

***A Self-study into Developing Queer and Critical Pedagogies on Youth and  
Community Work Courses.***

*Final thesis submitted for Doctor of Education to Leicester University*

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## **Abstract**

### ***A Self-study into Developing Queer and Critical Pedagogies on Youth and Community Work Courses.***

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*This is a self- study (S-STEP) into interrupting and re-constructing heteronormativity via an integration of queer and critical pedagogies on youth and community work courses. It was conducted over three years and involved interactions with three student cohorts (over 200 people) and reflective conversations with ten colleagues. It was situated within a critical realist paradigm, making specific use of Archer's morphogenetic approach and her typology of reflexives as a heuristic tool. I make an ontological contribution to knowledge by illustrating how critical realism is a useful bridge between queer and critical pedagogy.*

*It found that 'coming out' is a legitimate method of interrupting heteronormativity, but needs to be a pedagogical act carried out co-currently with interrupting other social constructions and binary oppositions. It suggests that interrupting heteronormativity is most effective within the context of a whole course and wider team approach. There is a legitimacy and necessity of developing transgressive sexualities, especially heterosexualities.*

*I add to the literature by suggesting that interrupting and reconstructing heteronormativity also necessitates the development of pedagogical practitioners as dedicated meta-reflexives with intersubjective consciousness's. This combines elements of Orne's and Black's reconceptualising of Du Bois's original vision of double consciousness, as a negative de-centring concept, to being a useful, and necessary, device in an increasingly liquid modernity. I also expand Scrambler's, and Archer's different visions of a dedicated meta-reflexives. Intersubjective consciousness's can, by implications, only be held collectively. The group co-holding each other to account for the balance between stigma resistance and challenge.*

*Developing pedagogical practitioners necessitates co-created and co-held meta-reflexive liminal spaces that emphasise inter-subjectivity, encounter and working in the moment. These spaces need to be founded on principles of the need to de-construct and reconstruct pedagogical power and knowledge, and understandings of the public and private in pedagogical space.*

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*The study is dedicated to all those 'living in the shadow of masculinity'.*

## **Abbreviations**

LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer.

NOS – National Occupational Standards.

NYA – National Youth Agency.

QAA - Quality Assurance Agency.

PALYCW – Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work.

S-STEP – Self Study into Teacher Educational Practices.

TAG – Training Agencies Group.

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## **Chapter one: Introduction.**

*It (youth and community work) is seemingly naive, romantic, anti-intellectual and metaphysical, to say the least; a simplistic, pseudo-philosophical, incomplete mix of existential, phenomenological, Buberian and other metaphysical ideas! (Baizerman, 1989 p 1)*

I have been a youth and community worker educator in higher education for over fifteen years. I have taught at four institutions in this time, and been an external examiner for another five. Previously, I was a youth and community worker for 15 years. I would therefore call myself a youth and community worker, and my theoretical and pedagogical framework comes from this tradition. However, as Baizerman (1989) indicates, locating oneself within the canon of youth and community work is not unproblematic, it is both contested and contestable. This thesis can be read as an attempt to work through the theoretical framework of youth and community, and its praxis and pedagogy in relation to heteronormativity, bringing out some of its inconsistencies and tensions. However, my focus is much more specific than this.

According to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject benchmarks for the programme, I am meant to enable practitioners to enter into a community of practice (Wenger, 1999) that privileges a critical pedagogy based on the ideas of Freire (1973), hooks (1989, 1994) and others, to help them '*develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, connect knowledge to power and develop the ability to take constructive action*'. (QAA, 9.2). The nature of critical pedagogy is one of my major concerns and I would consider myself to be a critical pedagogue. I am therefore interested in exploring if, and how, I, and colleagues, enable spaces where critical pedagogy happens, in the hope that that creates conditions where it can happen elsewhere. Students undertake a number of placements and fieldwork experiences with young people and communities as an integral part of their learning.

My concern here is on the impact of my pedagogic practice, and my colleague's. This will largely be within institutional boundaries ie the classroom, and more widely in the corridors and social spaces. This outlines a further focusing of this study. It is primarily about my own experiences of improving my own pedagogic practice within a number of higher education institutions. This will be informed by the thoughts of colleagues who have taught on youth and community courses with me, and with some colleagues

in other institutions teaching the same subject, and students who have been, and are, on those courses. However, my primary lens and focus is my own experiences.

