figures within these disciplinary regimes, reflecting one of the key strategies for ensuring that dynamic normality is accomplished within bodily docility (Hegarty, 2011).

> Lewis: "online is the only way i can learn about who i am and get info on safe sex."
>
> ----
>
> Mohammad: "It feels like discussions are more open now I am older but in school we only focused on sexual health of straight people… the impression I have of sex ed is that my straight friends thought it was crap and did not tell them anything useful but they still got acknowledged… they should think how they would feel if everything they heard didnt apply to them… going online was the only way I could educate myself on how to be safe in relationships."

The impact of heteronormativity within society has played a key role in pushing LGBQ young people to circumvent their regulated socialisation and to instead undertake their own pursuit of knowledge. However, the separation of their online identity exploration from their physical closeted self has required a considerable degree of negotiation when navigating between spheres and ensuring the activities of one remain cut off from the other. Harry, a 13-year-old questioning male, highlights the competent manner in which he can balance his spheres and regulate who has access to them:

> Martin: "Are you worried about your parents seeing what you access online?"

Harry: "yeah but i make sure they dont know."

Martin: "How?"

Harry: "my phone and laptop have passwords only i know."

Martin: "What would happen if they ever asked to look at your phone or laptop?"

Harry: "haha... my dad wanted to use my laptop so I deleted my history and installed a new browser to use... he isnt good on computers so its not difficult to hide things."

Martin: "Have they ever asked to inspect your phone?"

Harry: "nah but could do the same thing if they ever did... if im out with them I will sometimes turn off notifications for apps like sc [SnapChat] and whatsapp so they dont no im using it."

Within these extracts, Harry emphasises the importance of privacy for closeted LGBQ young people when using the internet, as it is the control over their perceived safety and visibility which empowers them to explore their true self (Downing, 2013) within the online sphere. As he highlights, he is confident that he possesses sufficient technological knowledge to protect his privacy. This results in his empowerment to join a coming out support community, and to even feel confident enough to participate in this research and disclose private information which is being concealed from his physical sphere. This presents a clear contrast with identity performativity within the physical world, which demands a greater degree of conformity to gender performance and provides the audience of their performance with the power to sanction individuals informally with a discredited identity (Goffman, 1990). Online, however, Harry shows how the impact of authority is minimised, and he is able to perform in a way which allows him to construct his own audience and normalise his own identity performance (Suler, 2004) by engaging with communities who cater for those with similar stigmatised identities. Harry's identity exploration is further empowered through the anonymity and invisibility which is provided by the online sphere, as the lack of face-to-face cues allows for interactions to be solely expressed and moderated through the self, such as by Harry's

disabling of social media notifications. In other words, any interactions which do occur are read through the voice in our head, rather than by any physical manifestation in front of us, and that subvocalization of interactions through our own cognition provides comfort and privacy within these text-based interactions and activities. Young people are able to restrict access to their online sphere by internalising it as a separate world which operates and functions through the voices in their head, and any physical traces of that world existing (e.g., internet search history) are more akin to breadcrumbs which can be 'cleaned away' or hidden to prevent anybody else spotting visual clues about that world's existence. These same forms of activities reported by Harry to preserve his online sphere were further evident across a range of participants:

> Grace: "I always delete my search history after I am done using my laptop. I share it with my family so it would not be a good idea to let them see what I have looked at."
>
> ----
>
> Jonathan: "Nobody else knows the code on my phone and I am lucky my parents havent asked to look at it… they trust me to be responsible."
>
> ----
>
> Isaac: "i have friends my age who i have met online… there on sc [SnapChat] but they dont have my number… it helps keep them [the spheres] separate."

Whilst the online sphere has been recognised by young people as allowing them to bypass social and spatial boundaries imposed by parents (Ruckenstein, 2013), the techniques outlined above by Grace, Jonathan and Isaac are only reflective of the practical steps which they take when utilising their technological competency. Alongside this computer literacy, Liam and Ruby also demonstrated considerable interactional competency within their physical sphere performance when attempting to maintain their closeted status:

> Martin: "You mentioned your mum can sometimes be suspicious about what you are looking at online. How do you handle those conversations?"

Liam: “I usually act ignorant and distant… when she asked if I had a girlfriend I deliberately overreacted about how she should mind her own business and she thought it was because I was being a teenager.”

Martin: “Did you not worry that overreacting about not dating somebody of the opposite-sex could jeopardise your closeted status?”

Liam: “No because she didnt think i was reacting like eww girls she thought it was because I was embarrassed about her talking to me about who I like.”

Martin: “Has your dad tried to talk to you about relationships before?”

Ruby: “Yeah he makes jokes about how I should focus on my school work on [sic] not let guys distract me.”

Martin: “And how do you respond in those conversations?”

Ruby: “I go along with it… he thinks I dont have a boyfriend because I want to focus on working hard.”

Martin: “And that prevents him being suspicious about your sexuality?”

Ruby: “Yeah im also into the same things as other girls… he has no reason to be suspicious because there are no signs im a lesbian.”

This interactional competency illustrated by Liam and Ruby serves an important purpose for preserving the barriers between the physical and online barriers. Due to them being closeted gay and lesbian individuals respectively, their engagement with LGBQ inclusive content within the online sphere only provides safety and value for them when interacted with outside of the scope of surveillance (Moore, 2011; Ruckenstein, 2013) and this has required the participants to recognise that a reactive protection of the sphere (e.g., deleting history and

implementing codes/passwords) is not a sufficient strategy by itself. Liam and Ruby's strategies illustrated how interactions and performance within the physical sphere contributed to the preservation of these boundaries, which meant them adhering to an Apollonian construction of childhood[118]. For example, Ruby acknowledged that by displaying stereotypical characteristics of femininity and emphasising agreement with her father regarding intimate relationships, she was able to defuse scrutiny of her identity by reinforcing dominant idealisms attached to childhood. This was accomplished by simultaneously emphasising her presumed pre-sexual status and her desire to focus on schoolwork so as to enhance her educational attainment. The consequence of this, she states, is that it prevented her being subjected to any further scrutiny or suspicion, and she was able to preserve her privacy by adhering to a stereotypical female performance. With Liam, a similar effect was reported by how he reacted to an enquiry by his mother about whether he had a girlfriend. His reaction was able to reinforce dominant characteristics of teenagers being distant and private within their performance, and he stated that this was interpreted by his mother as a way of emphasising that he did not want to talk to her about such topics. The intent within this performance is evident from Liam stating that he 'deliberately overreacted', thus highlighting yet another way of how playing to normative identity assumptions helped avoid further scrutiny. We again see processes of dynamic normality being performed by the participants as a technique for avoiding suspicion and scrutiny. Normative truths are used by both the participants and parents to identify the standards of behaviour expected within a young person's performance of self, and the willingness to perform only to dominant constructs reflects the prescriptive way in which closeted LGBQ young people compare themselves to an idealised norm (Gyllenhammer, 2009). In this instance, the roleplaying of a normative identity facilitates a capability for engaging in micro-resistance whilst challenging the power of the norm (Foucault, 1977), without detection from observers.

As the online sphere has often been presented as a harmful and dangerous domain within media and societal representations (Buckingham, 2011), the secrecy of the participants' online activities has been dependent on how effectively they reinforce normative constructions of identity within their physical sphere. Hawkes and Egan (2008) outline that the characterisation of 'proper' and 'improper' sexualisation treats children and young people as individuals requiring automation to educate them in a proper way and steer them away

[118] See page 32 for more information.

from any improper channels which could be deemed to 'corrupt' them. The participants, however, have demonstrated how they are able to use the internet to exercise agency and circumvent the restricted socialisation mechanics which underpin their 'proper' socialisation. Additionally, they have also emphasised how the preservation of the online sphere, and the barriers to separate it from the physical, are dependent on how effectively they automate their performance around the characteristics of the 'proper' in their physical world. By reinforcing the expectations of parents, young people can present a physical self which is conforming to 'proper' socialisation. By doing so, their circumvention of these regulatory structures within the online sphere occurs in an agentic and covert manner, without provoking suspicion or scrutiny from adults. Closeted LGBQ young people become competent performers of the 'proper', in recognition that it preserves their closeted status and contributes to the security and privacy needed for being agentic producers online.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how young people recognise their physical sphere as an incompatible environment, and so use communicative technologies in creative ways to circumvent heteronormative information barriers. This allows them to construct an online self which conforms to their internalised desires and enquiries, and to obtain a sense of community from other people who are also undergoing their own identity development. Consequently, closeted LGBQ young people are no longer limited to being passive recipients of regulated knowledge within education and the family unit. The internet instead empowers them to become active 'producers' of their own enquiry and learning. However, this circumvention does present opportunities for potential threats to materialise too. One of the most noticeable was evident from their knowledge of 'stranger danger' discourses. On the one hand, individuals demonstrate considerable competency in recognising this offender typology and can safely navigate the online sphere to avoid the risks posed by this specific danger. On the other hand, the focus on this typology within danger discourses has meant that sexual solicitation from individuals of a similar age to the victim are instead interpreted as peer flirtation and do not trigger the same responses when protecting the self. As individuals are deploying considerable concealment strategies to preserve the separation of their online and physical spheres, this presents an area of potential vulnerability to the individual and could lead to their closeted status becoming a tool for controlling and manipulating the individual. The participants also displayed a competency in protecting their online sphere

from surveillance using performative and technological techniques. This involved the use of privacy measures so as to avoid being tracked by other users of their electronic devices, as well as performative roleplay based on stereotypical identity performance.

Surveillance

7.0 Introduction

This chapter will examine how surveillance strategies are deployed within pedagogical regimes in an attempt to maintain control over young people online. It will discuss how restrictions are used by parents as a way of regulating access to information, as well as the competency young people can display in circumventing these controls without being discovered by a parent or parental figure. It will further examine how parents use communication as a key strategy for transmitting concerns about online risks, and how young people are able to perform to the desired expectations of their parents during such interactions to avoid scrutiny and interrogation about their online activities. How young people access the online sphere in a physical sphere is also examined to identify spatial conflicts, as participants demonstrate an awareness that even when avoiding the scrutinising gaze of their parents, overt forms of surveillance can instead be replaced by covert strategies to ensure their conformity with desired internet usage. There are also clear gender distinctions in how stringently young females and males are regulated within heteronormative safeguarding frameworks, and these are illustrated to show how young females are unequally positioned and subjected to greater scrutiny compared to young males when acknowledging and expressing their gender and sexual identities. Finally, I will analyse how Government responses to young people's technological competency has attempted to redress the balance in favour of parents, to ensure the pedagogisation of children's sex and adult-child binary are maintained across spheres.

7.1 Restricting information

The deployment of information regulation strategies by parents or parental figures is promoted extensively within child internet safety guidelines. As outlined previously[119], these guidelines are developed centrally through the UKCCIS, allowing recommendations to be widely distributed amongst parents. Additionally, the alliance between the state, internet service providers (ISPs) and parents has attempted to obtain absolute control over children and young people's online browsing activities. This has been particularly fuelled by dominant concerns about assumed dangers facing children and young people. Such anxieties are further heightened when combined with the empowering effect of the online sphere to allow young

[119] See pages 39, subheading 'The role of Government in developing child internet safety guidelines'.

people to exercise agency by accessing and consuming any information they desire, irrespective of proper or improper sexualisation.

One of the most significant strategies devised by the UKCCIS, in conjunction with ISPs, has been to enable content filters for customers automatically (Woollacott, 2013). As the biggest ISPs are members of the UKCCIS, this has provided the Government with a 95% outreach of all households with internet access to date, and the strategy has increasingly moved towards an opt-out model requiring clear action from the account holder to disable such filters. Even if not specifically enabled, ISPs will automatically enable them as a safety strategy, thus highlighting a presumptive model of consent from purchasers (i.e., parents) which allows a household to be subjected to cyber-censorship, unless clear action is taken by an adult to opt-out of this. Not all participants reported having content blockers on their internet access, but for those who did, Lewis and Emily provide insights into the varying ways these surveillance measures have been used by their parents:

> Lewis: "my wireless has a block on… it keeps a log when blocked… i can access any blocked pages from my phone that does not have a block on it so i use that when i need to. my parents dont access my phone to so i feel safe on it."
>
> ----
>
> Martin: "What experiences have you had with content blockers?"
>
> Emily: "Just blocking random pages ive tried to access even when they are fine."
>
> Martin: "What happens when it does block a website? Is it a warning message? Or does it alert a parent in any way?"
>
> Emily: "nothing like that thankfully. It just shows a message saying the page cant be shown because its not child friendly. It also has an email you can contact if it shouldnt be blocked."
>
> Martin: "Have you ever contacted them about it?"
>
> Emily: "No its not worth it."

Martin: “Why not?”

Emily: “easier to access the site in other ways.”

Martin: “Oh, so a content blocker has never actually stopped you from being able to visit the website it has blocked?”

Emily: “It just requires extra steps but I just use a spoof mirror site.”

Martin: “I am not familiar with that. How does it work?”

Emily: Its just an empty website with a search bar like the Google homepage. You put in the web address of the site you cant access it [sic] and it loads up on that page. It [the content blocker] cant tell your on the site it blocked.”

Martin: “So it spoofs the content blocker by loading in the blocked website into the website which it isn’t blocking?”

Emily: “yeah exactly and you can use it normal without it being blocked.”

Martin: “Does it show in your search history?”

Emily: “Not if you access on private browser mode.”

Lewis and Emily’s techniques for circumventing the effects of cyber-censorship are consistent with the arguments raised by Valkenburg, Piotroski and Hermann (2013), who argue that surveillance is an effective safety strategy for controlling children during early childhood but becomes a contested technique during the later stages of childhood, which Lewis and Emily have reached. At first glance, the proactive censoring of information may appear to be a compromise between providing privacy and independence, and continuing to exert control and maintain online safety, but the participants effectively demonstrate how this is not the case. Instead, the deployment of access restrictions is perceived by them as a

controlling surveillance strategy. This requires them to adopt specific counterstrategies to circumvent this surveillance without having such transgressions detected by their parents.

The above excerpts by Lewis and Emily have been selected because of the two approaches to restrictions embedded within online safeguarding. Both of their experiences with cyber-censorship fall into the category of 'restriction' within internet safety guidelines, but the techniques they each encounter varies and require different counterstrategies to avoid circumvention detection. The first approach is outlined by Lewis, who acknowledges that his content blocker also contains a 'log' of any websites which he has attempted to access but which were blocked. This model of monitoring attempts to alert a parent or parental figure to any detections of inappropriate content, informing them of what was blocked and why. Such a measure goes beyond a simple protective measure of preventing him from accessing 'inappropriate' websites, and functions as a surveillance tool which alerts his parent to an alleged infraction so that steps can be taken to mediate the reported behaviour. The second approach outlined by Emily is a more straightforward restriction model, which contains the same strategy for censoring information but does not appear to have an alert/log function in place. The comprehension shown by Lewis and Emily of how these monitoring approaches work is also evident, as there are specific ways for them to access blocked content without being detected, depending on how their respective content blockers function. With Lewis, he recognises his privacy could be violated if he attempts to circumvent restrictions using his wireless connection. Instead, he is aware of his mobile network not placing similar restrictions on content, as well as his parents not accessing his device, allowing circumvention of this strategy. This reinforces the importance of technology in the everyday life of young people, and how proficient they are at utilising different devices in a competent manner to meet their needs. Emily equally demonstrates strong awareness of how she is being monitored, as her ability to use her internet browser in 'private' mode and to interact with websites which aid in the circumvention of content blocks shows the limitations of such strategies when attempting to regulate a tech-savvy population.

It is at this point that we begin to see how adult-centric views of sex and sexuality become embedded into the functioning of content blockers. As these safety features aim to restrict access to 'inappropriate' content, the marginalisation and stigma experienced in everyday life by Alfie and Declan provide insights into how heteronormativity and homophobia perpetuate

the exclusions of same-sex identities from childhood socialisation by categorising them as 'improper' forms of knowledge:

> Alfie: "gay people are judged because of sex."
>
> ----
>
> Declan: "It feels like only older people are allowed to be gay. Everything we learn in school is about being straight and makes you feel like your not able to be yourself until your older. Even on tv you can see young straight people enjoying life but the gay one has to hide and be in crisis… I see others exploring who they are and im too busy hiding who I am… I bet if I asked one of my straight mates what if there too young to know there [sic] straight they would think im weird but it's a question which would be fine to ask me."

These experiences allude to the categorisation of sexual identities as 'age-appropriate' constructs, and the same dominant heteronormative developmental models of childhood and sexuality outlined by Declan also underpin internet safety guidelines. These respective experiences are important considerations for illustrating this point, as they both refer to two inequalities with how adult-centric regulations use heteronormativity to invalidate sexual minority young people. The first is by stripping LGBQ identities of their broader identity, and instead defining them solely through a moral gazing of the sexual acts in which they are perceived to desire and engage in. Moore and Reynolds (2018) outline how age ratings reflect the dominant fears and anxieties society has regarding children and young people's exposure to sex, and so defining a group of non-normative identities solely through a sexual lens provides a justification for dominant discourses to invalidate and scrutinise those who are considered to adopt an age-inappropriate label. Declan elaborates on this further by outlining how his heterosexual peers have their sexual identity assumed and unquestioned in society and within media, whereas he would be subjected to age-based judgements about his perceived immaturity and incompetence to identify as gay.

The consequences of these age-based fears and anxieties are that they inevitably influence the development, implementation and maintenance of content blockers when parents and parental figures are attempting to restrict the participants from accessing age-inappropriate content:

> Alfie: “my school tries to put as much lesson content on its intranet so we dont need to use search engines… it blocks so much even google images.”
>
> ----
>
> Hayley: “its not happened to me but I have heard of lgbt sites being blocked because there mistaken as porn.”

The phenomenon that Alfie and Hayley’s experiences are referring to is called ‘overblocking’, which is when restrictions target “content that is both legal under relevant laws and permissible under community standards” (Theil, 2019: 48). As Hayley mentions, this is particularly applicable for LGBT+-themed information as content blockers often fail to differentiate pornographic content from sexual health and social support, instead proactively blocking access due to mischaracterisations. By automating this safety strategy, context-specific content is missed from the assessment of appropriateness, therefore the blocker fails to differentiate between sexual health discussions for educational/supportive purposes and sexual discussions for the purpose of sexual gratification. However, normative sexual health knowledge which is deemed appropriate to teach young people during adolescence is not mischaracterised and blocked to the same frequently, thus highlighting that the algorithms which calculate age-appropriateness are holding LGBT+ themed sexual health to a higher standard of scrutiny than normative sexual health information. This raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness of these blockers and the ideologies which feed into their development and enforcement, as the heightened scrutiny and overblocking which causes LGBT+ content to be miscategorised as pornographic exists alongside the same dominant developmental discourses within the UK’s safeguarding agenda which also do this. These experiences are not limited to the participants of this research either. Further studies by the Open Rights Group have found that LGBTQ+ sites are frequently caught in filters despite being legitimate and safe, and that 27.6% of requests to ISPs for them to be unblocked were unresolved by the end of 2018 (Jackson, 2019). A significant access barrier becomes evident for the closeted young people in this research, as they not only have to contend with legitimate websites being overblocked because of dominant anxieties regarding young people’s exposure to non-normative content, but they also face the risk of being covertly ‘outed’ by an automated log of blocked content. This subsequently creates considerable risks

to the privacy and welfare of a closeted young person as they attempt to safely navigate contested web spaces outside of their pedagogical regime. This, ironically, creates a contradictory outcome whereby the greatest risk to the child's well-being emerges from the safeguarding agenda's attempt to keep them contained within this pedagogical regime, all whilst claiming to do so in the best interests of their safety and welfare.

7.2 Communication as a safety strategy

As safety strategies are primarily deployed in regimented institutions which control their occupants[120] – family households and educational settings – their effectiveness is dependent on the legitimacy that is ascribed to them by young people who are the subjects of them. To accomplish this, internet safety guidelines recommend communication as a fundamental part of the online safeguarding agenda so that children and young people can both be aware of the risks of using the internet, and to know what to do should they face any danger. Communication thus becomes one of the safety strategies deployed in sustaining the pedagogical regime and ensuring its perceived legitimacy, and in doing so reinforces the power structures between adults and children:

> Matthew: "they never sat me down and talked about it but they have mentioned so many times about the internet being dangerous and how i cant be sure who im talking to."
>
> ----
>
> Isaac: "I got the talk when I started secondary school. I was given a laptop and because it had a webcam my parents were worried someone would want me to use it… it was awkward and pretty sure they didnt even know how web streaming worked they were just worried about nudity."
>
> ----
>
> Grace: "I can relate to so many of these stories. Once my dad even warned me about getting dressed by my laptop or phone because someone might hack the camera and be watching."

[120] See pages 63-67 for more information.

Participants have largely acknowledged attempts by parents to communicate online safety strategies, but there were minor differences reported within the approaches taken by parents. Participants such as Matthew, a 13-year-old gay male, experienced informal but frequent communications from his parents to reinforce the importance of online safety, whereas Isaac, a 13-year-old questioning male, acknowledged a formal but infrequent approach triggered by him obtaining access to a new electronic device and the perceived risks this posed to his safety. Nevertheless, irrespective of whether formal or informal communication strategies were used, the outcomes were always the same: parents took the initiative of attempting to educate about online safety. This occurred despite numerous participants reporting that they perceive their parents to possess inferior knowledge of technology, such as Isaac's reference to his parents not understanding web streaming, or Grace's father expressing an unsubstantiated anxiety regarding voyeuristic hackers.

The positioning of roles within communication strategies, however, always favoured the parent as the leader of the discussion. Despite participants inferring they possess superior technological knowledge, the power of their parents' possessing authority and being able to play an active role in overseeing their safety was never questioned. This links to the household functioning as a disciplinary regime, in which a hierarchy of observation is legitimised and enforced by its occupants (Foucault, 1977). As these strategies are deployed within an institutionalised setting, the adult-child power structures which sustain its hierarchy are what naturalises the roles both groups play[121].

Liam: "There have been a few occasions when I have been warned about the internet being dangerous."

Martin: "Who warned you about it?"

Liam: "Usually my parents but I also have lessons which mention it at school."

Martin: "Do you find it useful when you are spoken to about it?"

[121] For parents, they are empowered with the ability to determine when communication strategies are deployed, as well as being the active participant within that discussion, and exerting authority and knowledge. For young people, their positionality reflects their inferior and unequal place, therefore the ordering of these power structures is so deeply ingrained into their socialisation that they fail to challenge it, even despite their belief that they possess superior technological skills.

Liam: "no they dont tell me anything I dont know already."

Martin: "What type of things do they tell you?"

Liam: "At school we have talked about sexting and the dangers of sending nudes to people because of revenge porn… My parents worry about strangers and who im talking to so will ask questions about how i know the person im texting and stuff like that."

Martin: "Do they do anything to try and find out if you are telling the truth or not?"

Liam: "Nah I think they trust me. I dont do anything to cause attention and doubt they would even know how to check."

Martin: "Who do you think has a better understanding of how to be safe online? You or your parents?"

Liam: "Me… my parents can use a computer but you can tell their knowledge is old."

Martin: "In what way?"

Liam: "well if my mum wants to access her email she asks me for her password. She cant deal with passwords needing to have upper case letters and numbers in them now she prefers having the same password for everything… its just a word so most sites wont accept it anymore so she struggles to remember them. She doesnt understanding [sic] how bad it is using the same password for everything."

When discussing children and young people as digital natives, researchers have often taken polarising viewpoints on whether children are competent consumers of digital environments, or inappropriately labelled as so (Bond and Rawlings, 2017). Livingstone (2017) argues such polarising viewpoints are unhelpful, as both positions have elements of truth when examining children's online activities. It is acknowledged young people are pioneers of digital and social media trends and are enthusiastic in embracing opportunities afforded by the internet to explore beyond the restraints often imposed by adults in their offline lives. However, the

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2017) argues we ought to be careful about referring to young people as digital natives, as they can be susceptible to misinformation, exploitation, and an inability to exercise self-protection. When considering the key findings regarding the consequences of narrow socialisation and stranger danger[122], there is an element of truth to this position[123]. Livingstone (2017) further argues that there is a danger that by tacitly accepting children as digital natives, it could result in the withdrawal of resources which undermines their empowerment and protection online and offline. Nevertheless, it is clear from the combined experiences of Isaac, Grace, and Liam that despite there being conflicting research on whether young people are competent digital natives, there is a prominent understanding amongst young people themselves that they typically possess superior knowledge to their parents. This self-confidence is not only a dominant anxiety shared by many parents but is a prominent finding from The Byron Report (2008) which led to the UKCCIS' formation. From the perspective of the participants, a paradoxical scenario emerges from these safeguarding reforms, whereby the least tech-savvy group (parents) are tasked with presenting themselves as possessing superior knowledge than the more tech-savvy group (young people).

Additionally, Liam, a 15-year-old gay male, also alludes to the over-reliance on stereotypes and typologies he experienced from parents when communicating to him about perceived risks. Specifically, he refers to his father's concerns regarding strangers and their ability to interact with him. The danger posed by the stranger reflects one of the most prominent anxieties regarding child sexual abuse (Jenkins, 1998) and the analysis has discussed how this typology is further perpetuated by young people through the persistent stranger danger narrative they are taught throughout childhood[124].

> Martin: "You mentioned earlier that your dad was worried about you talking to strangers. Is that something he talks to you about regularly?"

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[122] See page 165, subheading 'perpetuating typologies'.
[123] However, this acknowledgement does not consider the role that adults themselves play in creating this knowledge deficiency by being the regulators of a narrow knowledge exchange within socialisation. The narrow knowledge young people possess is indicative of the limited information they are permitted to know in their physical sphere, rather than a factor grounded in developmentalism.
[124] See page 165, subheading 'perpetuating typologies'.

Liam: "Not in an obvious way but he might ask who im talking to and will act interested in my friends so he can know how I know them."

Martin: "So if you are talking with a friend you made online who is also gay, how would you deal with that situation if he asked?"

Liam: "Just lie and say I know them from school. He doesnt usually ask for much info so hes happy if he gets the answer he wants to hear."

Martin: "So just as long as you do not admit that you are talking to a person from the internet, he is happy?"

Liam: "yeah."

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Valkenburg, Piotroski and Hermann (2013) outline how dominant forms of surveillance become problematic at later stages of childhood. With this in mind, Liam's experiences highlight the limited way communication occurs as a safety strategy, as the structuring of his interactions with his father largely conform to dominant discourses of online dangers. Embedding stranger danger into online moral panics is one such example of this and provides parents with a criterion to assess their child's behaviours when determining if they are being safe online. Graham, Treharne and Nairn (2017) state that the fulfilment of a child's needs is typically measured through how effectively they conform to the behavioural expectations of parents. In other words, if a child behaves in a manner which parents consider 'safe', this conformity is rewarded with trust to obtain increased independence and privacy, and so it is unsurprising that many of the participants reported roleplaying to this idealised performance in their communications[125].

This conformity is important within the communication of online safety, as the focus on dominant typologies, combined with the reported skills from participants, provide them with a perceived confidence to perform to the idealised expectations of their parents. Liam alludes to this within his experiences, but it is more explicitly outlined by David in the below excerpt.

[125] See extracts from Liam and Ruby on pages 176-177 for examples of these benefits.

He directly states that he avoids disclosing information to his parents which he knows would result in a negative reaction:

> David: "…I avoid showing them who I talk to… if they think im only talking to friends from school it means they wont get angry at me"[126]

How privacy and independence is obtained and maintained by the participants is especially telling, as on the surface it appears to be a way of rewarding them and providing increased autonomy, but it is really underpinned by conditionality and, potentially, covert surveillance. This is evident from the unanticipated way Liam reports being questioned, or the calculated steps which David must take to avoid disclosing behaviours which he knows are undesirable to his parents. Without these steps, their privacy and independence would be potentially compromised, demonstrating how desirable behaviours must be performed on cue by a participant if instigated by questioning from parents. The consequence of this desired performativity is that the rewarding of privacy for them does not reflect an actual loosening of parental control, but is instead a continuation of parents' capability to monitor and control young people without them contesting this form of surveillance, in the same way that more overt forms of constant control and monitoring may be challenged. This approach ensures that parents can provide their children with conditional, and regulated, privacy under adapted models of surveillance for this later stage of childhood. By applying conditionality to their right to privacy, young people simultaneously perceive it as a weakening of the control which they have been more overtly subjected to throughout their earlier stages of childhood, but remain coerced into conforming with behavioural expectations so that the rights rewarded under this surveillance are maintained.

7.3 Protecting the online self from surveillance strategies

One of the most significant benefits of conditional privacy for the participants is that it increases their likelihood of being able to privately access the online sphere without being discovered or supervised by their parents. As outlined earlier within the thesis[127], closeted young people are required to undertake considerable, and challenging, identity management, often over a long period of time. The challenges of this have been discussed already, and the

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[126] See additional extracts by Joe, David and Louis for further examples of this on pages 194-195 of this chapter.
[127] See page 173, subheading 'Balancing the online and physical spheres'.

impact of conditional privacy provides both opportunities and risks for the closeted participants when they are observed using their devices:

> Martin: "You seemed quite confident earlier about being able to keep your online activity private from your parents. How much privacy do they give you?"
>
> Harry: "alot… i never feel like there tryin to look at my phone and im good at removing my history so i cant be spied on."
>
> Martin: "You also mentioned you will disable notifications on your phone. Why is that?"
>
> Harry: "lets me use it around ppl without worrying… if i hid my phone when near them theyd get suspicus [suspicious]… not hidin my phone and giving my dad the laptop when he wants it stops any1 thinkin im behaving in a suspicus [suspicious] way."

Identity management within the physical sphere occurs within a covert model of surveillance, as Harry highlights that even with the conditional privacy afforded to him, it remains subjected to continuous scrutiny, based on the perceived acceptability of his behaviour. Whilst Valkenburg, Piotroski and Hermann (2013) are correct in their assertion that constant overt supervision is most effective at earlier stages of childhood, the conditional privacy attached to young people means that more covert forms of supervision are still occurring irrespective of age. These experiences are further supported by research from Ofcom (2014), who have consistently found that more than four in five parents report regularly supervising their child's online activities in some way. Despite the perceived privacy participants reported, they still reported undertaking concealment strategies to avoid being unexpectedly supervised by a parent, as acknowledged by Calvin, a 14-year-old gay male, and Grace, a 13-year-old gay female:

> Calvin: "I am careful using the internet around my parents. I don't make it obvious I don't want them to look and just be careful about what I open if I know there nearby."
>
> ----

> Grace: “deleting my history is just a normal part of my routine after im done so that theres no risk of them seeing what I look at. By stopping my search history appearing I dont need to worry about other people who use the laptop finding out and it allows me to just search for safe things if im using it around other people who can see the screen.”

By performing to the desired expectations of their parents, the participants are again demonstrating strong competencies in managing their identity through desired normative performances, thus minimising the likelihood of further scrutiny from a parent. Harry, Calvin and Grace demonstrate a clear proficiency in recognising how physical surveillance could jeopardise the privacy of their online identity, as well as an understanding that despite their perceived privacy rights, such opportunities still arise for their parents to exercise covert forms of surveillance. The different concealment strategies deployed by them all achieve the same outcome: preventing suspicion. In the case of Harry, he proactively enables and disables message notifications depending on the space in which he is using his digital device. Similarly, Grace habitually clears her search history as a way of protecting her privacy and facilitating her capability to perform in a desired way when being monitored by potentially prying eyes. All these behaviours empower a closeted young person to be capable of managing challenges to their online sphere when navigating surveillance strategies from parents or parental figures in their physical sphere. Their parents remain satisfied that they are behaving in a safe manner, and they can continue benefiting from the privileges of privacy and independence because of their performance satisfying covert scrutiny from parents.

One of the key dilemmas which participants reported facing was communicating with online friends without an observer from their physical sphere enquiring about them:

> David: “…I know my parents would not be happy and would threaten to take my phone away… if they think I use it to much they get annoyed and I try to be careful.”
>
> ----
>
> Joe: “I do what I can to stop my parents seeing my messages… I talk regularly to friends who are also gay and I dont want them to see those… my brother got his phone taken off him

> earlier this year when he came home late so got punished… he wasnt allowed to use his computer without their permission… I don't want that."

> Louis: "… they would take it [my phone] away coz they think they know better… probably would not be allowed to use my laptop either unless they let me."

The precarious right to use their electronic devices without overt supervision is apparent from the concerns raised by David, Joe and Louis, as each of them understood the conditionality attached to their perceived independence and privacy. Furthermore, the consequences of not conforming to the behavioural expectations their parents place upon them is evident from the anxieties expressed if they were to be discovered by their parents interacting with individuals from the online sphere. These experiences illustrate the insecure nature of a young person's right to privacy within a pedagogical regime, as a lack of conformity to their parent's regulations is met with punishment. Linking this to Foucault's (1977) bodily docility, the disciplinary process is clearly evident within these experiences, as participants consistently accepted the role of the parent, as hierarchical observer, to act as the judge and enforcer of behavioural norms. This accepted the right of the parent to exert control through punishment should any indiscretions be detected.

An inevitable result of this disciplinary process is that it incentivises young people to conform to the expectations of their parents and normalises punishment when subversion is discovered. It is important that participants not only perform in a way that mimics the desired docility, but that their indiscretions remain carefully hidden to avoid detection and punishment. If such detections do occur, the process of rehabilitating the child is further illustrated by them, with numerous participants outlining how their access to their devices would be increasingly regulated as a rehabilitative strategy. Joe recalls a specific instance when his brother had his mobile phone taken and his computer access subjected to heightened restriction and supervision. Such rehabilitative strategies would have an obvious impact on the welfare and privacy of closeted individuals, as the regulations regress to overt safeguarding strategies more commonly deployed during earlier stages of childhood. The impact would inevitably be emotional and stressful too, particularly because of the increased risk of them being prematurely 'outed' and subjected to the potential repercussions of that.

As their ability to circumvent heteronormative socialisation is dependent on their conditional privacy, it is of fundamental importance that participants undertake a carefully balanced performance when navigating parental surveillance. This requires them to ensure their online sphere remains separate from their physical sphere, but it further requires them to choreograph and stage-manage how they perform around parents when using their digital devices. If they were to behave in a manner deemed suspicious, such as by deliberately concealing their device's screen, or disclosing information indicating they were behaving in a way which was deemed dangerous or undesirable, this would risk the preservation of their privacy rights. It is of little surprise that considerable concealment strategies and dramaturgical performances are simultaneously deployed as the participants navigate their spatial conflicts.

7.4 Regulation of gender

Patriarchal assumptions about girls' increased need for protection were evident from the differences reported between male and female participants, reinforcing findings from existing research into the policing of women's bodies within the safeguarding agenda. Foucault (1976) refers to this as the hysterization of women's bodies, due to a genito-centric, reproductive focus within the deployment of sexuality. This has historically resulted in women's bodies being at the centre of sexual anxiety and regulation, and such gender inequalities are evident within heteronormative socialisation. In particular, females obtain a legitimised performance of their gendered self through a combination of sexual passivity and feminine roleplaying, whereas the normalisation of sexual expressions amongst boys allow their gender performativity to be sexually expressive, but also sufficiently regulated to sustain dominant childhood constructions of their 'heterosexual becoming' status.

> Martin: "You stated in the discussion board that you have been in relationships with males and females. How does the gender of your partner influence how open you are about those relationships with others?"
>
> Callum: "If am dating a girl I can be open about it and dont worry about others finding out and am even happy to tell them. My parents know when I have been in those relationships and that also makes them think am straight."

Martin: "When you say you can be open about it, how do you do that?"

Callum: "Just being able to talk to mates about it and just knowing I can say whatever about her without it being seen as weird or worrying about people saying shit."

This discussion with Callum draws attention to the heteronormativity embedded within masculine performativity, as the recognition and sustainability of a valid masculine identity is dependent on a boy expressing their sexual interests and behaviours towards a female. This links to the sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system conceptualised by Butler (1990), which states that gender intelligibility is determined by a stable sex being expressed through a stable gender, and we can see the functions of that system being performed through Callum's expressive heteronormative identity. As gender intelligibility is defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality, those who conform to these sex-gender norms are automatically assumed to possess a heterosexual identity, illustrating how Callum is assigned a particular sexuality based on the assumptions made about his gender performance by those who observe it. Goffman (1963) outlines those individuals who are at risk of stigma for possessing a discreditable identity will undertake concealment to avoid being recognised as an 'other'. This is consistent with the findings from Callum, as he feels capable of openly acknowledging and discussing any relationships he engages in with a member of the opposite-sex, and even emphasises that it plays an important role in reinforcing the presumptive heterosexual identity his parents have of him. In contrast to this, any same-sex relationships are hidden because of the destabilising effect it would have on the heteronormative expectations of his audience.

Similar behaviours were consistently reported across all of the male participants, as they recognised that deploying a heteronormative gender performance provided them with emotional security and prevented their behaviour and/or identity being subjected to scrutiny from parents and peers. Some noticeable examples of this from participatory discussions are:

Mohammad: "I would make the occasional comment about finding some girl on tv hot… because people think im straight it lets me have an easy life… my dad has talked to me before about the importance of being safe when dating and I just went along with it and he has left me alone since."

Oscar: “online is the only time I have felt comfortable flirting with a guy… am lucky my parents trust me to use the internet responsibly… they will sometimes make a joke about how they think I use the internet to flirt with girls… its important to go along with it to avoid making them suspicious about what your really doing.”

Calvin: “My parents have no reason to spy on me because I am very careful about how I monitor my behaviour around them and others… I have found the less you give people to be suspicious about you the more they leave you alone.”

The performativity evident from Mohammad, Oscar and Calvin signifies how crucial heteronormative displays are within the enactment of male masculine identity. Moore (2003) highlights the importance for young boys to display masculinity, as it is a crucial part of their socialisation when performing to heteronormative gender roles. Connell (2005) links this to patriarchal power, which requires boys to adopt a hegemonic masculinity to receive the full benefits of a male identity. Within the above extracts, there was no evidence to suggest that the participants performed to a hegemonic masculinity, but behaviours did indicate their conformity to either a complicit or marginalised masculinity as a means of concealing their identity. This was apparent from the widespread consensus across the male participants on the necessity to perform in this way to avoid the scrutinising gaze of their heteronormative audience within their institutionalised environments. Roleplaying a heteronormative identity appears to impact the safeguarding measures to which they are subjected, with the avoidance of scrutiny from their heteronormative identity preventing further safeguarding strategies being deployed by their parents. The permittance of limited sexual behaviours amongst heterosexual boys is apparent, with Oscar and Calvin both acknowledging that avoiding heteronormative scrutiny is a key concealment strategy which provides them with the autonomy to browse the internet with greater freedom compared to if they did not reinforce these stereotypical gender roles. This can be attributed to the gendered knowledge which permeates from dominant scientific models of childhood development, as the ability for boys

to express their sexual attractions are contextualised as being a healthy and normal part of their development towards adulthood, thus allowing this behaviour to be nurtured and regulated throughout childhood socialisation.