Focusing my concerns further, I educate practitioners as to the underlying principles of youth and community work, the nuances of which will be explored in some depth later. This includes a broad commitment to '*valuing each individual and their differences, and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others, while challenging oppressive behaviour and ideas*' (QAA, 1.6). The course is also meant to develop practitioners who can '*identify discrimination, oppression and/or exclusion and be strategic in developing interventions to tackle these in different situations*' (QAA, 7.2). One aspect of the content or curriculum of this is the nature of '*sexuality-based oppression*' (QAA, 4.5.2).

Youth and community work also has a tradition of the use of self as a pedagogic tool, both in its teaching (Kitto, 1988) and its practice. (Rose, 2005). Practitioners on our course are meant to be '*able to exhibit insight and confidence in managing themselves and draw on conscious use of self in working with others*' (8.4). I am a bi-sexual man. As such I am drawn to exploring the use of self in the study of sexuality and oppression. Overall then I wish to explore how I and others in the teams I have worked with, have been involved in 'interrupting heteronormativity' (Queen et al, 2004) including, but not exclusive to, my coming out. Linking the twin concerns of challenging heterosexist oppression and developing a critical pedagogy, I am drawn to some of the potentials of queer pedagogy, which, in the form I used, draws together some of the traditions of queer theory and critical pedagogy (Britzman, 1995, DeCastell & Bryson, 1993, Kumashiro, 2003, Leumann, 1998, Pinar, 1998) to critically examine processes of normalization and reproduction of power relationships, including in the classroom, and problematise presumed binary categories of the heterosexual and the homosexual within the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Hickman sees real potential for the combining of critical pedagogy and queer theory through queer pedagogy:

*Allied with critical pedagogy, queer theory cannot only tackle radical change for oppression based on sexuality and gender, but other forms of oppression.*  
(Hickman 2010 p81)

Taking Hickman's ambition further, I have explored whether this critical queer pedagogy gives us a wider framework for developing the 'conscientization' (Freire,

1973) necessary for practitioners to become adept in critical pedagogy more generally, challenging their received notions of ‘normality’ and social construction in other spheres. I will explore whether heteronormativity is a useful concept and site that gives leverage for opening up and deconstructing intersecting issues such as gender, race, class and faith.

The findings should be relevant to policy makers looking at other related courses, such as social work, and also shed light upon heteronormativity in other contexts in higher education. In terms of policy, sexual orientation policies in higher education granting equal status to people irrespective of sexual minority status have some way to go. In a survey of institutions in 2009, UCU concluded that basic guides to policy and procedures, supportive environments, internal engagement and monitoring in particular would be useful.

### ***Research questions***

In my research I wish to explore three themes, and several questions within these themes:

1. What are the dynamics of heteronormativity within teaching practices on youth and community work courses in a range of HEI institutions?
  - How does heteronormativity manifest in day to day interactions between staff and students, both formal and informal, within teaching practices?
  - How does heteronormativity on a structural level impact on teaching practices including curriculum and curriculum planning, assessment and pedagogic practices on youth and community work courses?
  - How do these experiences intersect with experiences of the wider institution's heteronormativity?
2. How can I, and the team, interrupt heteronormativity in our teaching practice and challenge wider notions of normality and social construction?
  - What contribution does the use of self, ie coming out, have to make towards interrupting heteronormativity?
  - What pedagogical strategies can I, and the team develop to challenge heteronormativity, including the use of self as a pedagogic tool?
  - How can queer pedagogy manifest in our teaching practice and how successful is it in challenging heteronormativity on youth and community courses?
3. Can we integrate queer and critical pedagogies within our teaching practices?
  - What are the tensions within critical pedagogy that queer approaches can make a contribution to alleviating?
  - What are the tensions between critical and queer pedagogies, theoretically and practically, given their different paradigms and epistemologies?
  - Can a queer pedagogy that challenges heteronormativity also challenge wider notions of normality on youth and community work courses?

### ***Structure of this study***

It is worth noting at this point the degree to which this is a queer study. Queer theory is an enormous and expanding field covering issues such as psychoanalysis, literary theory, linguistics, etc. I am being very specific in what I am going to draw on within queer theory – the intersection with pedagogy, and particularly critical pedagogy. Within that I am going to focus on the notion of heteronormativity and the idea of the heterosexual matrix, seeing them as a part of a greater hegemony that privileges a certain view of many social phenomena.