As a result of these gender differences, Carrington (2015) notes how boys are more likely to seek out sexual content and interactions in their everyday life, and that the internet is a key tool for this. Nevertheless, Mohammad, Oscar and Calvin have highlighted that their institutionalisation within pedagogical regimes requires this to be a carefully regulated and scripted process, as such behaviour must only occur in a manner which does not risk destabilising the regulations which position them as heterosexual 'becomings'. This consideration is particularly important for three fundamental reasons: First, it demonstrates the conditionality which is attached to a young male's right to be given privacy and independence to express his sexual identity. If a male is observed as performing in a normative way, this becomes a contributing factor towards them being trusted and enjoying the 'perks' which come with heterosexual privilege. Mohammad and Calvin refer to this point within their respective experiences, as each discuss how pretending to be heterosexual ensures they avoid heightened judgement, scrutiny, and surveillance. Second, the construction of LGBQ identities as deviant and age-inappropriate for children has the impact of marginalising young people and labelling them as vulnerable and at risk from predatory adults. Historical connotations of homosexual men as predators who 'recruit' children continues to create an unconscious bias in how we understand the 'stranger danger' typology towards young boys. This inadvertently positions a young gay male as being seen as increasingly vulnerable because of historical misconceptions of gay men as hypersexual individuals who will groom them. Such anxieties will be further heightened by the exclusion of LGBQ relevant material from online safety guidelines, thus allowing anxieties and fears from parents to remain heightened and compensated for through excessive surveillance and policing[128]. Third, this symbolises the gender inequalities within the deployment of sexuality, as the preservation of young people as heterosexual 'becomings' places the burden of bodily policing on females through normative constructions of desired feminine sexual passivity. Despite the normalisation of expressive male sexuality, this ideally remains restricted by a

[128] In addition to the analysis below regarding patriarchy, the regulation of girls is further analysed within the 'The Impact of Heteronormative Online Safeguarding' chapter, subheading 'Gendered safeguarding'. See page 235.

female's sexual passivity, thus indirectly limiting male sexuality through the regulation of women's bodies.

There is a profound contrast between the forms of regulation observed amongst the participants, as the earlier extracts from males – Mohammad, Oscar, and Calvin – indicate an isolated occasion when a parent would communicate safety concerns to them but would then proceed to continue providing them with privacy and independence because of the trust they had obtained through their normative, and unquestioned and accepted, gender performance. In contrast, the extracts below – Emily, Grace, and Alia – are all from female participants and indicate experiences of a drastically different deployment of safeguarding strategies:

> Emily: "My parents often express concerns about dangerous people online and how I need to be careful. I deny using it to talk to ppl ive never met and they think my social media is just for friends… it helps some of my profiles like twitter are only for ppl I know irl [in real life] so if they checked that it would make them think I am not taking to strangers."
>
> ----
>
> Grace: "i just assume hes [father] watching when i use my phone or laptop… he acts like everyone is sum old man tryin to trick me… even my mum thinks he is to worried sometimes."
>
> ----
>
> Alia: "a song got blocked coz it had sexy in it and my dad saw the blocked message on screen… had to exlain [explain] what I was doin… he keep [kept] reminding me to be careful when searching for things."

Hirschmann (2003) states that patriarchy results in females being regulated more stringently than men, and these experiences are indicative of that argument. Most noticeably, female participants are having to contend with continuous overt strategies within their bodily surveillance from parents. They are further consistent with the findings of Moore (2003), whose research drew attention to girls being subjected to stricter forms of sexual regulation as a way of socialising them into being sexually passive. This again aligns with the work of Hawkes and Egan (2008), as the categorisation of proper and improper highlights how gender intersects with sexualisation to ascribe different sexual rights to females and males. Whilst

boys can perform a ‘proper’ masculine identity, any similar expressions of attractions or behaviour from a girl would be labelled ‘improper’ for transgressing dominant desires about how femininity ought to be performed.

This gender inequality represents the alliance between parents and other institutions of power, such as education and media, as the construction of the online moral panic perpetuates the vulnerability of female sexual innocence as one of the overarching messages it transmits to parents. Pedersen (2013) found that media imagery used within child safety responses would disproportionately rely on depictions of females to emphasise its portrayal of sexual risks facing children and young people online. The implications of this within the UK are evident from Ofcom's own research findings, who found that "parents of girls seem to be more likely to employ a number of mediation approaches than parents of boys" (Ofcom, 2016: 215). These trends are reflected by dominant anxieties regarding young girls being coerced into sexting and becoming victims to situations such as ‘leaks’ and revenge porn. Dominant concerns for males often focus on the consequences of them using their agency to access pornography, whereas regulations for girls are most frequently centred on fears that any sexual agency will inevitably lead to negative consequences for them. As highlighted by Figure 17 in the CDA chapter, this supports the findings from Pedersen (2013) as young girls are consistently represented as being prominent victims of sexualisation within the online sphere. Imagery often conveys a stereotypical, feminine child, who is isolated and looking afraid when accessing their digital device. This gendered distinction between fears of the online sphere for young girls and boys highlights the unequal way that online safeguarding constructs their perceived risk. For girls, their desired gender performativity is one of sexual absence and passivity, and more stringent safeguarding strategies are promoted by guidelines and deployed by parents to ensure conformity to this desired behaviour. Consequently, the experiences reported by the participants shows how females are structurally disadvantaged within safeguarding because of how the hysterization of their bodies is embedded into the power and knowledge which produces and sustains the UK's safeguarding agenda.

As Emily, Grace, and Alia have shown, heteropatriarchy impacts the everyday lives of females as it creates additional barriers for them to be capable of accessing the internet, and unequally subjects them to overt forms of control and surveillance under the guise of protecting their perceived heightened vulnerability. The implications of these gendered sexual anxieties are evident from the last Key Threats Assessments by CEOP, who found that

4 out of 5 cases of online-initiated child sexual exploitation reported to them involved a female victim (CEOP, 2013)[129]. At first glance, these statistics would appear to suggest that young girls are more vulnerable than their male peers. However, the deployment of enhanced surveillance strategies for girls, combined with the heightened scrutiny to which their sexual behaviours and identities are subjected, provides noticeably more opportunities for them to be caught. Additionally, the parental framing of their child's sexual agency will inevitably impact this, as a young male exercising heteronormative agency would be rationalised through gender norms as an indiscretion to be addressed at home. In contrast to this, a young girl exercising the same agency would potentially be subjected to stricter gender norms, and thus parents would be more likely to interpret sexual behaviours through a prism of abuse and exploitation. As heterosexual behaviour and expressions are normalised for male masculine identity, this constructs a higher threshold for triggering a safeguarding response from parents. These gendered inequalities demonstrate the importance of the meaning ascribed to sexual behaviours, as a young male displaying limited sexual agency is contextualised as a healthy and normal part of their masculine identity, whereas a female displaying similar sexual agency is instead subjected to heightened regulation and scrutiny, causing said behaviour to be framed as abuse/exploitation.

As already argued, even though males enjoy greater privacy and independence in comparison to girls, it is nevertheless conditional on their conformity to idealised standards of behaviour. This typically tends to shift surveillance towards more covert strategies by parents instead. It nevertheless still reflects a crucial gender distinction within parents' everyday safeguarding duties. The male participants within the research indicated that overt surveillance was most likely to be communicative, and even when males are subjected to covert surveillance, it is done under an increased threshold on what sexual behaviour is tolerable and permitted by the parent. In contrast to this, the female participants reported more intrusive surveillance. This not only involved more frequent and ongoing communication by a parent, but it was also framed around anxieties regarding their body. For example, Liam stated earlier in the chapter that his father would occasionally ask who he was messaging, thus showing how the stranger danger narrative remains a concern for males and females. However, when compared

[129] This statistic has been taken from the most recently published Threat Assessment by CEOP. Whilst this is a relatively dated piece of research, it provides important context regarding the gender distinctions between safeguarding investigations being triggered for online cases of child sexual exploitation. See footnote 6 for more recent statistics on child sexual offences more broadly.

alongside Hayley's experience, she stated that after being asked the same question and informing her father that she was speaking to a male school friend, his response was to emphasise the importance of focusing on schoolwork and not on male classmates. Therefore, the unequal positioning of female and male sexuality was reported across the participants. Online safeguarding agendas at all stages of practice propagate dominant developmental assumptions regarding heteronormative sexuality, ensuring that women's bodies are more stringently controlled to delegitimise their capacity for sexual agency in comparison to males.

7.5 Technological competence: redressing the imbalance

The emergence of digital communicative technologies has presented a considerable challenge to the traditional parameters of children's safeguarding. One of the key concerns driving this agenda is the anxiety regarding an insufficient knowledgebase amongst parents, particularly in comparison to the young people they are held responsible for protecting. Moore and Prescott (2013) highlight that discourses of child protection provide a naturalised symbolic order, positioning adults as competent, mature and knowledgeable, and thus equipping them with the necessary skills and life experience for protecting children and young people from the dangers of everyday life. This ordering was identifiable from the reported experiences of the participants:

> Declan: "…they act like they know about computers but can only use the internet… my mum is on Facebook but does not use it much… ive had to help her download apps onto her phone a few times."
>
> ----
>
> Zach: "Mine [my mum] does everything possible to avoid using a computer. She thinks the internet is full of dangerous things and bad people are trying to contact you all the time. It its [it is] better now I am older but when I was younger she would always worry about who might contact me if I used the internet."
>
> ----
>
> Lewis: "my dad pretends to understand tech… he usually forgets passwords to his account and asks me how to get access again so I do the forgot password for him."

> Isaac: “i get asked about things when they hear or read something… my dad asked if i use ig [Instagram] after reading about ppl [people] my age getting sex messages from creeps.”

Technological competence and use are amongst the dominant perceived risks to the effectiveness of online safeguarding. Anxieties often focus on the enthusiasm young people have for consuming new forms of digital and social media, and their capability of concealing their online behaviours from parents. Adolescence is already underpinned by sexual panics, due to young people being considered to pose ‘hypersexual’ potential in their agency if they are not subjected to enough control and surveillance by parents (Elliot, 2012). It is this concern which forms the basis for the pedagogisation of children’s sex so this can be controlled and regulated. The excerpts above demonstrate young people’s understanding of these anxieties, as Declan, Zach, Lewis, and Isaac acknowledged that their parents encountered barriers in their understanding of how to use technology and would often rely on them for support when using internet-connected devices. Nevertheless, their perceived confidence and skills in comparison to their parents exists alongside dominant constructions of their assumptive vulnerability, and Zach and Isaac specifically refer to this dichotomy when discussing how their parent’s express concerns regarding online dangers. Staksrud and Livingstone (2011) state that the emergence of online moral panics has relied on dichotomous understandings of children’s technological competency. By embracing technology and confidently using it in ways to circumvent restrictions from their physical sphere, these behaviours have become attributed to improper forms of sexualisation. This has led to safeguarding practices being reconstructed for the online sphere as a way of managing dominant fears regarding children’s vulnerability to grooming. However, what constitutes as ‘inappropriate’ and ‘unwanted’ are themselves constructed through an adult-centric lens, based on age-appropriate understandings of ‘exposure’ within socialisation. As the internet provides individuals with the agency to circumvent this regulation, the technological knowledge of young people is stripped of any perceived competency and instead reinterpreted as evidence of their potential danger, thus sustaining the power structures which rely on their positioning as immature and incompetent beings.

The emerging online safeguarding agenda has sought to redress this imbalance in knowledge, and the development of internet safety guidelines for parents and children exemplifies the most well-known strategy for trying to equip parents with the necessary skills to maintain control and surveillance over young people as they access the online sphere. As part of this moral panic, a failure by parents to educate themselves and protect their children online has been accompanied with media examples documenting children and young people who have been victims of online grooming and abuse (Nathanson, 2011). Parents are required to engage with these safeguarding materials as part of their parental responsibilities, thus making them susceptible to the recommendations contained within them.

Martin: "Have your parents spoken to you about being safe online?"

Ben: "yeh a few times."

Martin: "How did they do it?"

Ben: "1 time sat me down and talked about bad ppl using the internet... others hav been when they see news about it and they remind us about bein careful."

Martin: "Have they taken any steps to monitor or restrict your internet access?"

Ben: "they put a filter on which sometimes blocks things."

Martin: "Did they leave that enabled when you got the internet? Or did they enable it themselves?"

Ben: "dunno its just always been on."

Martin: "Have they spoken to you before about why they left it on?"

Ben: "not rly just said its to protect us from bad ppl and things."

Martin: "What do you think they mean by that?"

Ben: "porn weirdos abuse that stuff."

Ben's experience of parental control and surveillance demonstrates how communication and monitoring strategies are deployed to regulate his online activities, and he refers to his parents' anxieties being raised when they encounter a news story related to online child abuse. He acknowledges that the content blocker has been justified by his parents as a way of keeping him and his siblings safe online, thus highlighting how these strategies continue to draw upon developmental models of childhood and sexuality which perpetuate treating children and young people as a homogenous group who all progress in a linear way (Alcock, 2014). This assumption is undermined, however, by Ben's closeted identity status which, as discussed in an earlier chapter, has meant he has needed to access sexual health information relevant to the needs of gay males. Such needs have been largely ignored within sexual education in schools, whereas the internet provides Ben with opportunities to circumvent this regulated curriculum. As young people such as Ben possess the technological competence and agency to transgress this regulated socialisation, the emergence of online child protection agendas has placed a dual burden on parents to continue protecting children and young people from the risks associated within the online sphere but doing so from a position where they lack the skills and knowledge of how to do so (Hargrave and Livingstone, 2009).

The centralisation of online safeguarding through the UKCCIS reflects one of the most significant techniques established by UK Governments to redress imbalances in technological competence. By bringing together different agencies and industries under a single council, the strategies which have emerged from this have been legitimised and transmitted to parents and children from a wide range of pedagogical professions and technology industries. For example, Ben refers to internet service providers developing content blockers, and their membership in the UKCCIS allowed the Government to mandate that these blockers be automatically enabled when providing households with an internet connection. This requires parents to proactively opt-out of these restrictions, as governmental policy stipulates presumed consent to opt-in households automatically. By moving towards an opt-out model, a lack of technological knowledge becomes diminished as a safeguarding barrier due to the Government and ISPs taking initiative on behalf of parents. The responsibility on parents then shifts to maintaining these monitoring strategies and using internet safety guidelines and educational media tools to undertake communication and supervision strategies, both of which require less technological competence and confidence.

Grace: “He [dad] is more afraid of online dangers than real life ones.”

Joe: “My mum has said when she was my age she didnt need to worry if someone was lying about their identity because you spoke in person and knew… gran has also said a couple times shes is glad she didnt have to deal with the internet when raising my dad.”

Harry: “because he [dad] cant use a computer good he gets worried that might cause something bad to happen.”

To redress technological competency between parents and young people, safeguarding responses by parents have conceptualised young people’s sociality from a position of danger, with adults being the final arbiters of managing risk and surveillance (Fisk, 2014). This pedagogy of surveillance is stringently utilised to over-compensate for parental anxieties, resulting in their online sphere being regulated more stringently than their physical sphere. The excerpts above provide insights into why this occurs. Grace and Harry allude to the fears displayed by their fathers, who are concerned about online dangers more than physical ones because of their lack of understanding of what they can do to monitor and control them effectively. This loss of control significantly challenges the pedagogy of surveillance which typically surrounds children at earlier stages of childhood, providing adults with a consistent sense of control and security. Joe expands on this further when comparing generational responses to child-rearing, by acknowledging the relief that his grandmother expresses about not having to deal with the perceived risks which have appeared in response to the recent emergence of the internet and digital communicative technologies. Whilst dominant narratives have often focused on parents failing to safeguard their children because of a lack of confidence in using new technologies, these experiences instead suggest that parents are more likely to overprotect as a way of mediating their anxieties and sustaining their control. Government responses have empowered parents to do this by automatically enabling invasive safeguarding strategies for children (e.g., content blockers), and instead requiring parents to take the lead on deploying communication and supervision techniques to provide additional

layers of protection. Through this alliance between parents, pedagogues and the state, the requirement to educate and restrict access to devices is achieved, ensuring that the pedagogisation of children's sex remains invoked and proper sexualisation restored and maintained (Moore and Reynolds, 2018).

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how surveillance strategies have been deployed within the UK's safeguarding agenda as a way of sustaining the pedagogical regime children and young people are raised in. It has outlined how attempts to maintain heteronormative 'proper' sexualisation has created barriers for closeted young people with content blockers, which present multiple risks to a closeted LGBQ young person's privacy and independence. First, incidences of 'overblocking' are common because of historical misconceptions about certain identities and information being 'adult-only' domains, thus resulting in websites being miscategorised and blocked. Second, restricting information requires young people to undertake covert circumvention strategies to maintain their autonomy, and the chapter has outlined various techniques young participants competently used to accomplish this. Communication was also found to be a popular safeguarding technique by parents, with dominant constructions of risk and danger being prominent within the knowledge parents sought to transmit to their children when communicating with them about the importance of being safe online. However, the deployment of these surveillance strategies was not without tension, as the competency of young people to reinforce desired behaviours and transgress pedagogical surveillance meant that they would be consistently monitoring their performativity and ensuring they could hide their online activities and communications from parents. A variety of concealment strategies have been outlined, including young people using knowledge of devices to delete their search history and disabling notifications to avoid attracting attention from any covert surveillance. This demonstrated that even when overt forms of surveillance are no longer widely used at later stages of childhood, the privacy and independence which accompanies adolescence is conditional and replaced by covert forms of surveillance. There are also clear gender distinctions within these safeguarding responses by parents, as young males are permitted to engage in heteronormative sexual expressions and interactions as part of their male masculine identity, whereas young girls are subjected to more stringent safeguarding regulations so that sexual passivity is reinforced within feminine idealisms. Finally, dominant anxieties and moral panics regarding young people online has

required the state to play a key role in exerting surveillance over children and young people, and its alliance with parents have meant that technological competency has been redressed as a safeguarding barrier in several ways. A lack of confidence in using ICT devices is not a reliable indicator of a parent failing to implement and deploy online safeguarding strategies, and the chapter has outlined how parental fears of online risks can cause them to over-compensate when regulating the pedagogical regimes in which their children are socialised.

The Impact of Heteronormative Online Safeguarding

8.0 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the impact of heteronormative online safeguarding on closeted LGBQ young people. It will begin by illustrating how their main priority is to protect their closeted identity and personal domain, before demonstrating how the exclusion of children's voices from decision-making processes causes safeguarding to rely on adult-centric anxieties which focus on different concerns. This mismatching between the concerns of adults and LGBQ young people results in the participants having to deploy concealment strategies to prevent themselves being outed, increasing their potential vulnerability when responding to the communicative, restrictive, and supervisory strategies recommended by internet safety guidelines. Each of these categories of safeguarding will be analysed to identify how they fail to consider the participants' needs, and how their incompatibility as a safety tool for closeted young people inadvertently exacerbates perceived threats. The chapter will also examine how homonormativity operates within their online community space and causes closeted LGBQ community members to recognise the limitations of that safe space, thus requiring a restricted performance within the information they disclose. Specifically, my argument will outline how only normative behaviours are permitted within the community, and any disclosures which transgress these boundaries compels the administrators to report 'threats' to outside pedagogues who may jeopardise their closeted status. The barriers for participants disclosing abuse will also be examined, as heteronormative ideology privileges adult-child power dynamics and typically provides an unquestioning right for parents to know information regarding their child. The chapter will illustrate how the safeguarding agenda's failure to consider heterosexism and homophobia from pedagogues disempowers young people from feeling capable of disclosing concerns, instead creating a difficult decisional balance for them when navigating the risks of the online sphere with the consequences of disclosure on their physical sphere. Finally, the perpetuation of gendered inequalities within online safeguarding will also be analysed, as the experiences offer insights into the different ways in which female and male participants are respectively disempowered by the heteronormative ideology permeating from children's safeguarding strategies.

8.1 The dominant concern: being outed

"Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978: 95)

One of the most dominant concerns which participants expressed was the incompatibility between the recommendations provided to parents by internet safety guidelines and the needs of young people themselves. This is an obvious consequence of a homogenous, adult-centric agenda which represents childhood as a linear, developmental process towards adulthood. The deployment of surveillance strategies has been illustrated in the previous chapter, but the implications these have when clashing with the concealment strategies deployed by the participants will now be examined to identify areas of conflict and incompatibility.

> Lewis: "my biggest worry is being outed… i dont want my parents to know until I feel ready and im not there yet."
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>
> Isaac: "It would be bad if they [parents] found out before I was ready… I am still questioning who I am so what would I tell them if they found out?... they would have so many questions and I would have no answers."
>
> ----
>
> Hayley: "being able to tell people when your ready is the most important thing and nobody should be able to take that away… being outted would cause me more harm than good."
>
> ----
>
> Matthew: "it [being outed] would be crap… they [parents] no nothing about being gay so how would they help? makes no sense they should have a right to know they dont understand it."