To queer, or queering, also functions at different levels. I could have queered the structure of this doctoral thesis, seeing the conventional structure of literature review, theoretical lens, methodology and methods, results and conclusions as artificial and binary, re-enforcing and re-inscribing a certain way of constructing knowledge and creating a certain boundary of what constitutes knowledge. I could also have queered my methodology (Browne and Nash, 2010, Kulpa and Liinason 2009, Warner, 2004), seeing such aspects as ethics, validity and reliability and even the binary way that research paradigms are presented, as in need of queering. While these perspectives have validity, I have not done that. I accept that in not doing so, I run the risk of re-inscribing certain boundaries and construction of knowledge, but I think that is another project. I have focused the site of my queering on the pedagogic practice that I was investigating. I have sought in my methodological approach, selection of methods, and in writing up my study, to be mindful of queer theory's critiques, but it was not my central project to queer these processes.

I locate this study within critical realism and this has important implications and consequences for my analytical approach and the recurring theoretical themes that run through the thesis. As well as defining my paradigmatic approach, I have used a number of concepts from critical realism in my analysis, primarily building on the work of Mary Archer (1995, 2000, 2003, 2010, 2012). I employed her morphogenetic approach to examine how heteronormativity has manifested and been worked with on the course. She believes it is possible to give empirical accounts of how structural and agential phenomena interlink *over time*. I have tried to analyse how structural and/or cultural factors provide a context of action for agents and investigated how those factors shaped the subsequent interactions of agents and how those in turn reproduce or transform the initial context of heteronormativity.

Also central, as an analytic tool, has been Archer's typology of reflectors, distinguishing between communicative, autonomous, meta and fractured reflectors. This has been useful both in analysing the kind of reflection that leads to certain manifestations of heteronormativity amongst actors on the course, and, in the case of meta-reflector, a characteristic for the reflective practitioner that we aim to co-produce. I then use Orne's (2013) and Black's (2010) reconceptualization of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1906), as an aim for how to reconstruct heteronormativity, along with concepts of stigma resistance (Goffman, 1959, 1963) and there being middle positions within heteronormativity, between acceptance and hostility.

In desiring an approach to conceptualising heteronormativity that is compatible with critical realism, I have found Herz and Johansson's (2015) model most useful in that they recognise the limitations of accounts of heteronormativity that either overemphasise the individual, and therefore ignore the structural, or over-emphasise the structural and ignore individual agency. Instead they say that 'people's everyday life, agency, and the social practices where they act, need to be the starting point of analysis' (Herz and Johansson, 2015, p1019). While I examine wider structural factors and the course in terms of curriculum and structure, it is as a context for my focus on these everyday interactions.

My pedagogical approach is also compatible with Herz and Johansson's (2015) approach, in that they advocate taking a visible and reflexive approach to exploring constructions of heteronormativity 'in which a potential space of reflexivity and political change involves both subjects and structures, homosexuals and heterosexuals and feminists' (ibid, p1020). Stemming from this, and using Archer's (2010) morphogenetic approach, I believe it is possible to work actively and creatively with heteronormativity. It is not enough to interrupt; an engaged pedagogue needs to also examine what constitutes an ethical becoming with reference to their sexualities. In this regard I have developed a number of features that could be useful for describing a pedagogical practice that intends to interrupt and re-construct heteronormativity. My thesis will develop these themes across the chapters.

- *Coming out is a legitimate method of interrupting heteronormativity, but needs to be a pedagogical act carried out co-currently with interrupting other social constructions and binary oppositions*

- *Interrupting heteronormativity is most effective within the context of a whole course and wider team approach.*
- *Within the team approach, there is a legitimacy and necessity of developing transgressive sexualities, especially heterosexualities.*
- *Interrupting and reconstructing heteronormativity necessitates the development of pedagogical practitioners with intersubjective consciousness's, co-produced and held between students and tutors.*
- *Developing pedagogical practitioners necessitates co-created and co-held meta-reflexive liminal spaces that emphasise inter-subjectivity, encounter and working in the moment.*
- *These spaces need to be founded on principles of the need to de-construct and reconstruct pedagogical power and knowledge, and understandings of the public and private in pedagogical space.*

Finally, in regards to orientation and intended impact, this was a piece of S-STEP (Self study of teacher educational practice) research. Within this tradition, as Cuenca maintains, '*separation between pedagogue and pedagogy is indistinguishable, self-study research provides a natural pathway to explore and develop a deeper understanding of the deliberative and immediate reasoning that drives pedagogy in teacher education*' (Cuenca, 2010, p20). One 'does not focus on the self per se, but on the space between self and the practice one is engaged in' (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001 p.15). The intention is to inform others through an illumination of my own practice.