The above extracts provided by Lewis, Isaac, Hayley and Matthew identify the most apparent area of conflict, and this relates to the hierarchisation within the everyday deployment of safeguarding. Moore and Prescott (2013) refer to Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic order' to illustrate how dominant power structures obtain their naturalised legitimacy for regulating social groups, and childhood socialisation is consistently a site of focus for what values are important to transmit. Despite being seen as an inherently 'natural' order, it is one which is ideologically driven and is primarily designed to sustain adults' power over children. This is not to suggest that there are not legitimate safeguarding concerns facing young people, but the participants highlight significant differences in how their needs are understood by authoritative claims-makers versus how they understand and prioritise their own needs. The preservation of their privacy and identity is the most apparent concern for the participants,

and the comment by Matthew specifically rejects the dominant notion that parents have the unconditional right to know information about them as part of their parental responsibility and safeguarding role. This refers to expectations within safeguarding which are underpinned by an assumption of parents always possessing superior competency and intellect, but the participants have persuasively challenged this notion by exposing the limitations of heteronormativity when exercising parental responsibility over a closeted LGBQ child. Isaac alludes to this when mentioning that the ongoing questioning of his sexual identity would prevent him being able to offer any clear information regarding his identity to his parents if outed.

Nevertheless, it is the perpetuation of the 'natural order' which is a significant driving force behind moral panics and, specifically, the anxieties regarding young people using the internet freely. Hessel, He and Dworkin (2016) outline how the social domains of children are subjected to considerable control by parents[130]. It is the personal domain where young people develop their autonomy, independence and privacy when understanding their identity. As the personal domain is difficult for parents to access, the participants possess considerable advantages in preserving their autonomy and freedom away from watchful eyes, and the internet provides considerable opportunities for this domain to be developed and explored according to their desires and needs. To counteract this, online safeguarding strategies have sought surveillance techniques to challenge the privacy of this domain.

> Declan: "The only reason we are on a site like this is because everything assumes we are straight… they are the reason we have to stay in the closet… school only teaches us about being straight and people say were to young to know… its not like I hide who I am because its fun… they [parents] make out like we can tell them anything but you only need to look at the shit people get on here when coming out to see how conditional that is."

> Louis: "yeah i agree… they want to no everything about us but only when its things they want to here [hear]."

The strategies recommended to parents through internet safety guidelines can be assigned into three categories: communication, restriction and supervision. Each of these will be individually examined to demonstrate how the impact of heteronormativity within each

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[130] See page 49 for more information.

category fails to acknowledge their privacy needs, and inadvertently undermines the security and well-being of closeted LGBQ young people.

8.1.1 Communication

The necessity for parents and young people to regularly communicate with each other regarding online activities, and their perceived dangers, is a key recommendation within the guidelines[131]. The previous chapter has examined participants' experiences of communicating with parents about internet safety[132], but the power relations evident within this strategy highlights the role of the parent as the initiator and leader of communication.

Unsurprisingly, the ability to communicate with parents about their online activities was unanimously seen as impractical and lacking awareness of their privacy needs by the participants:

> Daniel: "I never start a chat with them about being safe… you have to be very careful what you tell them if they ask… it isnt possible to tell them about being on a site like this without it also outing you."
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> ----
>
> Calvin: "You just need to let them say what they want and avoid saying or doing anything suspicious that would make them question you. The less they know the better."
>
> ----
>
> Martin: "What would happen if you told your dad you have online friends?"
>
> Liam: "He would be angry and stop me from talking to them."
>
> Martin: "Stop you how?"
>
> Liam: "Probably take my phone and computer off me."
>
> Martin: "Why do you think he is so against you talking to people online?"
>
> Liam: "assumes they will be dangerous and want to hurt me."

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[131] The NSPCC (2016) encourages parents to talk to their children about what content is and is not appropriate for them to be accessing, and for them to regularly ask their children what apps and websites they are interacting with.
[132] See page 187.

Martin: “And are you not worried about that risk?”

Liam: “I am but i know how to be careful so easier protecting myself.”

Martin: “Would you be able to speak to a parent if you felt in danger?”

Liam: “dont think so.”

Martin: “Why is that?”

Liam: “What would I say? they would start asking questions i couldnt answer without outing myself or admit to doing something they would not like.”

This approach to safeguarding children can be understood through the act of confession, which Foucault (1978: 56) describes as “one of the main rituals we [Western societies] rely on for the production of truth”[133]. This is evident through the ways in which Daniel, Calvin and Liam discuss the ways they resist the expectations to confess to their parents, but without it being interpreted as a destabilising act of resistance against the adult-child relationship. Instead, they are primarily concerned with the preservation of their privacy needs and use their agency to roleplay obedience as a means of protecting their concealed identity. This demonstrates the act of resistance which goes into subverting the demands of the confession, as they are still able to exercise agency to protect their identity, even when such agency is bounded by the adult-child dyad. By engaging in a performance bounded by their parents' desired conformity and compliance, young people can subvert the demands to confess and continue using the internet covertly without attracting further scrutiny.

The above extracts demonstrate how Daniel, Calvin and Liam each possess tacit awareness of how these heteronormative regulations restrict their capacity to ‘confess’[134], but their

[133] In this instance, the act of confession is symbolised through the power relations of the adult-child relationship. As a hierarchical observer, the parent plays an active role in defining the boundaries of appropriate conduct and is responsible for ensuring conformity as part of their parental surveillance. The child is socialised to confess to their misdemeanours as part of the ordinary affairs of everyday life. As Foucault (1978: 60) states, “the obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points… that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us”.

[134] Such concealment strategies would only ever be necessary in a society which regulates itself through dominant understandings of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ sexual identities. The concealment of LGBQ identities sustains the symbolic ordering of sexual identities which Weeks (1986) refers to in his pyramidal model of sexuality. Heterosexual monogamy is never subjected to ‘concealment’ in society, and even age-appropriate discourses are concerned with how the relationship is portrayed rather than the appropriateness of the relationship itself. By concealing LGBQ identities, power structures which legitimise and perpetuate a heteronormative social order are maintained.

resistance to it remains covert so as not to attract the unwanted attention of their parents. In doing so, they are able to demonstrate their knowledge of the 'obedient' child as a desired trait, and competently perform to this construct as a way of sustaining their resistance and subversion of adult-child power dynamics. This highlights the transformation which occurs in power relations between the adult and child, as the 'obedient' performance is instead deployed to satisfy the gaze of the hierarchical watcher, without them ever knowing that such resistance is occurring within their regulatory regime.

> Martin: "You mentioned earlier that your parents have spoken to you about bad people using the internet. Did they ever tell you what to do if one tries to talk to you?"
>
> Ben: "yeh was told to tell them."
>
> Martin: "And would you feel comfortable doing that?"
>
> Ben: "no."
>
> Martin: "Why is that?"
>
> Ben: "wud be awkward not sure what id say… id hav to tell them how we met to."
>
> Martin: "What would worry you about telling them how you met?"
>
> Ben: "if it was a site for lgbt ppl i wud need to say why i was there."

Although 'confession' is evident yet again in this extract, the point Ben is making demonstrates another important consideration about the limitations of communication strategies. The role of language in constructing our understanding of the world is an important factor to consider, as this is one of the ways in which discursive practices are legitimised and sustained (Simpson, 1994). These discursive practices are evident through the dominant 'stranger danger' narrative which constructs online risks to children, but there is another important practice contained within these guidelines for mediating these anxieties, which involves the child confessing to their parent that they are in danger. Ben references this above, and it is this practice which is one of the most emphasised within communication strategies for protecting children online. The importance of disclosure by the child to a parent or parental figure is at the heart of safeguarding and is itself a clear attribute of the hierarchy of roles which both groups separately play. For the participants, their role is limited to the act of confession/disclosure, which is reflective of their exclusion from decision-making processes and the minimisation of their voices in favour of powerful pedagogues and claims-

makers. This inequality reflects the principles of ownership to which children are subjected within society, as power relations often position them as the property of parents who are primarily responsible for their care.

However, the prevalence of heteronormativity has a profound impact on the effectiveness of this strategy, as young people's sexual cultures are shaped by societal norms and adults (Ridder, 2017). Their institutionalisation into schools and the family unit positions them as passive recipients of a collaborative sex education and sexual socialisation by these two powerful institutions (Shtarkshall, Santelli and Hirsch, 2007). These collaborative approaches utilise an orthodox model of sexual schooling, as they are simultaneously transmitting sexual knowledge focusing on reproductive sexuality, coupled with "important moral norms and values for conformity in social conduct" (Moore and Reynolds, 2018: 178). These moral norms are constructed under a strict developmental model which limits sexual rights and citizenship to adults, whilst maintaining childhood as a pre-sexual period of life. This sexual culture is vital to acknowledge when considering the practicality of the 'confession', as young people are socialised under a strict sexual curriculum which significantly limits their ability, confidence and knowledge to discuss topics of sex and sexuality openly with adults. Despite this, a central communication strategy encourages young people to communicate openly with adults as part of their safeguarding, and yet raises them in a sexual culture which entirely undermines this approach by severely restricting discussions, information and knowledge of sex and sexuality. By failing to acknowledge the impact of these moral norms and values, this strategy does not consider how our sexual culture has disempowered young people and created the very barriers which prevent them being able to communicate openly and without fear of judgement or reprisal. This not only indicates the lack of privacy rights afforded to young people generally, but it becomes a particularly problematic approach when considering the needs of LGBQ young people specifically, as the participants have powerfully illustrated why they are unable to disclose information to a parent without jeopardising their closeted status.

8.1.2 Restriction

The deployment of restrictive measures is less frequently reported by the participants[135], but remains a source of considerable anxiety because of the perceived risks they pose to the

[135] See pages 181 for a detailed breakdown of participant experiences of online restrictions.

privacy and security of their closeted status. Not all participants reported having their access restricted at home, but they all had encountered some form of restrictive measures when accessing the internet from either their home, school or mobile phone.

> Alfie: "they [school] monitor everything and will disable your internet access if you mess around… 1 guy managed to load a game site and someone took control of his computer and closed it."
>
> Martin: "In what way did they take control of it?"
>
> Alfie: "someone from another room was watching… he lost his internet access because of it… computer admins have a office and watch for any rule breaking."
>
> ----
>
> Lewis: "i have to be careful using wifi at home because of the block… it [the block] lists any site it blocked and the computer that it came from so my parents would know if i looked at any lgbt stuff."
>
> ----
>
> Ruby: "I am lucky the blocker isnt on for my home internet but I cant turn it off on my phone."
>
> Martin: "Your service provider enabled a lock?"
>
> Ruby: "Yeah giffgaff leave the adult blocker on and you can only disable by sending them passport or driving license to confirm your over 18."
>
> Martin: "Can you recall any occasions it has blocked a website which didn't contain any adult content?"
>
> Ruby: "Yeah plenty… feels like any site that mentions lesbian gets blocked."
>
> Martin: "Are you able to request for them to unblock a site if it is restricted by mistake?"
>
> Ruby: "I know you can request but I dont… the request isnt anon [anonymous] and I would out myself by asking."

The risks to their closeted status are evident from these differing experiences of restrictive safeguarding measures outlined by Alfie, Lewis, and Ruby. This heteronormative agenda reflects the intertwining of the socialisation of procreative behaviours and the pedagogisation of children's sex (Foucault, 1978). Heteronormative socialisation is legitimised at all stages

of childhood, but the moral anxieties which surround the schooling of sex and sexuality show that concerns are focused on the depiction and detail of such relationships. Appropriateness is a key, albeit subjective, measurement used to ascertain age-ratings, but the shared meaning by claims-makers when categorising 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' ensures that such arbitrary categories are naturalised into our social order when schooling children. This is reflected in the moral anxieties surrounding exposure to pornography, for example, as such depictions of heterosexual relationships are interpreted as indecent and ascribed the label 'adult content' to reinforce the distinction between a regulated 'pre-sexual' childhood and a sexual adulthood. However, heteronormativity which permeates from the socialisation of procreative behaviours has a demonstrably profound impact on how closeted LGBQ young people access content which challenges this. The previous chapter has illustrated how LGBQ resources are frequently subjected to 'overblocking' because of a perceived historical inappropriateness posed by 'exposing' children and young people to sexual minority identities and content[136]. The consequences of this inequality pose a considerable challenge to the safety and security of a closeted individuals right to privacy, as Joe notes:

> Joe: "It feels wrong for a content block to record everything you tried to access… it makes sense to block porn but it's unfair to get outed because you searched for LGBTQ+ support… you only need to look at the forums on here to see how many people are trapped by this sorta thing. It happens so often the admins created a forum for parents to get support[137] and that is full of stories from concerned parents who snooped and found out their child is in the closet."

The implementation of restrictions reflects the objectives of surveillance pedagogy which these guidelines aim to enforce when preserving a desired construction of pre-sexual childhood. As a disciplinary concept, the panopticon (Foucault, 1975) is a powerful tool for instilling bodily docility and ensuring that all occupants institutionalised within it are conforming to the standards of appropriate conduct. Even as the participants move between different institutions and electronic devices, the apparatus used to monitor them adapts its functioning to maintain its covert surveillance. As highlighted above, different participants disclosed various experiences of these restrictive measures, and yet awareness and

[136] More information regarding the relevant statutes is outlined on page 43. Also see Edwards et al (2014) and Lee (2019) for more information on the impact and legacy of these laws and the roles they play in creating an ongoing unease for teachers when providing RSE.
[137] This is referring to a forum provided by Empty Closets Community Services, which caters to parents of LGBTQ+ children who wish to receive support and advice on their child's sexual identity.

conformity to their demands, as a way of protecting their closeted identity, still resulted in a shared bodily docility. Although the threat posed by this surveillance pedagogy was evident from the participants' experiences, it was most emphasised by Alfie and Lewis. Alfie specifically referred to the covert, omnipresent nature of this apparatus when discussing the role of his school's IT Administrators as 'hierarchical observers'. Despite not being seen, their ability to act and sanction a pupil for rule breaking symbolises their ability to exert power without being detected, and the effect of this power ensures that the rest of the occupants will behave as though they too are being watched. A similar threat exists from Lewis's experience, as the omnipresent figure is the automated content blocker, which determines whether to grant access to a desired page and has the power to deny access and alert a hierarchical observer to the individual's alleged indiscretion.

The consequence of these restrictive measures is that closeted young people need to demonstrate considerable knowledge and competency of what disciplinary apparatus is present when engaging with their online sphere, and how to avoid surveillance from this apparatus to prevent unwanted attention by an authoritative observer. As Joe acknowledges, the number of young people and parents he has observed as being outed by these restrictions demonstrates the challenges facing closeted young people by heteronormative over-blocking. They are further disempowered by the barriers which the system creates to try and minimise instances of overblocking, as Ruby highlights that reporting websites as being incorrectly blocked would require her to 'out' herself because of personal information being part of that report. Such an approach can only reform in a reactive manner (i.e., by responding to experiences of overblocking) which is of little benefit to a closeted individual whose experience of this caused them to be outed by an inaccurate warning 'log' to a parent.

8.1.3 Supervision

Supervision of online activity is reportedly practised by more than 4 out of 5 parents in the UK (Ofcom, 2014), and this process involves making conscientious decisions about where children access the internet and from which devices they do so. As the participants have reached adolescence, developmental understandings of childhood afford them conditional privacy so that they can use electronic devices outside of the overt gaze of parents and

parental figures[138]. The previous chapter has highlighted how the weakening of overt surveillance also provides opportunities for covert surveillance methods to be deployed, and the discussion on spatial conflicts has emphasised the importance of participants roleplaying a disciplined performativity at any moment should a parent enquire about their online activities.

The deployment of constant overt surveillance is less applicable to the participants' age group, but there is also an overlap between communication and supervision of which they must still be mindful of to ensure their privacy is not threatened:

> Martin: "How often does he [dad] ask about what you are doing online?"
>
> Liam: "I dunno not all the time but kinda regular."
>
> Martin: "Why do you think he is asking?"
>
> Liam: "He makes it seem like hes interested but i know its his way of watching me."
>
> Martin: "And he asks about this at random times?"
>
> Liam: "yeh."
>
> Martin: "You mentioned earlier you sometimes have to lie if he sees you messaging a friend and asks how you know them. Are you worried you might not always be able to think of a convincing lie?"
>
> Liam: "It cvan [can] be hard but done it fine so far i just avoid saying anything i know will worry him."

This extract from Liam demonstrates the impact of conditional privacy which comes with weakened overt supervision for young people, as it is not just the deployment of covert surveillance tools which pose a threat to the maintenance of his closeted identity. As Liam identifies, there is only a reduction in supervision rather than its removal altogether and engaging in parent-led communication provides them with opportunities to continue exercising supervision in conjunction with other forms of surveillance. For Liam and the other participants, this reflects one of the more difficult aspects of safeguarding for them to navigate, as it requires an improvised performance which addresses the unanticipated

[138] See page 192 for more information on spatial conflicts within the deployment of supervision strategies. Although conditional privacy provides less overt surveillance, it also provides new opportunities for covert surveillance methods to be implemented.

questions from their parents. A failure to do so would, at best, attract further unwanted attention and scrutiny, thus jeopardising the privacy and security of their personal domain. To prevent this, they must always be alert to the possibility that they may be questioned at any moment and must possess the competency to roleplay a desirable improvised performance. This performativity needs to both address the anxieties of the parent which triggered the questioning, as well as perform the desired characteristics of the 'obedient' child to avoid their limited rights being stripped away further as punishment for undisciplined behaviour online.

8.1.4 Prioritising their closeted identity

The analysis thus far has demonstrated the considerable difference between adults and young people's understandings of what poses the biggest danger/threat to them online. Harbeck (2012) states that one of the impacts of heteronormativity is that it fails to mediate such differences, as adults with safeguarding responsibilities repeatedly clash with the privacy needs of young people who are trying to use the online sphere to access information and develop and understand their non-normative identity. The consequences of this are that parents and other powerful pedagogues construct an adult-centric agenda which focuses on normative constructions of danger and threat, and the online safeguarding agenda is merely a reproduction of this to sustain the control and surveillance which they possess in the physical sphere. For the participants, their concerns with this agenda highlights that their biggest concern is about how to protect and preserve their closeted identity status from the safeguarding methods which seek to undermine their privacy and security. The lack of children's voices has a profound impact on ignoring the needs of young people who fall outside of dominant constructions of childhood and sexuality, as the adult-led protectionist agenda instead advocates for the implementation of surveillance methods which undermines their privacy. The consequences of this adult-centric agenda will be outlined further throughout this chapter, including in the very organisation which provides closeted LGBQ young people with an online safe space to explore their identity and seek out sexual health resources. Due to the requirement for charity organisations to conform to strict safeguarding standards, the risks posed by this online safeguarding agenda are even evident in the very organisation which seeks to offer them a safe space.

8.2 Legal accountability in the online sphere

Providing parents, professionals and charities with a legal duty to protect children and young people is an essential part of the UK's protectionist agenda. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Protection of Children Act 1978 are two key examples of legislation which impact how organisations must safeguard minors from sexual activities[139], and these are of relevance to support communities for LGBQ young people. If allowed to operate outside of these laws, a children's welfare charity would pose a significant challenge to the dominant orthodoxy which aims to regulate childhood as a pre-sexual period of life. Schooling of sex and sexuality permit young people to be educated and socialised in preparation for adulthood, but it is a highly contested process that is underpinned by considerable anxieties. These concerns are heightened for children's support services which provide advice and resources on sex education, and laws and statutory guidance play a key role in determining which organisations are authorised to work with children.

> Alia: "the coc [Code of Conduct] list so many things you cant do!"
>
> ----
>
> Ciaran: "makes sense to have those rules… theres people who are 13 here and you need to think of them when keeping the site safe."