This thesis examines a number of aspects of these spaces between. It examines how I managed, changed and developed declarations about my sexuality over two academic years with an aim of developing a positive critical queer pedagogy. Concurrently it examines how heteronormativity manifested on the course through my, and colleagues, interactions with students. I then explore how the youth work team managed the effects of this in the context of the reflections of colleagues from other institutions. Finally, it examines the nature of the pedagogic spaces we co-created with students in order to explore the impact of heteronormativity on us all.

## **Chapter two: Review of Indicative Literature.**

### ***The nature and tradition of youth and community work.***

As I previously stated, locating oneself within the canon of youth and community work is not unproblematic as youth and community work in the UK lacks a common definition (Smith, 2003, Davies, 2012). Williamson in *Finding Common Ground* (2015), that prefaced the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Youth Work Convention, commented that ‘*it can give the impression of...a rather chaotic and disputed field of practice*’ (2015, 3). Perhaps the idea of the common ground can coalesce around a central principle: that ‘*youth work is always an ‘unfinished’ practice*’ (Davies 2009, 21) and that to be effective, youth work requires ‘*a constant exercise of choice, recurrent risk-taking, a continuing negotiation of uncertainty*’ (ibid). As Grace and Taylor state ‘even if it is something of a truism, youth work remains a contested ideological and theoretical space’ (Grace and Taylor, 2016 forthcoming).

Davies (2003) points out the difficulties of normative definitions in that they rarely justify their claims or map well against practice, and descriptive definitions, in their attempts to generalise, rarely reflect the breadth of actual practice and do not have scope for contestation. Davies cites MacIntyre (1984), who maintains that we should examine a conceptual framework by ‘a consideration of its trajectory through time, its tradition’ (Davies 2003 p2), its ‘historically extended, socially embodied argument’ (MacIntyre 1985, 187). In a previous work (Seal & Frost, 2014) I traced the tradition through looking at the canon of teaching on qualifying youth and community work courses. In doing this I made the claim that the classroom is a site for the creation of praxis, something this thesis will also do. This is a contestable claim, and Holmes points out (2008) that the distance between the academy and practice is one of our tensions. However, as I also claim (Seal & Frost, 2014) the canon provides a reference point for discussions amongst practitioners, including non-qualified ones (Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

In scouring the various statements and definitions of youth and community work by the NYA, as given to the Houses of Commons Select Committee by PALYCW, or as expressed in our QAA subject benchmarks (see appendix i), positions are detectable on a number of epistemological, pedagogical and ontological questions. The field is strongly rooted in a dynamic, dialectical view of knowledge creation (Aristotle, 1976)



and a commitment to professional practice that is re-formulated as evolving *praxis* (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

The creation of this evolving knowledge entails, ‘reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it’ (Freire, 1973, p12). This commitment to *reflective practice* as a means of mediating and developing praxis is an idea present in the work of John Dewey (1936), and was coined as a method by Schon (1983). Schon describes reflective practice as ‘the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning’ (1983, p34). Others have developed these early formulations (Brookfield, 1998; Johns, 2005; Gänshirt, 2007; Rolfe et al, 2001). Bolton describes it as, ‘paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively’ (2010, p56).

Jeff and Smith (1990), Petrie (2006) and Hamalainen (2003) all discuss how youth and community work is primarily a critical and social pedagogic practice. Giroux describes critical pedagogy as an

*educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action (2010, p23).*

Paulo Freire (1973, 1976) was a foremost exponent of critical pedagogy, who introduced ideas such as ‘conscientisation’, and favoured ‘transformative and democratic education’ over traditional ‘banking’ forms of education. Youth workers, as critical pedagogues, are introduced to these ideas on the course with aim to produce practitioners who seek to enable young people to become increasingly aware of how the ideological apparatus of the state creates a ‘common sense’ that re-inscribes dominant elites’ social positions as natural and inevitable. This involves interrogation ‘beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions’ (Shor, 1992, p125).