Within these extracts, Alia and Ciaran refer to the Code of Conduct regulating what content is and is not appropriate for posting by community members, and age-based determinations of appropriateness are evident throughout. The code reflects the requirements which the organisation must follow to ensure that it is recognised as a safe environment for children and young people to engage with. The Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018: 7) guidance states that charities "should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm… charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with, their charity, are not harmed in any way through contact with it". How charity organisations understand concepts such as 'risks' and 'harm' are demonstrated by their capability to follow the standards laid out in the statutory guidance. There are obvious tensions due to the clash between heteronormativity within the schooling of sex and sexuality, and the nature of coming out support as a source of information for minors. However, discussions about same-sex intimacy, and even disclosures of being

[139] For a more detailed analysis of the United Kingdom's legal framework, see page 43.

sexually active below the age of consent, are mediated through statutory guidance[140] documents by the Government and Crown Prosecution Service[141]. Such documents state that any underage sexual acts which occur between people of a similar age, and without evidence of abuse, coercion or exploitation, are not in the public interest to prosecute (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019), and yet the statutes still remain to reflect an important symbolic value. Additionally, there are still a wide range of identified risks of harm that the protectionist agenda attempts to regulate when placing a legal duty on charities to safeguard children, and these are reflective of the dominant anxieties which drive the online moral panic and the desire for a regulated pre-sexual childhood.

Societal desirability to restrict sexual behaviours and identities to adults presents a key dilemma for online community spaces catering for children and young people, as relationship and sexual health support are frequent topics which arise from enquiries. The extracts below highlight observations by Grace and Matthew regarding the techniques ECCS uses when attempting to mediate these competing and conflicting duties:

> Grace: "…you get banned or restricted if they [the staff] see you using the forum to find a bf/gf or flirting a lot."
>
> ----
>
> Matthew: "your ment [meant] to use the site for advice on sex and sexuality not to look for it… I like they try and stop it being like a dating site but theres also times when people just flirt as a joke and its not fair to warn them for that they dont mean to break the rules."

These regulations remain consistent with the wider discourses surrounding the pedagogisation of children's sex. Despite the law acknowledging the impracticalities of criminalising young people for engaging in sexual activities underage, the social regulations enforced by parents and other pedagogues still aspire to regulate such behaviours, and this is reflected in the sanctions which the community use to control the actions of its members

[140] See the statutory guidance for the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the CPS' social media guidance for more information. Further information on the inspection guidance by Ofsted (2020) has also been illustrated in footnote 115 on page 162.

[141] This is not to suggest that teaching young people about LGBT identities is no longer without controversy. However, such controversies are largely occurring separate from these legal guidance documents. See Page 29 for more information on the clash between LGB-inclusive Relationship and Sex Education sanctioned by the state and the backlash by particular claims-makers who argue it is intrusive.

when addressing this specific 'risk'. More broadly, the Working Together appendix places a strong emphasis on protecting children and young people from sexual abuse, and uses language such as 'enticing' (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018: 103) to present children and young people as both sexual beings and sexual becomings. This is an important consideration when understanding the lack of sexual rights provided to young people, as it uses an adult-centric orthodoxy to contextualise the assumption of an immature agency when observed by adults. In other words, if a young person does engage in sexual activities, it is automatically labelled as enticement and grooming, thus always framed from a position of inappropriateness. Even if the young person were to proclaim that they made an informed decision to engage in such behaviours, this would be nullified by the lack of legal rights afforded to make such decisions. The implications of this for coming out support communities becomes apparent in how they follow these ideological measurements of risk to fulfil their duty of care towards community members. However, they also inadvertently reinforce dominant sexual anxieties of the 'stranger danger' narrative:

Zach: "The staff are honest that all conversations are monitored and can be read anytime… [them] being able to see pms [Private Messages] stops bad people using the forum to abuse teens."

Oscar: "it can feel to much knowing they can look at everything it would be nice to have some privacy… i understand why its done but it makes it harder to have a private convo knowing it might be read by a admin."

Martin: "How do you feel about the amount of monitoring which occurs?"

Ben: "its a lot."

Martin: "Does it affect how you use the site?"

Ben: "yeh u cant talk to a friend and no its just them reading it i hav to watch what i say coz i no the admins can see it."

Martin: "What type of things would you not want the admins to see?"

Ben: "anythin rly if i dont post it on the forum i dont want ppl seein it some things are private and i only want a friend to no... ive heard of them having to report ppl coz of what they read."

Martin: "When you say they report people, what do you mean?"

Ben: "to police they discover something and they hav to report it to protect the person."

Martin: "What type of things have you heard them report a member for?"

Ben: "old creeps sexting teens or if worried a member is goin to hurt them self."

Martin: "How does that impact the conversations you have on there?"

Ben: "u hav to watch what u say to protect urself so the police wont turn up were u live and tell ur parents."

Martin: "So you're worried that if you do not watch what you say, that may end up causing you to be outed?"

Ben: "yeh exactly how could it not the police would hav to tell ur parents why there there and they wud no u had bene [been] on a gay site."

These experiences from Zach, Oscar and Ben highlight a crucial point regarding their privacy needs and the challenges they face in preserving their closeted identity status. Even on web spaces which are constructed with the direct intention of allowing them to explore their sexual identity in a safe and controlled environment, they are still forced to overcome considerable safeguarding barriers which threaten their privacy and security. As Mathieson (2013) highlights, 'technopanic' has consistently ignored children's needs when establishing paternalist processes for regulating children online. It is at this point we reach an important conjuncture, as the safeguarding duties which the organisation must follow to maintain their legitimised status as a 'safe' non-profit organisation become sustained through its adherence to homonormativity. By failing to challenge dominant assumptions of childhood and sexuality, homonormativity inadvertently continues to reinforce the very heteronormative ideology which has pushed the closeted participants towards such a community space. This requires the organisation to operate in a paradoxical manner: it acknowledges the privacy needs of its marginalised community members but is required to conform to the standards laid out by a protectionist agenda which fails to acknowledge LGBQ identities when seeking to protect children. To ensure that the organisation is able to maintain its charitable status, it is required to operate under such paradoxes and, subsequently, will occasionally be forced to

undertake safeguarding measures which contradict the prominent needs of its own closeted community members.

The impact on participants is wholly apparent, as the integrity of their safe space is instead yet another source of concern about how they will maintain their closeted identity. As rights are only provided to those who are willing to conform to the dominant orthodoxy (Mathers, Sumerau and Cragun, 2018), community members demonstrate a clear awareness that they must police what they disclose on the website, including privately, to prevent the organisation from being obligated to report a safeguarding concern to the relevant authorities. This again has clear ties to the panoptic surveillance by which children are regulated by, as the lack of privacy rights on the forum is part of the apparatus which empowers hierarchical observers to watch them constantly to ensure that the desired bodily docility is maintained. LGBQ services inadvertently propagate and sustain heteronormative regulations by engaging in performative mirroring (Butler, 1992) and gender policing (Bryant, 2008). The consequence of this is that the organisation's assimilation compels them to operationalise heteronormative safeguarding procedures which stand in complete contrast to their operational aims and principles. For community members, the strategic outness which they utilise elsewhere to protect their closeted identity (Orne, 2011) ends up also being a necessary part of their performativity on the one webspace which advertises themselves as a safe space for being closeted:

> Daniel: "Its understandable they need to protect vulnerable young people but a coming out support forum having to out its own members is a unusual approach"

This tension is encapsulated well by Daniel, who refers to one of the paradoxes of ECCS' safeguarding, in which they are sometimes compelled to prematurely out a community member when reporting safeguarding incidents to relevant authorities. This again refers back to the earlier analysis of safeguarding protocols automatically framing all instances of sexual behaviour from a position of inappropriateness, due to the lack of sexual rights and recognition afforded to young people when exercising agency.

8.3 A perceived inability to disclose

The above analysis illustrates the authoritative role organisations must play in implementing and enforcing processes which protect children and young people from harm. These include having clear strategies for identifying safeguarding concerns, and the knowledge to alert the

relevant legal authorities in a timely manner, to prevent or minimise the harm and/or risk identified. The analysis thus far has also focused exclusively on the challenges of identity concealment from groups whose approaches to identifying safeguarding concerns are to impinge on the personal domain of young people as much as possible, thus undermining their autonomy and right to privacy. The ability of the young person to take a proactive role in disclosing their own concerns to a parent or parental figure has not yet been considered, but participants have identified clear barriers to exercising this agency due to the impact of heteronormativity on their familial and professional relationships[142].

> Louis: "…there are lots of ways to deal with concerns like just blocking them so they cant contact you."
>
> Mohammad: "I use privacy settings for this reason but it may not always work. I think we need to figure out what we would do if the usual things failed."
>
> Louis: "True in that case i dunno… telling my parents isnt a option unless i could do it without getting in trouble."
>
> Martin: "How might you get in trouble?"
>
> Louis: "If they dont like what i was doing or they would find out im gay."

This dialogue between Louis and Mohammad again highlights the privileging which closeted LGBQ young people give to concealing their identity from their parents. Rote and Smetana (2015) argue that because issues of sex and sexuality are constructed as part of the personal domain, young people are likely to challenge a parent's 'right to know' about this domain, enabling concealment as a way of mediating fears of disapproval or punishment from parents. Louis refers to both factors as a justification for concealing information. This reflects the strong overlap these issues have for individuals like himself who are exploring their sexual identity, as sexual concerns will inevitably manifest from activities related to their sexual identity exploration, and yet such concerns cannot be reported to a parent without their identity exploration also forming part of the disclosure. This clash between what the parents

[142] This topic within the data collection process was planned to potentially sample both perceptions of being able to report concerns, as well as experiences of having been able or unable to. However, no participants disclosed experiences of abuse and/or harm during the data collection stages, and therefore the data reflects their perceptions of how they would hypothetically navigate this issue if it arose. This is not to claim that their perceptions would be a clear summation of how they would respond to an actual experience, but they are nevertheless insightful and worthy of consideration to better understand the barriers they perceive themselves to face.

want to know versus what the young person is comfortable disclosing has the risk of adverse outcomes (Abar et al., 2015) by inadvertently exacerbating the risks to the child. Adult-centric concerns about protecting children and young people from harm are primarily focused on concerns about young people engaging in sexual activities, whereas the priority of closeted LGBQ young people is focused on maintaining concealment due to their expectations of discrimination and negative parental reactions, all of which contribute negatively towards their health and well-being (Rothman et al., 2012).

Stattin and Kerr (2000) argue that child disclosure yields the best outcomes for becoming aware of concerns facing children and young people, which is reflective of their role as 'information managers' within the protectionist agenda (Tilton-Weaver and Marshall, 2008). This exposes a powerful contradiction within safeguarding, as abuse disclosures are simultaneously dependent on the child disclosing abuse as quickly as possible, but also rely on a surveillance pedagogy which minimises their voice. Moore (2013) effectively identifies sexuality as a key area in which this occurs, as young people's participation in decision-making processes are excluded, due to assumptions of sexual immaturity and a lack of competence. This creates a knock-on effect when concealing information, as young people recognise the alliance which exists between parents and other pedagogues:

> Martin: "Can you think of any adult in your life you would feel comfortable talking to about sexual harassment online?"
>
> Callum: "No I cant really think of anyone I would tell."
>
> Martin: "Any reason why you would not trust somebody such as a teacher?"
>
> Callum: "Am not really that close to any of them to feel comfortable doing it."
>
> Martin: "So you would feel comfortable telling them if you had a trusting relationship with them?"
>
> Callum: "Yeah but I would still be careful with what I say because they need to report things like that."
>
> Martin: "How would that impact what you tell them?"
>
> Callum: "I would have to think how much I can see [say] before its no longer just a chat that is private. You can only say so much before it escalates and they have to tell the police and your

parents and everyone ends up finding out. You would not stay in the closet for long with all that going on."

Martin: "Would it make a difference if your parents would not find out?"

Callum: "Yeah a big one... would still need to know if they have to report to police before telling but would help knowing my parents wont find out if I did decide [to tell]."

Callum identifies a further consequence of the substantial differences between parents and young people regarding the extent of parental authority, as the disagreements between what each group think they have a right to know (Rote and Smetana, 2015) impacts the perceived ability of young people to disclose issues of the personal domain with pedagogues outside of their family unit. As acknowledged above, issues of sex and sexuality are at the forefront of young people's concerns when guarding their personal domain, and such anxieties are considerably heightened for closeted LGBQ young people navigating a heteronormative surveillance pedagogy. Chan, Bradford and von Bank (2015) refer to young people as autonomy seekers when protecting their privacy, whereas their right to autonomy is a dynamic process which is subjected to contestation and challenge by the alliance between parents and other authority holders. This has a clear impact on young people's interactions with other pedagogues, as they demonstrate competency in recognising how the adult's safeguarding obligations limits their capability to offer assurances of privacy and confidentiality. In the above extract, Callum outlines how a private discussion between him and a teacher could potentially escalate into the police and parents being informed, and the perceived inevitable consequences this would have on outing him. The latter part of the dialogue offers a compelling insight into how the removal of barriers would impact his engagement with disclosure processes and indicates the decisional balance which he and other participants must navigate when considering whether they would report a concern.

This decisional balance is a vital consideration for stakeholders within the safeguarding agenda to acknowledge, as the perspective obtained from the participants shows the profound differences which exist between the dominant anxieties of parents and young people. Adult-centric understandings of harm and risk are primarily focused on 'stranger danger' narratives, whereas closeted LGBQ young people are instead weighing up whether the loss of control over their closeted identity status would create an even worse situation for them because of their disclosure:

Isaac: "what if you have homophobe parents? they get told you get kicked out and your in a worst situation"

David: "Not knowing how my parents will react to me being gay is what would worry me most about telling someone... I guess it depends what I think would turn out worse"

The loss of control over the management of their identity, as well as exposure to negative reactions and consequences, are extensively documented as being the most significant risks associated with sexual identity disclosures (D'Augelli, Pilkington and Herschberger, 2002) and are dominant anxieties which are expressed by Isaac and David. These anxieties are further complicated by the risk of forced outings that represent a loss of control over their right to privacy, due to privacy needs being overlooked by heteronormativity within the safeguarding agenda, as well as by its privileging of a parent's right to know. Anxieties surrounding negative reactions to a disclosure often focus on fears of confrontations, self-shame, and the breakdown of familial relationships (Rosario, Schrimshaw and Hunter, 2009). These are evident from the experiences above, with Isaac and David both expressing fears which fall into these categories. In Isaac's case, he especially refers to the consequences of the breakdown of familial relationships and the potential impact this would have on homelessness. When taking these factors into consideration, it offers compelling and urgent insights into the anxieties closeted LGBQ young people have, and it becomes understandable to see how safeguarding procedures present the participants with extremely difficult barriers because of its failure to consider family rejection as a form of child domestic abuse. Internet safety guidelines are just as culpable for perpetuating these barriers, as they consistently emphasise to children and young people about the importance of disclosing to a parent or other parental figure if they feel in danger. This approach poses considerable problems when those adults/pedagogues operate in alliance to sustain an adult-centric agenda which privileges a parent's right to know, at the expense of limiting a young person's right to privacy and confidentiality.

Nevertheless, the participants did offer a perspective which attempted to redress the challenges posed by the current decisional balance participants would undertake when considering whether to disclose. This perspective offered by Emily was not only agreed upon by many other participants on the discussion board, but it also has precedence within the UK:

Emily: "I would be more likely to report if I could decide who they could tell. If my safety is most important they should respect my wishes and not create new problems for me ."

Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines are important factors to consider alongside Emily's position[143], as they represent existing approaches in law to recognise young people's capacity to make decisions on matters related to sex and sexuality. Although these would not extend to affording young people the right to disclose sexual abuse/harm without confidentiality being broken, they do offer examples of how young people can make informed, competent decisions without parental involvement being beneficial or needed[144]. However, these frameworks are largely restricted to specific medical interventions, in which a child is still required to 'confess' to a medically qualified adult who is empowered to assess whether they meet the standards to be afforded with a recognition of their competency and rights. Duffin (2007) demonstrates the benefits of mediating concealment by providing LGBTQ+ patients with a tailored clinic which specifically addresses their privacy and confidentiality anxieties. The outcomes of this are that closeted adults who have been victims of sexual abuse and violence have been offered a specialised service to make disclosures, within a system which provides them with control and support over how that disclosure is handled. Whilst this is a service offered to adults, it demonstrates the effectiveness of redressing the decisional balance which closeted individuals are forced to undertake and offers a potential approach for listening to the needs and voices of young people, subsequently making safeguarding processes more accessible and effective. As Racz and McMahon (2011) identify, disclosures are the most effective way of obtaining knowledge when safeguarding groups, and it consistently produces better outcomes in comparison to methods which seek information using solicitation and control.

8.4 Heteronormativity in the physical sphere

The impact of heteronormativity is the driving force of the anxieties that closeted LGBQ young people have when perceiving an inability to disclose, or when resisting the deployment

[143] These are not without their limitations, however, as they still attempt to encourage the child to inform and seek the permission of their parent(s), and a health professional will break confidentiality if they believe there is evidence of coercion or exploitation. They are also based on developmentalist assumptions about maturity, and it is the adult that decides if the young person is 'mature' enough to understand the consequences of their actions.

[144] The power of the adult is nevertheless still embedded within these legal approaches, as an adult is still required to use knowledge from developmental models to assess whether maturity is possessed by the child.

of safeguarding strategies which are designed to support a parent's right to know about their personal domain. These ideologies are embedded into the restrictive regulatory frameworks which young people are subjected to in their physical sphere (Alldred and David, 2007), and the surveillance apparatus designed to instil bodily docility (Foucault, 1977) is at its most dominant within the institutions in which children are contained. The intersection of two distinct positions - the unquestioning right for parents to know about their child's personal domain, and the heteronormative understanding of children's needs - creates a significant barrier for closeted LGBQ young people. The agenda fails to acknowledge the rights of the child to be closeted, the safety this provides them, and the potential limitations of a parent's acceptance of their identity if outed. The safeguarding approach inadvertently positions itself as posing a bigger perceived threat to the safety and well-being of young people than the dominant risks which they are trying to manage through its surveillance:

> Jonathan: "… there are lots of ways to be careful and private when using social media and you just need to be aware of that… I worry more about being outed than dangers online I can control… once your out there is nothing you can do to control that and thats worse than having to block a perv or keep a profile private… you can control what you do and post online but all of thats lost irl [in real life]."

The concern expressed by Jonathan highlights the heightened scrutiny which closeted LGBQ young people have of surveillance strategies and is evident across participant's experiences within the surveillance chapter. Such findings are not isolated to this thesis either, as Moore and Reynolds (2018: 239) outline that "there has been considerable research to suggest that online spaces are considered safer than offline spaces for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth", as it provides a perceived safe space for these young people to explore issues around identity politics which is excluded from their heteronormative formal schooling. By considering these needs, participants highlight the safety concerns which closeted LGBQ young people consider to be most pressing. These are profoundly different to the dominant anxieties which parents and other pedagogues have, resulting in the concerns of both groups conflicting with each other. As a result, the online safeguarding approach pursues an agenda which creates threats to the safety and security of closeted LGBQ young people, and its failure to acknowledge this potentially risks solving one perceived threat at the expense of instigating others:

Louis: “i dont think i would be kicked out but it would cause arguments… my mum is religious and thinks its a sin.”

Lewis: “… the closet lets you prepare for all bad reactions… if you prepare for the worst anything less than that is a good thing.”

The lack of consideration given to homophobia and biphobia amongst parents reflects a significant flaw when relying on parental knowledge and interventions as the overarching strategy for protecting children[145]. This approach fails to consider the conditionality which may be attached to the information that parents find out about their child, instead assuming that their right to know will be met with positive actions by the parent to mediate the safeguarding concern and protect the needs of the child. However, as participants have shown at varying stages of the analysis, including by Louis and Lewis above, failing to consider a child’s fear of family rejection is a flawed concept when critiquing the heteronormativity embedded within safeguarding practices. Seidman (2004) acknowledges that the closet is a necessary reality for LGBQ young people living in a heteronormative society, as it provides them with the necessary safe space to ascertain potential reactions by family and friends. It is not surprising that being contained in these heteronormative institutions triggers concealment methods to protect themselves, as young people are particularly dependent on their family and school to access basic amenities such as food, shelter, and education (Hillier and Harrison, 2007). The ability to access these without further challenges are at the forefront of their anxieties about coming out or being outed, as their lived experiences show that they feel their access to these crucial institutions (and the amenities they provide) would be threatened if their same-sex attractions became known[146].

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[145] The dominance of ‘stranger danger’ anxieties outlined in the CDA chapter demonstrate the extent to which the nuclear family unit functions as a contained safe space for protecting children from danger. This overlooks the prevalence in which familial abuse occurs, as the child’s likelihood of knowing the perpetrator of abuse undermines a central tenet of parental involvement within effective safeguarding. This can be mediated by the child disclosing familial abuse to other adults, but the data has also highlighted that these parental figures are often treated with suspicion too by closeted LGBQ young people.

[146] Research by the Albert Kennedy Trust (2019) shows that these anxieties are merited, with 24% of homeless youth in the UK identifying as LGBT. Of that 24%, 69% reported family rejection, abuse and violence as being contributing factors to their lack of stable shelter. This raises critical questions about the roles and responsibilities enshrined within heteronormative adult-child power dynamics, with there being clear causes of concern about relying on a safeguarding approach which fails to account for homophobia within familial hierarchy.

8.4.1 Forced Outings

Containment within the family presents clear anxieties about the consequences of being outed, but education reflects another domain where anxieties are dominant too. Alongside familial concerns about relationships breaking down, similar fears are often expressed about the impact 'outing' has on relationships amongst school peers (Diamond and Lucas, 2004):

> Harry: "i cant be out at school… guys wud worry i fancy them and say horrible things… prob wud make friends uncomfortable 2."

As Harry identifies, concerns with homophobic or biphobic bullying from peers, and the breakdown of peer friendships, are dominant fears for young people navigating heteronormative discourses in education. Seidman (2004) specifically identifies schools as an institution which are susceptible to heightened discourses of heteronormativity and homophobia because of its occupants being strictly contained and regimented within it. Such institutions have been designed to regulate occupants who are seen as susceptible to corrupting influences. Despite homonormativity legitimising the 'normal gay' within wider society, historical discourses of homosexuality as an adult-only behaviour/identity still prevents sexual minority identities being a legitimate social grouping within the school population. Instead, homophobia represents one of the prevailing discourses used to reinforce a heterosexual, masculine identity amongst its male occupants. Therefore, the impact this gender policing has on closeted LGBQ young people is apparent, with the heterosexual beneficiaries of the school hierarchy exercising considerable power as hierarchical observers. This results in bodily docility being achieved across all the institution's occupants, by forcing closeted LGBQ young people to engage in a concealed identity performance. As with anxieties regarding the impact of being 'outed' within the family household, there are also statistics available showing the risks posed to LGBQ children in schools[147].

The emphasis from participants about the dangers posed by the physical sphere reflects the prevalence of heteronormativity within it. When online, young people instead benefit from disinhibition, allowing them to feel empowered to manage online risks and subsequently creating a regulatory conflict with parents. Young people seek to preserve their online sphere by taking responsibility for their own safety, whereas parents seek to intrude upon it to ensure it is as strictly regulated as their physical sphere. However, the experiences LGBQ young

[147] See Stonewall's School Report (2017) and Teachers' Report (2015) for more information.

people have in their physical sphere are perceived to be of a considerably greater threat to them, and so significant resistance covertly occurs when attempts are made to intrude on the privacy and safety they have acquired from their online sphere. This creates the contradictory dilemma whereby the safeguarding apparatus intended to protect them instead ends up being perceived as the biggest threat to their safety and well-being.

8.5 Gendered safeguarding

The final implication of heteronormativity within online safeguarding is the effect it has on gender policing for young people. This is because heteronormative ideology underpins social hierarchy within society, and this allows it to set the boundaries of normality when defining desirable gender roles (Habarth, 2014). As this ideology is embedded into the pedagogisation of children's sex, gender norms play a crucial role in categorising behaviours, identities, and information as 'appropriate' and thus permissible to nurture into children (Renold, 2005).

> Jonathan: "… [my parents] have never asked look at my phone and trust me."
>
> ----
>
> Grace: "the main reason I clear my search history is because I dont trust my dad not to spy on me… he says he does not pester my brother as much as me because hes older but thats bs [bullshit] ive never once saw hiim [him] ask my brother who hes talking to but he asks me all the time."

These extracts by Jonathan and Grace illustrate the gendered differences which are observable in how females and males are permitted to exercise agency. For Jonathan, heteronormativity provides him with a heightened level of trust because of his closeted identity providing him with the rights of a presumptive heterosexual male. In contrast, such rights are not provided to Grace, whose gender results in noticeably less agency and privacy than her male peers because of her being seen as being at greater risk. Her experience specifically acknowledges this discrepancy by comparing the surveillance pedagogy she is monitored by, in comparison to the greater freedoms provided to her older brother. Moore (2003) identifies that because young boys are desired to perform a masculine identity, a regulated protoplay of their heterosexual identity is permitted within dominant constructions of pre-sexual childhood. Due to this, safeguarding strategies perpetuate this patriarchal

inequality by reinforcing dominant heteronormative ideals about sexually expressive masculinity and sexually passive femininity. This causes parents to be more vigilant in regulating the sexuality of young girls, as these behaviours are constructed as posing a greater threat to a normative gendered social order (Hinshaw and Lee, 2003).

> Joe: "I have never caught my parents trying to spy on me but I always delete my history to make sure they dont see anything... I think they trust me and my brother to be responsible."

The experiences of male participants indicate the increased trust which is placed upon them to use the internet without overt methods of surveillance. The analysis has discussed the conditionality of this privacy, as well as attempts to covertly minimise the perceived loss of control adolescence brings to pedagogical surveillance, but there is nevertheless a clear movement towards greater autonomy and freedom expressed by the male participants. Existing research has documented that high school age boys are consistently more likely to report decreased levels of parental intrusion and surveillance compared to their female counterparts (Laird et al., 2003). Despite this, the heteronormative nature of this agency and autonomy is conditional on their closeted status continuing to provide them with a presumptive heterosexual identity to hierarchical observers. Without this, they would be stripped of the limited sexual agency and autonomy which is afforded to their male heterosexual peers, as they would no longer enjoy the sexual citizenship rights provided by a heteronormative social order:

> Martin: "In what way would coming out impact your internet access?"
>
> Ben: "my dad wud be worried about what i was doin he wud not like me bein on gay sites."
>
> Martin: "Why do you think that would worry him?"
>
> Ben: "prob think thats causing it and is confusin me... he thinks the internet is full of nad [bad] men and wud worry im talkin to them."
>
> Martin: "Do you think you would still be able to use the internet without being supervised?"
>
> Ben: "doubt it he wud be to afraid of weirdos."

Ben has identified the unequal way in which non-heterosexual men are regulated within a heteronormative social order, and the impact of this on the categorising of 'appropriateness'

for young people's socialisation. The historical legal context of male homosexuality in the UK illustrates the fixation that law and society has had on treating gay men as a sexual threat. The Criminal Law Amendments Act 1885 specifically targeted gay men when defining illegal same-sex sexual activities. Even when homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967, the law sought to maintain heightened restrictions and regulations for them in comparison to their heterosexual peers. The age of consent exemplifies this, as the Sexual Offences Act 1967 only permitted sexual activities between two individuals of the same-sex who were aged 21 years or older, and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 first rejected a proposed amendment to equalise the homosexual age of consent, before accepting a compromise reduction to 18 years of age. When decriminalising homosexual acts, these have focused on regulations of male sexual activities, whilst same-sex acts between women were largely ignored and treated as non-existent within societal discourses.

Heteronormativity and homophobia have had a detrimental impact on all sexual minority social groupings, but gay men have been subjected to a stronger societal prejudice compared to lesbian women (Bettinsoli, Suppes and Napier, 2019). Ray and Parkhill (2020) attribute this to dominant anxieties regarding the threat posed by gay men to a patriarchal social order. First, the existence of gay men as a legitimate social constituency causes heterosexual men to fear a shift in ideology away from an arbitrarily set social hierarchy from which they disproportionately benefit. This is because their acceptance is seen as posing a destabilising threat to the patriarchal structural preferences provided to heterosexual males within British society. Second, they threaten the hegemony of maintaining a fixed ideology of masculine characteristics as a natural norm for appropriately socialising young males, thus further threatening the exercising of dominance in socio-sexual interactions and relationships. Consequently, the influences of patriarchy within socialisation and safeguarding demonstrates that regulated expressions for young males are only permitted to perform a heterosexual, masculine identity. By concealing their true attractions from pedagogues, the rights of closeted males are not only unequal compared to their heterosexual male peers but are more aligned to the regulations imposed upon females. This is due to the sexual agency of women and gay men being subjected to heightened regulatory discourses because of their perceived threats to patriarchal social order, and these are reflected in the normative ways the safeguarding agenda seeks to nurture 'age appropriate' behaviours from children and young people.

Hayley: "one time a guy friend from school messaged me and my dad saw it and said about how I should focus on my school work and not on boys."

Ruby: "he [dad] still thinks im to young to date anyone."

Martin: "Are your siblings treated the same?"

Ruby: "kinda… he jokes with my sis he will embarrass any bfs she introduces to us…"

Martin: "What about your brother?"

Ruby: "no he [dad] just thinks its funny when he [brother] has a new gf every couple weeks."

Alia: "lost count how often my parents ask who am talkin to when I get a text it feels like they are always suspicious and tryin to catch me out."

The experiences of a surveillance pedagogy from the female participants demonstrates the consequences of the pedagogisation of children's sex and the hysterisation of women's bodies intersecting. Racz and McMahon (2011) found that research examining the deployment of safeguarding measures in the family unit consistently show girls being subjected to excessive monitoring compared with boys, and that the severity of this monitoring would alternate depending on their perceived misconduct. The above experiences by Hayley, Ruby and Alia are consistent with these findings, as female participants demonstrated experiences of surveillance which were disproportionately excessive in comparison to the closeted male participants, who benefited from presumptive heterosexuality by pedagogues. This homogenous regulation of all females reflects the broader social concerns regarding girls' exposure to, and engagement in, behaviours which heteronormative ideology considers inappropriate and destabilising (Pettit et al., 2007). To sustain these unequal power structures within gender relations, the safeguarding agenda perpetuates normative constructs by portraying adolescent females as being at increased need

of protection (Pedersen, 2013). This subsequently legitimises pedagogues to subordinate female sexuality to protect both the female subject and the broader anxieties of the patriarchal social order.

However, Kerr, Stattin and Burk (2010) highlight that this ideological regulation undermines the efficacy of the safeguarding agenda, with increased parental solicitation resulting in increased conduct problems. This has been evident throughout the analysis, as the competency participants possess allows them to simultaneously deploy concealment strategies in their physical sphere, as well as circumvent the surveillance pedagogy imposed upon them by the online safeguarding agenda. However, by privileging heterosexual masculinity within societal hierarchy, the agenda inadvertently disempowers both groups within the study, albeit through different means. The male participants are forced to conceal their same-sex attractions if they wish to receive the full benefits of patriarchal power[148], whereas the female participants remain subordinated by virtue of their social positioning within a patriarchal society. The consequence of these gendered power relations is that the safeguarding agenda fails to acknowledge these factors when developing guidelines and processes of disclosure. Instead, they privilege the right of parents to know about their children's lives, and inadvertently increase the vulnerability of closeted LGBQ young people by attempting to encroach upon their personal domain using heteronormative regulations.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified how the online safeguarding agenda is constructed to perpetuate and sustain heteronormative ideology within societal power structures. This creates a clear clash between the dominant anxieties of pedagogues and closeted LGBQ young people respectively. With adults focused on sustaining young people's containment within a surveillance pedagogy, closeted LGBQ youth are focused on their dominant concern of protecting their personal domain from unwanted intrusion to avoid being outed prematurely. These differing understandings of threat have consequences on how communication, restriction and supervision strategies are deployed in the online sphere, with participants actively having to undermine the efficacy of these safeguarding tools as a way of protecting

[148] This is not to suggest that gay men are unable to benefit in any way from patriarchy. As Connell (2005) illustrates, even effeminate gay men have access to some of the benefits of male privilege. This allows them to benefit from patriarchy more so than women can, despite not enjoying full access to such benefits because of their hierarchical masculine positioning.

themselves. Additionally, participants demonstrated a clear awareness of the limitations of using a coming out support community for support, as the organisation's legal duties meant that it had to align itself with homonormative ideology to operate. The consequences of this meant that even in a safe space for exploring their identities, participants still had to manage their online performativity carefully to avoid triggering a mandatory report. As online safeguarding is developed and sustained by heteronormative ideology, the disclosure processes which they recommend are perceived to be wholly incompatible with the needs of closeted LGBQ young people, again demonstrating a consequence of the differences between pedagogues and closeted youth. By failing to take their privacy needs into account, participants reported that the implications of disclosing were often seen as having more dire consequences than any perceived online threat which might cause them to consider needing to disclose a concern to an adult figure. Anxieties centred around fears that disclosing would result in the breakdown of familial and peer relationships, as well as jeopardise access to basic amenities, such as food and shelter. This meant that participants would have to engage in a decisional balance regarding whether the threat from the online sphere was more severe than the consequences it could have in their physical sphere. As the guidelines fail to consider the impact of homophobia, the disclosure of this to a parent was perceived to risk creating an even bigger safeguarding dilemma for them to weigh up. Finally, the impact of gendered safeguarding was also discussed to outline how heteronormative ideology within safeguarding simultaneously disempowers females and males, albeit in different ways. The consequence of this is that both groups are subordinated within safeguarding, resulting in their closeted status being vulnerable to 'outing' because of this heteronormative agenda attempting to encroach on their personal domain.

Conclusion

9.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by offering summative responses to the research questions. I also provide reflections on the limitations of this research project, and areas of future research which can be conducted to strengthen knowledge of this topic.

9.1 Answering the research questions

In this section, I will briefly summarise how the findings have addressed each of the four research questions across the four data analysis chapters.

1) **How are protectionist discourses embedded into child internet safety guidelines?**

The situational context in which guidelines are produced and distributed is of vital importance when understanding how protectionist discourses are embedded into them. These documents are part of a broader social practice to protect children and one of many strategies stemming from child-specific legislation and social policy. Their primary intent is to encourage constant control and surveillance over children, which is evident from the adult-child power dynamics and heteronormativity embedded into their recommendations. This allows for protectionist discourses to be naturalised within the text, ensuring these documents are ideologically consistent with broader social practices within UK child protection.

Adult-child power dynamics are evident across all three levels of the CDA's analysis, with adults textually identified as the subject of the text who is being spoken to, as well as being attached to relational processes which associate their roles and responsibilities with assumptions of safety. In contrast, children are only textually spoken about as objects of control, with relational processes inferring that their agency must be understood from a position of risk and danger, thus reinforcing dominant developmental assumptions. At the discursive level, utterances and coherency markers define the scope of a parent's safeguarding duties via instructional discourse, which function alongside interdiscursive imagery that consistently invokes specific tones to depict children's behaviour. Whenever a child is within the presence of an adult, the tone portrays them as appearing happy, healthy, and safe because of the protection from the adult. If a child is alone, imagery relies upon dark tones to construct danger narratives, with stranger danger discourses heavily utilised to reinforce negative consequences which may arise if parents fail to protect their children.

Heteronormativity reflects a key social practice within the successful integration of protectionist discourses into the guidelines. This is because the developing child construct is sustained by heteronormative bodies of knowledge. Relying upon these gendered understandings of young people's pre-sexual status has inevitable consequences for how adults use their power to deploy specific surveillance strategies. Due to this, young girls are more likely to be subjected to stricter protectionism within online safeguarding. This is not only evident from the CDA but also from the participatory analysis. Female participants disclosed being more likely to be subjected to more invasive surveillance promoted by these guidelines – restriction and supervision – whereas male participants were more likely to report being subjected to communication from parents.

Additionally, the pedagogisation of children's sex was wholly apparent throughout the CDA, which had considerably impacted many of the barriers which participants went on to report when discussing the challenges of maintaining their privacy or feeling able to report internet-initiated abuse. This is due to the intersecting of adult-child power dynamics and heteronormative socialisation privileging a parent's right to know. This protectionist right is so naturalised into the guidelines, and broader social practices within children's safeguarding, that critical considerations regarding its implications are not made. The guidelines instead demonstrate their unquestioning alliance to sustaining the adult-child power dynamics on which child protection is built. Effective safeguarding remains intrinsically linked to a parent's efficacy in maintaining constant control and surveillance, and through this knowing as much about their child as possible. I have, however, highlighted the consequences of this for closeted LGBQ young people. By failing to critically consider the ramifications of homophobia and family rejection on a child's well-being, protectionist discourses within the guidelines instead legitimise a system of surveillance which would out them prematurely.

2) **How does the internet allow closeted LGBQ young people to circumvent information barriers imposed by parents and parental figures?**

The construction and maintenance of a 'proper' socialisation throughout childhood has been significantly challenged by the internet. Whilst safeguarding practices aspire for absolute control over the information children and young people access, such restrictions have presented logistical challenges for parents and parental figures when attempting to regulate the online sphere. For this reason, closeted LGBQ young people have been able to transgress the imposed limitations of their heteronormative childhood. Adult claims of appropriateness

no longer become the sole means for determining access to information, and so the incompatibility of a heteronormative socialisation for LGBQ individuals is replaced by inclusive information and resources which they have sought out online.

Outside the control of parents and parental figures, LGBQ young people become agentic producers of their own socialisation so that they are able to access inclusive sexual health information and resources. Heteronormativity within schools requires a performativity which limits the ability to ask questions and seek out content during RSE without it jeopardising the concealment of their closeted status. These dramaturgical concerns relate to identity policing within schools, which invoke developmental, heteronormative understandings of gender performance to regulate young people. The heteropatriarchal power embedded into childhood institutions – family and school – consistently reinforce stereotypical gender roles regarding male masculinity and female femininity. To be seen or perceived to transgress this heterosexual matrix in any way results in a stigmatised identity, of which closeted participants were keen to avoid.

When online, their agency empowered a transformation in how they constructed and performed their virtual self. This included being able to access any information and resources, irrespective of adult-centric concerns of their 'inappropriateness'. Additionally, the ability for their online and physical selves to be kept separated within their respective spheres meant that participants deployed concealment strategies to maintain their privacy needs. A particular concern emerged from the risks that a parent could become aware of their online activities through surveillance. One of the prominent strategies for minimising this risk was to mimic behaviours desired by their parents so as to avoid scrutiny and suspicion. This, they argued, meant parents would be less likely to engage in further monitoring steps, preserving their privacy when performing their online LGBQ self.

A further consequence of circumventing regulations of the physical sphere was that the safeguarding role of the parent became diminished. This places a considerable responsibility on young people as their own agentic producer, as this meant they singlehandedly had to manage their own online safety. One of the most significant challenges they faced was exhibited when discussing stranger danger narratives, as participants had a thorough understanding of dominant narratives used within childhood socialisation and used these to assess risk. This reflected a potential area of concern, as the stereotypes perpetuated by the older male typology only prepares children and young people for a specific type of online

risk, at the expense of ignoring other risks which occur at a higher frequency. These consequences highlight the competency of young people to comprehend and practice safety awareness transmitted to them in the physical sphere, but also highlight how narrow adult-approved safety strategies can be when relying on stereotypical typologies. Selective information transmitted by adults produced gaps in knowledge amongst young people when assessing risks, and those consequential gaps were then used by adults as evidence of their immaturity and incompetency. A further layer of complexity emerged in how closeted online performance requires identity concealment so as to keep the online and physical selves separate. Stranger danger narratives invoke stories of online predators lying about their identity and concealing information, but these behaviours also have clear overlaps with how closeted individuals would protect their privacy needs when seeking coming out support on ECCS.