As a result of this ideological and political stance, youth work rests on a materialist ontological premise and has primarily positioned itself within a tradition of political action and change. As Seal and Harris claim, ‘as agents of social change, youth workers seek to promote these critical and Freirian tenets of practice as central to their primary aim of not simply re-engaging young people in the mainstream (social control) but as

the means by which they enable young people to gain an insight into their limited circumstances and challenge how they are marginalised within society too (social action) (Seal & Harris, 2016, p20). Accordingly, youth workers are not just interested in solving social ‘problems’ but are also keen to problematize social issues, i.e. to ask, whose interests does solving the problem serve? And what has produced the ‘problem’ in the first place? (Seal & Harris, 2016). The use of ‘generative themes’ (Freire, 1973) that emerge from the young people’s own reality and are raised by them is therefore both practically and ideologically wedded to youth workers’ professional identity. (Seal & Harris, 2016)

Finally, but importantly, the youth work profession has traditionally privileged and sought to remain wedded to the concept of *community*, seeing the strengthening of communities as the means by which to build more cohesive and socially just societies (Jones & Mayo, 1974, Popple, 1995, Twelvetrees, 2001). As such, it is allied to *communitarian* principles, i.e. the belief that the individual flourishes best through the collective, but that the collective should not be sovereign over the individual. Some within the field have argued that youth work has had a tendency to somewhat romanticise community (Belton, 2015, p12) and to underestimate its conservative, limiting and discriminatory aspects. Dewey (1916) suggests that youth workers need to avoid adopting a binary position towards either individualism or collectivism, and instead embrace the tension between them.

### ***Theoretical influences***

Within these broad philosophical paradigms, a number of more specific theoretical influences are given emphasis, such as Marxist, feminist, and post-colonial sociological analyses. Writers within the reading lists for youth work training programmes draw on critical and post-critical theorists in their examination of culture, ideology and the state, in particular Althusser for his account of ideology and the state (1970) and Bourdieu for his concepts of cultural capital and symbolic violence (1990). Fanon (2001), Gilroy (1984), El Saadawi, (1997) and the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham are also prominent. The weight given to these seminal texts led to the development of an emphasis on anti-oppressive practice (Belton and Hamid, 2012, Khan, 2013). bell hooks’ development of Freire’s ideas into the idea of the

‘engaged’ educator has also been influential, breaking down barriers between the personal and the private and stressing the need to look again at practice and everyday personal interactions. A countervailing influence of postmodern and post structural thinking has increasingly come to the fore in more recent times, re-directing youth work towards an emphasis on meaning contestation and fluidity (Seal & Harris, 2016). This corresponds with an evolving version of youth work praxis that questions all boundaries, binaries and essentialist claims, including those related to identity such as gender, sexuality, race, and class (Rosie, 1996, Lyotard, 1984).

Alongside the sociological, phenomenological and existential thinkers are influential with an emphasis on the development of agency, encounter and mutual meaning making. Key ideas include the relativity of experience and the importance of trying to understand the perspective and 'life world' of others (Noddings, 1984, 1992) and being 'present' in the moment with people within an 'encounter' (Buber, 1924, 1958). Friedman (1981). Later Baizerman (1989) noted that central to this encounter is a duty on youth workers to aid young people to understand and escape their biographies and their common sense notions, in a way that is akin to the countering of hegemony and development of conscientisation highlighted above. Here though, the stress is laid on how young people have agency, to become free to create their own meanings and flourish, echoing humanist and Aristotelian concerns.

Humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1968, 1970) is another influence, with the emphasis on being ‘person centred’ (Rogers, 1961, 1980). Maslow and Roger’s analyses of human motivation and effective ‘helping’ within relationships have been important in defining the nature and conditions of youth workers’ relationship with young people, and providing a framework for what is meant by their 'needs'. They also stress the importance of education, not instrumentally, but to be a fully ‘self actualised’ human being - an idea picked up by later youth work specific writers such as Smith (2001) who stress the importance of association and understanding others, if we are to reach our full potential.

Arising from these influences I identify (Seal, 2014) a number of philosophical and praxis based tensions: essentialist and anti-essential views of human nature and identity, agency and structure, the relative merits of adopting utilitarian, virtue ethics or deontological approaches to guide moral decision making, individualism and communitarianism, and whether we are pragmatists or idealists. To that I have added

the ‘problem’ of conscientisation, (Seal, 2016). This thesis will hopefully alleviate some of these tensions. Essentialist and anti-essentialist views of human nature, community and identity are pertinent to our understanding of heteronormativity. Similarly, the balance between structure and agency and conscientisation are relevant to the development of a pedagogic approach that interrupts heteronormativity and in building towards a wider critical pedagogic project.

I hold that some of the aforementioned tensions arise from not situating ourselves within the paradigms, and they can be resolved, or at least made more coherent, by doing so. In the methodology chapter I make the claim that critical realism, as a stance within the paradigms, offers a way to ameliorate a number of these tensions and is relevant to interrupting heteronormativity and in developing a queer pedagogy. Critical realism gives us a bridge between critical and queer pedagogy in preserving a realist materialist ontology, where economic forces are real, and independent of consciousness and hermeneutic constructions of them. At the same time, it offers an epistemology that does not necessitate a binary view of the roles of the oppressed, liberator, or even oppressor. It accepts that our knowledge is contingent, partial and contestable, but has the potential, and enough validity, to demand action and potentially inform the actions of others.

Regarding praxis, critical realism also offers us a way of positioning ourselves within these paradigms that allows for an emphasis on action, and creation and application of theory through action, that legitimises a desire to impact on the world, yet acknowledges the contingent, specific and evolving nature of this desire. Finally, Archer’s writing (1999, 2003, 2010) also offers us some insight into how we work with agency in our day to day praxis, to recognize its temporal dimensions and to overcome a tendency in workers to instil in young people a ‘knowing hopelessness’ (Seal & Harris, 2016).

### ***Definition of terms: sexuality***

I will now define my terms. As a pedagogical starting point, I will begin with the World Health Organisation’s definition of sexuality.

*‘...a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and*

*reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.*’ (WHO, 2006a)

This echoes Jackson’s assertion that ‘sexuality is a broad term referring to all the erotically significant aspects of social life and social being.’ (Jackson, 2006, p 17). However, within this definition are embedded terms such as sexual orientation, commonly seen as the gender of the person(s) that you are attracted to, physically, romantically etc, or not (Reiter, 1989, Sell, 1997). There is an assumption here of an enduring pattern of attraction, when many researchers discuss sexual fluidity, variously in terms of biology (Savic et al, 2010), lifestyle choice (Savin-Williams et al, 2012), and social construction (Rosario et al, 2006).

Associated terms include: sexual orientation identity, sexual behaviour, sexual preference with *identity* referring to an individual's conception of themselves, *behaviour* referring to actual sexual acts performed by the individual, and *sexual preference* referring to romantic or sexual attractions (Reiter, 1989 p150). Phellas (2016) made the case for using the word ‘sexualities’, emphasising the plurality of possibilities and to challenge certain versions of heterosexuality as the norm. He argues that LGBT has been defined in opposition and therefore re-inscribes the normality of heterosexuality and otherness of LGBT sexualities. He suggests that the term ‘sexualities’ would move beyond this by erasing the constant reference to hetero and non-hetero sexualities. While I would agree with this in principle, I would see it as the aim of a long term project. We need to understand how sexuality is constructed in order to interrupt it. Some LGBTQ identities may well be strategically essential.

I avoid using terms such as homophobia or heterosexism. As a term, homophobia, was first used by Weinberg (1972) to refer to a number of phobias including a dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals, fear of being assumed to be a homosexual, and also homosexuals' self-loathing (internalised homophobia). It was originally used to denote a specific psychological reaction, although it has become a common byword for more generalised prejudice against homosexuals (Herek, 2000, 2004), making a conceptual shift from a psychological reaction to one of moral judgement.

While I am concerned with such psychological and moral reactions, I also wish to consider more cultural, structural, linguistic and covert forms of discrimination; and most importantly those that operate at a structural rather than an individual level (Thompson, 2016). Writers such as Eyre (1997) and Lovaas et al (2006) note that focusing on homophobia '*diverts attention away from larger social forces that support and maintain the normalization of heterosexuality as well as away from the growing collective political activism of gay and lesbian groups*' (Eyre, 1997 p 199). I am more interested in how heterosexuality can be a totalising system. The term homophobia re-inscribes the view of sexuality as a heterosexual/ homosexual binary. The term homophobia entails 'fear of our opposite, lest we become it' (Harek, 2000 p23). For similar reasons I will generally not use the term homosexual, apart from when referring to works that do. The term has culturally embedded pejorative associations, with an assumption of the centrality of sexual acts in sexuality, but also because of its underlying binary construction of sexuality (Dynes et al, 1990, Stein, 1990).