3) **How do surveillance strategies promoted by child internet safety guidelines impact the maintenance and preservation of a closeted LGBQ young person's concealed identity?**

Within child internet safety guidelines, there are three surveillance strategies promoted - restriction, communication, and supervision - and each of these impact identity concealment in different ways.

Restriction: Content blockers are attempts to re-establish the boundaries of appropriateness which regulate children in the physical sphere. These tools restrict access to content seen as 'improper' by claims-makers when invoking developmental, naturalist understandings of children's needs. The extent to which overblocking occurs demonstrates the prevalence of anxieties when regulating access to information, and this issue is further compounded for LGBQ young people because of heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality within desired childhood socialisation. Attempts by young people to access such content, or to identify as LGBQ, are delegitimised as a 'phase', reflective of the immaturity and incompetency assumed of this period of life. When content blockers are enabled, closeted LGBQ young people have to find creative techniques for circumventing the blocking of content. The deployment of this strategy further complicates identity concealment because of its privileging of a parent's right to be alerted to successful website blocks. In some instances, parents will be notified when a website is blocked, presenting closeted individuals with the risk of being outed by these measures when overblocking inclusive sexual health content.

Communication: This strategy shows how adult-child power dynamics provide parents with the power to challenge and scrutinise a child's online activities. The guidelines place obligations on parents to take an active interest in their child's online usage, and the textual and discursive scope of the CDA have illustrated how linguistic devices are used to convey authority when questioning a child. Amongst participants, they reported having to be prepared for scrutiny, as any observed behaviour by a parent or parental figure could instigate questions. A common example cited was when a participant would be on their mobile phone, and a parent would ask who they are speaking to and how they know that individual. Performativity again becomes an important strategy used by participants to defuse situations, as they would provide answers designed to alleviate the concern. As an example, sending a message to another LGBQ peer would be communicated to a parent as texting a school friend, recognising this would be seen as an appropriate social activity by the parent.

Supervision: Overt supervision is most effective prior to teenage years, but the analysis highlighted participants still took steps to avoid being subjected to covert supervision by parents. By undertaking a desired performativity around their parents, they obtained conditional privacy when accessing the internet. Nevertheless, participants disclosed concerns about how this privacy would be tested at random times by parents, requiring them to manage access to their devices and the environment they use them in. They expressed concerns about ensuring online activities could not be traced, so could avoid covert supervision by deleting their web history and protecting their devices from being secretly accessed. The physical environment was also a contested space when navigating covert supervision, as they expressed concerns about how observable their screens were when using an internet-connected device. As yet another example, if a message was received on a mobile phone, participants reported this could jeopardise their privacy if a parent was in proximity to read the message. Although this surveillance strategy acknowledged limitations for overtly supervising older children, there were still clear examples of covert measures being taken which could jeopardise the closeted status of the participants.

These surveillance approaches reflect how the production of these guidelines are primarily influenced by adult-centric concerns about how effectively parents are able to police technology. This framework aligns with the ideological values which underpin UK safeguarding, as protectionism is considered to be effective when the child is being subjected to constant control and surveillance by a parent or parental figure. For this reason, the

production of these guidelines is not reflective of a desire to better understand children's needs when protecting them online. They are instead another extension of an overarching agenda which seeks to preserve adult-child power dynamics, whilst ensuring children remain subservient. As claims-makers have expressed considerable concerns regarding a perceived loss of control within the online sphere, these surveillance strategies reflect attempts to redress the balance in favour of adults once again. It is for this reason that they fail to provide any critical considerations about children's privacy rights. This has profound implications for closeted young people, as safeguarding approaches supposedly designed to protect them are instead designed to unquestioningly privilege their parents' right to know anything and everything about them.

4) **How does heteronormativity within online safeguarding impact a closeted LGBQ young person's ability to protect themselves?**

Adult-centric perceptions of children's needs within online safeguarding proved to be problematic when analysed alongside the participatory narratives. Sexual anxieties are particularly prominent within adult concerns for children's welfare, with the stranger danger narrative being one of the most persistent ways children are warned about these dangers. Whilst participants demonstrated clear awareness about these forms of online danger, it was not the most dominant concern at the forefront of their minds. Instead, participants prioritised their closeted status and expressed considerable anxieties about being outed. They were critical of surveillance strategies, believing they failed to consider their needs and had potential to jeopardise their concealed identity.

The consequence of this was that LGBQ individuals are further disempowered when engaging with online safety measures, in comparison to their heterosexual peers. Online safeguarding fails to meaningfully consider the importance of privacy needs, instead seeking to provide parents with as much information regarding their child's actions and behaviours as possible. By failing to consider homophobia and familial rejection as a safeguarding issue in its own right, the unquestioning privilege of parents' right to know, over a child's right to privacy, has profound implications on closeted young people's perceived ability to report abuse. Participants felt reporting abuse would inevitably lead to a loss of control over decision making and the dissemination of information, forcibly outing them as part of the safeguarding process. This results in closeted LGBQ young people having to engage in a decisional balance: they either disclose internet-initiated abuse to a parent or parental figure,

thus outing themselves in the process, or they attempt to manage it privately so that their concealed identity is preserved. The dominant concern of being outed meant participants would not feel comfortable reporting abuse if and when it occurred, compounded by their lack of confidence in safeguarding processes being able or willing to accommodate their privacy needs.

The impact of heteronormativity was also felt within the very organisation which seeks to be their safe space. The organisation's registration as a charity is contingent on its adherence to safeguarding procedures stipulated by the state, requiring it to behave in accordance with hetero/homo-normative standards. If the organisation became aware of one of its younger members being at risk of abuse or harm, they must report it to the relevant authorities, despite its organisational mission acknowledging the importance of privacy during identity exploration. Subsequently, a closeted individual could be outed against their will by the very community advertising itself as a safe space for those who are closeted. Furthermore, the impact of gender norms is apparent within online safeguarding efficacy, as females and males are inadvertently exposed to risks, albeit in different ways. For males, the permissibility of boys to engage in limited expressions of sexuality as part of masculine performance means they were more likely to be provided with greater freedoms when accessing the internet. In comparison, girls were more likely to be subjected to enhanced surveillance strategies, requiring them to undertake more elaborate concealment strategies to circumvent heightened surveillance. However, the inability of either group to feel comfortable reporting abuse meant that despite these gender differences, both were still inevitably marginalised by the heteronormative ideologies embedded within online safeguarding.

9.2 Reflections of the research

There are important limitations to this project which must be considered alongside its original contributions to knowledge, which will be illustrated in this section. Two of the limitations are applicable to the scope of this study, but also reflect two areas for further study which will be discussed in the following section.

9.2.1 Reliance on self-disclosure for maintaining the eligibility criteria

A trade-off of conducting virtual research is that protecting the quality of the data from participant deception becomes difficult[149] to achieve. Laursen, Little and Card (2012) state that a participant may deliberately choose to compromise the quality of data by submitting duplicate forms containing fabricated answers, or may provide false declarations to present themselves as meeting eligibility criteria for a study, knowing that the researcher lacks the means to validate this. Regarding duplicate participants, I argue the risk of this was minimal, as ECCS has rules regarding duplicate accounts and is able to detect these as part of its enforcement of the Code of Conduct. However, the eligibility criteria for the study were enforced through participants self-disclosing that they met them, and I lacked the means to validate such claims in any meaningful way. I argue this is a necessary trade-off so that my research design could follow the 'least invasive' principle when gathering data. I would further argue this risk too was minimised by ECCS's database, as individuals did participate via their registered accounts, which display basic demographic information such as age and country.

Whilst these are self-disclosed by the participant when registering the account, they cannot be altered after registration unless done so by a member of staff for the organisation. This meant that by recruiting participants who were established community members, I could ensure nobody had altered their identity so as to meet the eligibility criteria after the recruitment notice went live. In other words, the risks of deception which this project faced was no greater than the risk anybody faces when interacting with individuals in the online sphere. The measures which ECCS has to ensure consistency in people's online presentation of self, combined with the trust I placed in participants to be truthful, meant the research design took all of the necessary steps available to protect the quality of data. To have gone beyond this would have required more invasive forms of data collection, presenting participants with similar exclusionary barriers which they were critical of when talking about the challenges posed to them by online surveillance strategies.

[149] Any deception could also be part of the young person's identity experimentation as a closeted individual, rather than a deliberate and malicious attempt to jeopardise the quality of a researcher's data. A similar challenge was identified by Callum in the subheading 'Perpetuating typologies', page 169. He discussed the difficulty of using stranger danger narratives to identify a potential threat on a community designed to allow people to conceal their identities so that they can comfortably seek support regarding their non-normative sexuality.

9.2.2 The efficacy of child internet safety guidelines and associated abuse disclosure processes

The scope of this research does not provide suggestions for reforms to child internet safety guidelines, or any of the abuse disclosure processes promoted within them. Instead, this is an exploratory study highlighting barriers and areas of tension when surveillance strategies are examined alongside the marginalisation and privacy needs of closeted LGBQ young people. The data provides extensive considerations about how participants perceive existing strategies to be incompatible with their needs and wishes, but that is as far as the conclusions reach. As an exploratory study, it was important to establish if and how LGBQ young people perceive these guidelines to be effective at making them safe. Evaluating how the efficacy of these guidelines can be improved for the participatory group would require a separate piece of research.

9.2.3 Exclusion of groups

Whilst I have tried to be inclusive of diverse groups within childhood, decisions I made did result in the exclusion of certain groups for methodological purposes. One of the most apparent examples of this was the decoupling of trans* identities from the other collective groups who are defined within the LGBT+ grouping. It is vital to emphasise that the exclusion of trans* narratives is not to suggest that they are unworthy of offering their voices, or that the barriers examined are not applicable to their own experiences of exclusion, marginalisation, or oppression. On the contrary, this decision was taken because the research would not have provided them with the justice deserved when listening to their voices. The current scope of the research proved challenging to fit within the parameters of a doctoral research project, and to have expanded the inclusion criteria further would have placed considerable pressure on creating a viable piece of research. Although theory within the sociology of gender is utilised, this would have needed examining in much further detail to contextualise the intersecting barriers of exclusion which trans* young people experience. This would have risked diluting the depth and breadth of the data analysis for participant groups, minimising the impact of their narratives because of requirements to ensure each of the differing groups were represented. I instead argue that trans* identities are worthy of study in their own right when examining this topic, and their voices deserve to be heard with the same efficacy afforded to the LGBQ participants in this study.

A further area of exclusion is evident from the lack of broader considerations given to intersectionality amongst the participatory group. When examining the lived experiences of young, disabled bisexual people, Toft (2020) highlights that research involving non-heterosexual identities tend to collectively group LGBT+ together. The consequences of this are that key areas of intersectionality, such as homo/heteronormativity and ableism, go unchallenged as dominant forces. I concede this critique is evident within this research in two ways. First, the inclusion of bisexual participants does not lead to a critical examination of the specific barriers they face. The justification I put forward is that the data collection never sought out unique differences between homonormative (lesbian and gay) identities versus those within the collective grouping who challenge gender and sexuality binaries (bisexual). I instead highlight barriers which are reported across the collective grouping of LGBQ participants, and I draw upon bisexual narratives at relevant points to highlight areas of difference in how they approach identity concealment and performance.

Second, the research does inadvertently reinforce an ableist understanding of LGBQ+ identities because of the lack of intersectional considerations afforded to other identities within this collective grouping. A further critique put forward by Toft (2020: 1896) argues that research can be guilty of "not paying enough attention towards intersectionality and other aspects that affect the reality of coming out". To respond to this, I argue there are practical limitations which are present when conducting an original piece of exploratory research, and that maintaining strict boundaries to develop foundational knowledge enables these further considerations to be made in future research. There will inevitably be a wide variety of intersecting factors which create additional barriers for online identity concealment, the deployment of surveillance strategies, a perceived inability to disclose internet-initiated abuse etc. Toft and Franklin (2020) raise attention to one such example of this when talking about disabled, young LGBT+ people, whose experiences of discrimination, misunderstanding and non-acceptance are amplified because of the intersecting ways in which 'the phase' can be used to delegitimise their identity.

Other areas of intersectional considerations could be given to ethnicity, mental health, race, religion, suicidal ideation etc[150]. All of these reflect unique intersections which could expand

[150] Intersectionality helps contrast the multidimensionality in which non-heterosexual young people may experience during their own identity exploration. By focusing solely on LGBQ individuals, there is a risk that "the most privileged group members marginalise those who are multiply-burdened, and

on the knowledge produced by this study, but it would not be possible to examine them all within a single doctoral thesis. Instead, my approach reflects a research design which sought foundational knowledge of this issue, but which provides a pathway going forward to further examine how similar barriers impact other groups within childhood who possess other intersecting marginalised and oppressed identities[151].

9.3 Potential areas of future research

Based on the knowledge obtained and the limitations reflected upon above, I identify two areas of potential research which I could pursue for this topic:

9.3.1 Intersectionality and the wider applicability to marginalised sub-populations within childhood

The 'exclusion of groups' reflection offered insights into potential areas of future research for widening the scope of knowledge around this research topic, but I have chosen to reiterate it again in this section to argue how this project evidences the potential for this. The barriers which have been identified within the deployment of online surveillance strategies only make minor acknowledgements to intersectional factors when examining gender distinctions. To widen the scope of these barriers and challenges, further research on other marginalised and oppressed sub-populations within childhood would strengthen research knowledge on the efficacy of the UK's current approach to online safeguarding. Additionally, similar barriers exist outside of a sexuality context, as although coming out is often discussed within the framing of gender and sexuality, anybody who experiences stigma may undertake similar concealment strategies. As an example, a young, heterosexual male who is experiencing emotional ill-health and engaging in acts of self-harming may conceal this hardship from parents and parental figures[152]. This individual may use the internet to access support without

obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination" (Crenshaw, 1989: 140).

[151] There is also potential for this research to transcend the UK. Global, international perspectives would provide insights into how differing protectionist discourses contribute to the formation of online surveillance strategies in other countries. The impact these could have would also be profoundly different to the lived experiences of LGBQ individuals within the UK, particularly within the 72 countries which criminalise same-sex sexual activity. The Human Dignity Trust Organisation (2021) outline that there are also 11 countries which impose the death penalty for same-sex sexual activity, of which 6 of them (Iran, Northern Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen) still actively enforce this sentence.

[152] Although emotional and mental health are not identities in and of themselves, they can have the tendency to become a defining characteristic similar to an identity because of the prevalence of stigma

the knowledge of such figures and would have similar incentives for maintaining this concealment when navigating online surveillance strategies.

This research project has evidenced the benefits of examining intersectionality when analysing gender. It was this intersectional consideration which allowed for the lived experiences of female participants to be examined, which showed girls more likely to report stricter surveillance regulations online in comparison to boys. These findings showed that closeted lesbian and bisexual women had to undertake stricter concealment strategies to access online resources and support, because of the more scrutinous authoritative gaze they are subjected to. As this examination has produced such impactful knowledge of the topic, it provides a strong justification for obtaining a more thorough understanding of how different closeted groups of young people are impacted by online surveillance.

9.3.2 Young people's narratives when evaluating and improving child internet safety guidelines and abuse disclosure processes

My research highlighted the significant benefits of hearing young people's voices when understanding their needs, and adopting this approach within future research would help improve the efficacy of online safeguarding strategies. This supports Stattin and Kerr's (2000) claim that disclosures from children and young people are the most effective way of ensuring safe outcomes within safeguarding, but this can only be achievable if the group being protected are involved in research evaluating how to allow them to feel empowered and safe enough to report. Relying upon adult-centric assumptions regarding children's needs, or even only sampling young heterosexual people, would fail to capture the diversity which exists within childhood.

Future research needs to untangle itself from developmental, naturalist understandings of childhood, which perpetuate one-size-fits-all approaches within safeguarding. Instead, research must involve children when evaluating reforms to online safeguarding strategies, and the diversity of the child participants should reflect the diversity of young people which truly exists within society. Without doing so, future research will cease to have any meaningful benefit when trying to empower young people to feel safe online. Closeted

attached to them. Medicalised discourses will often elevate certain labels to become a defining quality for defining somebody's personhood, and Toft and Franklin (2020) highlight the negative consequences of medicalised discourses when understanding the lived experiences of young, disabled LGBT+ young people.

LGBQ young people would instead be left having to navigate the barriers which these strategies impose upon them, ironically making them more vulnerable to internet-initiated abuse and harm[153].

9.4 Outlining the key findings to ECCS

To conclude the project, feeding back to the community reflects an important step to outline what key findings emerged from the work conducted with the participants. As the research letter in Item G of the appendix states, ECCS has a vested interest in this area of research because of the dilemmas examined which it regularly has to navigate because of their safeguarding obligations. Therefore, feeding back to the community enables both the organisation and its community members to evaluate the role they have played in generating original contributions to knowledge, and to ascertain the research pipeline which has emerged from their collaboration with myself.

To feed back to the community, a document outlining the key findings has been developed for the organisation to disseminate to its staff and community members. This document is accessible as appendix item H and provides an outline of the three key areas of original contributions to knowledge. I further provide a brief outline of the future research needed to supplement this topic, which relate to topics which will continue to be of relevance and interest to the organisation's charitable mission and community member's well-being. For more information on how this project has fed back to ECCS, see Item H of the appendix on page 269.

9.5 Thesis Conclusion

This social constructionist research has examined closeted LGBQ young people's experiences of accessing an online coming out support community, whilst subjected to heteronormative, protectionist discourses within online safeguarding strategies. It has illustrated how online surveillance has been constructed to sustain adult-child power dynamics, and uses developmental, naturalist understandings of childhood to attempt to regulate young people's internet activities. This requires closeted LGBQ young people to undertake various concealment strategies and engage in stereotypical gender performativity so as to minimise the risk of being outed, but the ideologies on which the UK's safeguarding

[153] See page 210, subheading 'The dominant concern: being outed'.

agenda is built create unavoidable consequences for closeted LGBQ children and young people. By relying upon adult-centric understandings of children's needs, they fail to understand the importance of privacy amongst young people, ironically resulting in existing procedures leaving certain groups more vulnerable. To conclude this research, I argue that if online safeguarding is to address the barriers identified by the participants, it must put children's voices at the heart of future research when evaluating what changes it can make to better meet their needs. It must also recognise diversity within childhood, rather than relying upon one-size-fits-all models perpetuated by developmentalism. Without doing so, online safeguarding will continue privileging the rights of adults, rather than effectively protecting the very groups it intends to.

Appendix

Item A: Participant Information Sheet – Online Discussion Board

Edge Hill University

Participant Information Sheet – Online Discussion Board

Study: *Do child internet safety guidelines effectively protect closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning young people from online risks?*

Principal researcher: Martin Lewis, PhD Student (Department of Social Sciences)
21105359@edgehill.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Dr Allison Moore (Department of Social Sciences)
moorea@edgehill.ac.uk

You are being invited to part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please read this information sheet before deciding if you would like to participate. If anything is unclear, please use the above contact information for more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to examine how child internet safety guidelines used within online safeguarding impacted closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning (LGBQ) young people who are concealing their online activities from their parent(s) or guardian(s). This includes examining how and why you use the internet to access information; your experiences of being monitored, spoken to or watched by your parent(s)/guardian(s) when using the internet; and how concealing your activities and/or identity impacts your ability to manage online risks.

These topics will be discussed in a private discussion board on EmptyClosets.com. You will be granted access to this board if you consent to participate in the study and will be able to contribute to discussions alongside a maximum of 30 participants.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited as you meet the eligibility criteria for participating in the study. These criteria are:

- You are aged between 13 to 17 years of age
- You do not identify as heterosexual/straight
- You have not 'come out' to your parent(s)/guardian(s)

Participation is entirely optional and declining consent will not impact your account with EmptyClosets.com in any way.

Consent

If you consent to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form, which will be sent to you via Private Message (PM) or Email. This can be electronically signed, and it is your choice whether you wish your signature to be either your name or your EmptyClosets.com username.

This information will be privately stored on Edge Hill University's secure University server, and it will not be released or published.

Right to Withdraw

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time by ceasing participation in the online discussion board. Your contributions within discussions are entirely voluntary so you should avoid participating any further once you have decided that you wish to withdraw. You can withdraw from the study by contacting the principal investigator and informing them of your decision, and they will confirm that your access to the online discussion board has been revoked.

It is important that you are aware that there are limitations on withdrawing your discussion board posts. As this stage of data gathering is a group discussion, we may be unable to delete posts without it compromising the data of other participants who wish to continue participating. You should be mindful of this if you agree to consent to the study.

Confidentiality

Your data will be kept anonymous using pseudonyms and will be stored on Edge Hill University's secure server on a password-protected account. These steps will ensure that contributions you make which are analysed for the study cannot be traced back to you. The discussion board will also maintain strict privacy settings to ensure that only the principal investigator and participants can access the discussions.

There is a clear expectation that participants respect the privacy rights of other individuals. You should not discuss any information provided within the discussion board involving other community members. It is a condition of participation that you agree to respect the confidentiality of other participants.

It is important that you are aware that there are limits to confidentiality for safeguarding purposes. If any information you provide discloses that you or another person are at risk of immediate or significant harm, this information will be provided to the EmptyClosets.com staff team. They may act on this in accordance with their safeguarding procedures.

Results of the study

Any data may be used as part of a doctoral thesis and any subsequent journal articles which emerge from this. These will be publicly available, but any references to your data would be

anonymised using a pseudonym which will be assigned during data analysis.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be provided access to an online discussion board on EmptyClosets.com, and this will allow you to participate in discussions. The principal investigator will post a series of threads/questions to get discussions going, and you are able to respond to this question and other users if you wish. Other users also have the right to respond to your contributions, and the principal investigator may also ask you follow-up questions based on your contributions.

The discussion board will be open from Friday 14th December 2018 to Thursday 14th February 2019. You may join any time from Friday 14th December 2018 up until 31st January 2019, unless the maximum number of 30 participants has already been reached prior to you wishing to participate. There is an expectation that you participate in the discussions during his timeframe, but the frequency of contributions is dependent on each individual's availability.

Benefits and Risks

Benefits: The research is examining an important area of children's safeguarding, using the voices of a community which have largely been absent from consideration up until now. By participating, you will be able to provide insights into what your privacy needs are and what barriers you feel exist to being safe online under current safeguarding strategies. Your contributions would ensure that it is you who is listened to, rather than others making assumptions about your needs on your behalf.

Risks: It is likely that you will find many of the questions asked to be personal and highly sensitive. This includes information regarding your current sexual identity, details about your online and family life, and your perceptions and experiences of internet-initiated abuse. The staff team at EmptyClosets.com have approved this study and are working with the principal investigator to keep updated with its progress. If any of the themes explored upset or distress you in any way, the staff team are available to offer you immediate support.

Who can I contact to talk about the research?

If you wish to talk to an individual who is independent of the research, you can contact the Social Sciences Research Co-ordinator, Professor Mark McGovern at Mark.McGovern@edgehill.ac.uk.

Further Support

The EmptyClosets.com staff team have approved of this study and are aware of its sensitive nature. They are available to offer support at any time and can be reached either via Private Message, or by posting in the Ask The Staff forum.

Item B: Consent Form – Online Discussion Board

Edge Hill University

Consent Form – Online Discussion Board

Study: *Do child internet safety guidelines effectively protect closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning young people from online risks?*

Principal researcher: Martin Lewis, PhD Student (Department of Social Sciences)
21105359@edgehill.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Dr Allison Moore (Department of Social Sciences)
moorea@edgehill.ac.uk

Please read each of the following declarations and sign this sheet to confirm your agreement.

I confirm the following:

☐ I have read the Participant Information Sheet in full and understand all the information presented on it.

☐ I agree to respect the privacy of other members by not revealing their contributions to any other individuals.

☐ I understand how this information will be used, agree for my data to be anonymised using a pseudonym, and for it to be disseminated for research purposes.

☐ I can withdraw at any time but understand any contributions I make prior to withdrawal cannot be removed from the study.

☐ I am aware of the limitations to confidentiality and that anything I say which indicates a risk of imminent or significant harm may be shared with relevant authorities.

☐ Understanding all of the above, I wish to participate in the study so that I can be provided access to the discussion board.

To confirm your agreement to all of the above declarations, please electronically sign below. You may use either your real name or EmptyClosets.com username.

Participant Signature:

Date:

Please return your signed consent form to the principal investigator, either via Private Message on EmptyClosets.com or email at 21105359@edgehill.ac.uk.

Item C: Online Discussion Board Questions

Below contains a list of provisional questions used to initiate the online discussion board. Further questions were generated based on contributions made by participants.

1. How inclusive has your Relationship and Sex Education been of same-sex relationships?
2. How has the internet had a positive impact on your identity exploration?
3. What do you think is the biggest risk you face when using the internet?
4. What steps do you take to conceal your identity from your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
5. Have your parent(s)/guardian(s) implemented any restrictions on your internet access?
6. How does being closeted impact your ability to feel safe online?
7. What awareness of internet safety have you been given from family members or at school?
8. What would you describe as being the main advantage of using the internet for coming out support?

Item D: Participant Information Sheet – Interviews

Edge Hill University

Participant Information Sheet – Interview

Study: *Do child internet safety guidelines effectively protect closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning young people from online risks?*

Principal researcher: Martin Lewis, PhD Student (Department of Social Sciences)
21105359@edgehill.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Dr Allison Moore (Department of Social Sciences)
moorea@edgehill.ac.uk

You are being invited to part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please read this information sheet before deciding if you would like to participate. If anything is unclear, please use the above contact information for more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to examine how child internet safety guidelines used within online safeguarding impacted closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning (LGBQ) young people who are concealing their online activities from their parent(s) or guardian(s). This includes examining how and why you use the internet to access information; your experiences of being monitored, spoken to or watched by your parent(s)/guardian(s) when using the internet; and how concealing your activities and/or identity impacts your ability to manage online risks.

These topics will be discussed in a one-to-one virtual interview using a platform of your choice.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited as you meet the eligibility criteria for participating in the study. These criteria are:

- You are aged between 13 to 17 years of age
- You do not identify as heterosexual/straight
- You have not ‘come out’ to your parent(s)/guardian(s)
- You previously participated in the online discussion board for this research

Participation is entirely optional and declining consent will not impact your account with EmptyClosets.com in any way.

Consent

If you consent to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form, which will be sent to you via Private Message (PM) or Email. This can be electronically signed, and it is your choice whether you wish your signature to be either your name or your EmptyClosets.com username.

This information will be privately stored on Edge Hill University's secure University server, and it will not be released or published.

Right to Withdraw

You have the right to participate at any point from the interview date, including 28 days after the interview has occurred. To withdraw, please confirm this in writing to the principal investigator via Private Message or email, who will confirm that your data and personal information from this stage has been deleted. A reason does not need to be provided for withdrawing.

Confidentiality

Your data will be kept anonymous using pseudonyms and will be stored on Edge Hill University's secure server on a password-protected account. These steps will ensure that contributions you make which are analysed for the study cannot be traced back to you.

It is important that you are aware that there are limits to confidentiality for safeguarding purposes. If any information you provide discloses that you or another person are at risk of immediate or significant harm, this information will be provided to the EmptyClosets.com staff team. They may act on this in accordance with their safeguarding procedures.

Results of the study

Any data may be used as part of a doctoral thesis and any subsequent journal articles which emerge from this. These will be publicly available, but any references to your data would be anonymised using a pseudonym which will be assigned during data analysis.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to attend a virtual interview using a platform of your choice. You will also be able to decide whether you wish for the interview to be conducted via video call, audio call, or as text-only. This will ensure that your privacy needs are accounted for when allowing you to participate and it is entirely your choice which type of interview you wish to undertake.

If needed, the interview can occur over multiple days/weeks if time restrictions or privacy factors require an interview to be immediately stopped at any time.

Benefits and Risks

Benefits: The research is examining an important area of children's safeguarding, using the voices of a community which have largely been absent from consideration up until now. By participating, you will be able to provide insights into what your privacy needs are and what barriers you feel exist to being safe online under current safeguarding strategies. Your contributions would ensure that it is you who is listened to, rather than others making assumptions about your needs on your behalf.

Risks: It is likely that you will find many of the questions asked to be personal and highly sensitive. This includes information regarding your current sexual identity, details about your online and family life, and your perceptions and experiences of internet-initiated abuse. The staff team at EmptyClosets.com have approved this study and are working with the principal investigator to keep updated with its progress. If any of the themes explored upset or distress you in any way, the staff team are available to offer you immediate support.

Who can I contact to talk about the research?

If you wish to talk to an individual who is independent of the research, you can contact the Social Sciences Research Co-ordinator, Professor Mark McGovern at Mark.McGovern@edgehill.ac.uk.

Further Support

The EmptyClosets.com staff team have approved of this study and are aware of its sensitive nature. They are available to offer support at any time and can be reached either via Private Message, or by posting in the Ask The Staff forum.

Item E: Consent Form – Interviews

Edge Hill University

Consent Form – Interview

Study: *Do child internet safety guidelines effectively protect closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning young people from online risks?*

Principal researcher: Martin Lewis, PhD Student (Department of Social Sciences)
21105359@edgehill.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Dr Allison Moore (Department of Social Sciences)
moorea@edgehill.ac.uk

Please read each of the following declarations and sign this sheet to confirm your agreement.

I confirm the following:

☐ I have read the Participant Information Sheet in full and understand all the information presented on it.

☐ I agree for the principal investigator to record the interview to assist in generating transcripts, which he can use for research purposes.

☐ I understand how this information will be used, agree for my data to be anonymised using a pseudonym, and for it to be disseminated for research purposes.

☐ I can withdraw for up to 28 days after the interview has ended by requesting that any and all interview data be immediately deleted.

☐ I am aware of the limitations to confidentiality and that anything I say which indicates a risk of imminent or significant harm may be shared with relevant authorities.

☐ Understanding all of the above, I wish to participate in the study so that I can be provided access to the discussion board.

To confirm your agreement to all of the above declarations, please electronically sign below. You may use either your real name or EmptyClosets.com username.

Participant Signature:

Date:

Please return your signed consent form to the principal investigator, either via Private Message on EmptyClosets.com or email at 21105359@edgehill.ac.uk.

Item F: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Below is a list of questions across the four sections comprising the semi-structured interview. In addition to these questions, further questions were asked in follow-up to the points raised by the participants, and tailored questions for each section were also developed from triangulating their contributions from the online discussion board.

The purpose of these sections was to provide an overarching structure to follow when undertaking the interviews. Whilst each interview primarily had different questions tailored to the participant's experiences, the outlining of these questions help provide an understanding of the core questions to keep the interview structured towards relevant topics. By utilising these sections as the overarching structure, this helped ensure that the semi-structured nature of the interview still addressed the research questions of the study.

Section 1: Relationship and Sex Education offline

This portion of the interview examined participants' experiences of sex education, including the extent to which same-sex relationships and sexual activity were included within school. It examined the extent to which heteronormativity was evident within the curriculum and identified the barriers which participants felt existed to prevent them asking relevant questions which would make knowledge exchange more inclusive.

Core questions:

- Are same-sex relationships and sexual health include in RSE?
- Do you feel comfortable asking questions about sex and sexuality during lessons?
- Are there examples of homophobia you have experienced or heard during lessons?
- How supportive are teachers at challenging homophobia in school?
- How could RSE be improved for you?

Section 2: Reasons for using the internet

This section examined participants' reasons for using the internet and the benefits that it gives them when exploring their identity. It started by asking why they joined ECCS, and this was used to initiate a discussion about how they are able to access content, opportunities and social relationships which would otherwise be unavailable to them in their physical environment.

Core questions:

- Why did you join Empty Closets?
- How has meeting other LGBQ young people helped you better understand your own identity?
- How has the internet helped you to access resources which you would not have gotten from RSE?
- How does sex education online differ from the lessons you are given during RSE?

Section 3: Experiences of online surveillance

This section of the interview explored participants' experiences of surveillance strategies promoted by child internet safety guidelines. It examined what steps parents have taken, participants' perceptions of why they have been implemented, and the steps they have been required to take to preserve their closeted identity from these safety measures. Additionally, this section also examined participants' own perceptions of online dangers, and what steps they take to identify potential dangers and protect themselves from them.

Core questions:

- When accessing LGBQ content, have you ever nearly been caught by a parent?
- What do you think has influenced your parents to take steps to protect you online?
- What is the biggest danger your parents are most worried about when you access the internet?
- What steps do you take to ensure your parents cannot track your online activities?
- What dangers are you most concerned about when accessing the internet?
- How do you protect yourself from online dangers?

Section 4: Surveillance impacting privacy

This section examined how the deployment of surveillance strategies could potentially impact the closeted identities of the participants, and the effect surveillance has on creating barriers for protecting themselves. Based on their experiences, participants were asked either about their capability to report dangers they had experienced, or to speculate how they would consider this if such a danger materialised in future. In particular, they were asked to consider these alongside their current concerns about being outed.

Core questions:

- How does surveillance from parents impact your ability to maintain control over your closeted identity?
- How has joining ECCS impacted how safe you feel when accessing the internet?
- Have you ever felt in danger before from another person when using the internet?
- Would you feel able to report abuse to a parent or authority figure if you felt in danger?
- Are there any ways your closeted status impacts you from following advice you have previously been given on how to stay safe online?

Item G: Research Consent Letter from Empty Closets Community Services

February 28th 2018

Dr Allison Moore
Director of Studies
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Department of Social Science
Edge Hill University

Dear Dr. Moore:

I am writing upon request of Martin Lewis, Graduate Teaching Assistant and PhD candidate, with regard to his thesis research proposal to conduct research involving the online community of Empty Closets Community Services.

Our Board of Directors had previously received a request from Mr. Lewis to work with the Empty Closets community in conducting his research. The Board had approved the request and designated me to handle the logistics of the request and provide any necessary communications, review, and authorization to final review and approval to the project upon receipt of appropriate IRB documentation.

I have received and reviewed the Gatekeeper Information Sheet provided to me by Mr. Lewis, and reviewed the research protocol, including the purpose, methodology, participation, risk/benefits, and data collection/confidentiality information provided therein.

We have carefully reviewed the information provided, including the outlining of potential risks to members of our served community who are under the legal age of consent. The organization understands and is willing to accept the risk posed by this research, as we believe the potential benefit to LGBT teens and the LGBT community as a whole warrants the risks anticipated.

ECCS' leadership includes a licensed professional social worker and other research and mental health professionals, and as part of our mission, we have had protocols in place for a number of years to assess and manage risks among our community members, as well as protocols for addressing the types of issues (incidents that would trigger a mandatory report, for example) that might arise as a result of this research study.

Given that appropriate disclosures will be made to the subject population, and that a process for handling any such situations that should arise is documented in the materials provided to us by the researcher, we are comfortable that an appropriate process is in place to minimize and mitigate any potential risks or dangers to members of the community. We look forward to working with Mr. Lewis in conducting this research and completing his dissertation.

Accordingly, and with the consent and concurrence of the Empty Closets Community Services Board of Directors, I authorize the research study described in the ethical research proposal involving the EmptyClosets.com online community, and agree to our participation in the study as so described.

If you have any questions or require any further clarifications, I can be reached at the contact information provided below.

Warm regards,

Thomas V. White
Vice President / Co-Administrator
Empty Closets Community Services
chip@emptyclosets.com / 01-916-765-6951

Empty Closets Community Services 7250 Auburn Blvd #225 Citrus Heights, CA 95610 adminteam@emptyclosets.com

Item H: Research update for Empty Closets Community Services

Edge Hill University

Re: Research update for Empty Closets Community Services

Dear Empty Closets Community Services,

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding the research your community assisted me with during 2018/19 for the project titled: '"My biggest worry is being outed": The impact of heteronormative online safeguarding on closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning young people'. This letter contains a brief outline of the key findings from the research, and an overview of how your community members have contributed to a research trajectory which will be of crucial benefit to your community members and organisation.

First, I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to the staff members at ECCS who provided thorough and unwavering assistance and support throughout my research. Most importantly, I want to thank the community members who agreed to participate in the research, and who provided such honest and important insights during the discussion board and interviews. Their participation has contributed to an area of research which is wholly understudied and which they recognised as failing to meet their needs as they undertake their own identity exploration. It is because of their voices that a research agenda can now begin to further examine the barriers which they identified so that other closeted LGBQ young people in future can access the internet with the safety and privacy that they require.

Key findings:

- Importance of ECCS for identity exploration

The internet and communities like ECCS play a vital role in giving closeted LGBQ young people control over the information they wish to access as part of their identity exploration. There was widespread consensus amongst the participants that sex education in schools makes assumptions about young people only needing to know about heterosexual identities and relationships. Even when sex education attempted to include information on same-sex relationships and sexual health, closeted individuals could not ask questions without fear that this could out them to their peers. Communities such as ECCS play a vital role in filling this gap, as they enable closeted individuals to ask those meaningful questions, receive information and support which caters directly to their needs, and acknowledges the marginalisation and stigma which has caused young people to need that safe space.

- Incompatibility of child internet safety guidelines

The participants recognised that they were subjected to surveillance strategies from parents and other parental figures in their everyday life and had to undertake a variety of measures to try and protect their online activities. Whilst ECCS recognises the importance of privacy for its community members, an area of tension did emerge within the findings when participants discussed their concerns that the community staff may be required to report and out them. This reflects a paradox in which the organisation must operate: it works with a vulnerable community whose needs are largely ignored within child protection policymaking, but are nevertheless legally obligated to enforce safeguarding policies which clash with the needs of its community members. At present, further research is needed to address these barriers within policymaking, but the organisation should still be aware of this barrier within its everyday practices as it reflects an area of considerable concern for its community members.

- Inability to disclose internet-initiated abuse

The lack of compatibility from child internet safety guidelines and online safeguarding has the effect of causing closeted LGBQ young people to feel unable to disclose internet-initiated abuse. This is due to a perceived clash amongst the participants, as their biggest concern is preserving and protecting their closeted identity whereas they feel safeguarding privileges a parent's right to know about allegations of abuse from young people. The consequence of this is that the participants discussed facing a decisional-balance: they either report abuse and risk losing control of their closeted identity, or they manage the abuse privately so as to preserve their closeted status. As mentioned above, ECCS risk being seen by the participants as complicit in this dilemma, as your duty to protect your community members potentially requires them to be outed against their wishes.

Future research:

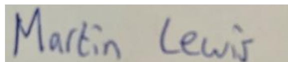
The participants have enabled an ambitious research agenda to be established from this project, and it is clear from their experiences that much more needs to be done to address the barriers which they have identified. Most importantly, they have highlighted that we must appreciate the diversity which exists amongst children and young people and make clear attempts to listen to their voices so that we can understand their needs when protecting them. Safeguarding must be a collaboration with these groups, rather than a process which renders them as passive recipients of steps taken by adults.

First, further research is needed to explore how young people who identify outside of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning grouping are impacted by these same issues. Most noticeably, trans* individuals were not part of this research, and I am sure you will agree that it is crucial that future research address this so that their needs can too be better understood. Second, the voices of these young people should be at the forefront of future research examining how to improve child internet safety guidelines and abuse disclosure processes. Their involvement in the research has shown that these individuals understand their needs better than anybody, and they can provide the strongest insights into the steps we can take to work collaboratively with them to protect them from harm and enable them to access the internet in the safe manner we all desire.

I am sure you will agree that the findings of such research would continue to have relevance to your organisation, and I hope that we can continue working together on such projects going forward for the benefit of everybody.

I would like to thank your staff and community members once again for their participation and support with the research. The doctoral thesis will be publicly available on Edge Hill University's research repository called 'Pure' (accessible at https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/services/pure/). Alternatively, any of your staff or community members are welcome to contact me at any time if they would like assistance in locating the published research.

Yours sincerely,



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