I considered 'heterosexism' as a term, defined by Jung and Smith (1993, p13), as an assumption that people are heterosexual, expanded by Herek (2000) to '*an accompanying system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships*' denigrating other forms of non-heterosexual sexualities'. (Herek, 2004 p5). However, it is also a limited term, in that it is not critical, does not seek to examine who this system of beliefs serves, or illuminate the power dynamics behind these constructions. I am concerned to look at the forms that these social constructions take, and whose interests are served by such cultural hegemonies.

### *Heteronormativity.*

I do not think issues of sexuality, and discrimination against certain forms of it, exist in isolation. Therefore, I prefer the terms heteronormative and heteronormativity, as they infer a more systemic view of sexuality. They incorporate other social constructions such as gender as an essential component of heterosexuality. Chambers (2003, 2007) sees heteronormativity as a concept that 'reveals the expectations, demands, and constraints produced when heterosexuality is taken as normative within a society' (Chambers, 2003 p1). I will look briefly at how the terms evolved.

As Ingraham notes (2005), heteronormativity was first used in the mid-seventies by feminist writers such as Grace Atkinson (1974), The Furies Collective, Redstockings (1975), Rita Mae Brown (1976), and Charlotte Bunch (1975), to explain the social construction of heterosexuality in a way that re-enforces the dominance of a certain kind of maleness. 'The Purple September Staff', a Dutch group, published an article entitled 'The normative status of heterosexuality' (1975) maintaining that heterosexuality was 'a normalized power arrangement that limits options and privileges men over women and reinforces and naturalizes male dominance' (Ingraham:2002). While such writers recognised that heterosexuality was a social construct, their focus was looking at female oppression within heterosexuality, rather than oppression of non-heterosexuals.

Theorists such as Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich first questioned the constructed privileging of heterosexuality itself. In the *Category of Sex* (1984) and *The Straight Mind* (1980) Wittig rejected the category of sex and challenged feminists to stop using the concept of 'women', saying that as a product of a constructed heterosexuality, which in itself was a political regime, the term would always be seen as subordinate, and should not be used. Rich expanded the lexicon further, with the idea of a compulsory heterosexuality, in the 1980 article 'compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence' (1980) where she questioned the construction of heterosexuality as 'natural' or inevitable, 'a compulsory, contrived, constructed as a taken-for-granted institution which serves the interests of male dominance.' (Ingraham,2002 p54). Butler (1990) similarly questioned the categories of man and woman in *Gender Trouble*. She introduced the idea of gender, and later most essentialist categories of identities, as performances. They are not embodied or stable, they are performed. Further they are performed within a heterosexual matrix, whereby:

*The institution of a compulsory and naturalised heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. (Butler, 1990, 22–3)*

Most radical is Butler's notion that the construction of heterosexuality creates the need for distinct genders, rather than gender creating heterosexuality.

### *The contribution of queer theory*

As a field, queer theory is vast in scope, varied in approach and concern, and has multiple epistemological bases (Clarke and Spence 2013 p1). Within this thesis, I wish only to use three concepts from queer theory and one particular orientation within it. Conceptually, I agree with its central notion that sexuality is not essential, or binary, and that the normality is a social construction that serves certain interests. Following on from this, I use the term heteronormativity, whereby it is a certain form of heterosexuality that is constructed as the norm. I also adopt the term heterosexual matrix as the site within which these constructions are played out, reified and re-inscribed. In terms of orientation, as Spurlin (2002) maintains, many queer theorists see the project as inherently political, and in turn inherently pedagogical.

*Queer theory's investment in political struggle, in the proliferation of social differences, and in the creation of multiple, more participatory spheres of public deliberation is not unrelated to forms of critical pedagogy which do not see the construction of the disciplines and their institutionalized pedagogical delivery as politically innocent activities as situated within specific relations of power.*  
(Spurlin, 2002 p 34)

It is this activist orientation within queer theory that I align with and specifically queer pedagogy within it. Michael Warner, often seen as one of the first queer theorists, in his seminal 1991 article 'Fear of a Queer Planet' later developed into *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (1993), begins with the assumption that the construction of normality, in terms of sexual behaviour, is heterosexual, but that it is a certain kind of heterosexuality, where 'normal, acceptable, behaviour', is also monogamous (with some toleration prior to 'commitment'), with one person, and preferably for life. As such, this 'normal' behaviour is also desirable, and morally right, with deviation being suspicious. Warner argues that heteronormativity is essentialist, in that it portrays these boundaries as set, with no fluidity, only deviations. For him, the construction of heteronormativity is male, white, middle class, and wedded to capitalism.

Queer theory expanded on many of these ideas and themes (Butler, 1990; de Lauretis, 1987; Fuss, 1991; Hennessy, 1993, 1995; Ingraham, 1994; Jackson, 2006; Sedgwick, 1990; Seidman, 2002; Warner, 1993; Wittig, 1992), seeing heteronormativity as further



bound up with binary notions of sex (male/ female), gender identity (man/woman), gender roles (masculine/ feminine), and in a late modern age of having incorporated homosexuality into the binary (gay/straight), but only a certain kind of homosexuality, and heterosexuality, is tolerated.

As part of this matrix, non-heterosexual sexualities are needed to affirm, in their otherness and deviant status, the normalcy of heterosexuality. This matrix may shift, but the blueprint and ideal is certain heterosexual structures, which Ingraham (2000, 2002, 2005) later called the 'Heterosexual Imaginary' (2002, 2005). Writers such as Duggan (2006) and Jones (2009, 2013) describe the incorporation of certain forms of homosexuality into heteronormativity as 'homonormativity' epitomised in the political privileging of equality through gay marriage. This is within the heterosexual matrix because the ideal of marriage is preserved, with its heteronormative trappings. Indeed, David Cameron, the former prime minister, in his speech supporting it said that he voted for it because he was a conservative, rather than in spite of that. He went on to suggest that acceptance of gay and lesbians was good for the nation because it was important in that it re-enforced the commitment to monogamy, two-person intimacy and individual responsibility, all integral aspects of heteronormativity.

The literature also shows that heteronormativity can be damaging for many heterosexuals. Feminist accounts of its damaging nature for women are well documented (Butler, 1990; Fuss, 1989; Grosz, 1994; Phelan, 1994; Stein, 1997). How it is also damaging for men is less well documented. As Knight et al (2013) note heteronormativity can limit and damage heterosexuals in that it can often inhibit men from forming close and meaningful relationships with each other and stereotypes can subject heterosexual adolescents to homophobic encounters (Brown and Alderson, 2010; Pascoe, 2011; Yep, 2002). In his typology of queer straightness, Heasley (2005) identifies a number of troubled heterosexual men 'living in the shadow of masculinity' who are unable to engage with hegemonic masculinities, while simultaneously rejecting perceived feminine traits such as sharing emotions and having women as friends. Heasley (2005) describes how they become non-people living fantasy lives, often in cyberspace, often with other men who are similar - but they remain inarticulate about their own selves.

### ***The heteronormativity of higher education***

Although the study will not concentrate on students' wider heteronormative experiences within HEIs, I think it is worth briefly examining the organisational context, as in the research experiences within the wider HEI intersected and impacted upon students' experiences on the youth and community work courses, although in a nuanced way. Much work has been carried out on the heteronormativity of HEIs in the nineties, primarily in the USA (Friend, 1993; Khyatt, 1999; Sedgwick, 1991, DeCastell and Bryson, 1993). DeCastell and Bryson (1993) typically denote an environment both of direct discrimination (although this may be a lesser factor), but also of indirect or structural discrimination (Thompson, 2016), more akin to heterosexism. Later work draws similar conclusions (Ben-ari, 2011, Koschoreck, 2003) denoting some, though often buried, direct discrimination, but endemic structural or 'mundane' heterosexism (Peel, 2001). (Peel uses mundane in terms of everyday and endemic, rather than mundane in terms of impact). They detect heterosexism, variably, in everyday language (Peel, 2001), administrative practices, (Koschoreck, 2003), examples given in science class (Martin, 1991) and well-meaning discussions about discrimination and sexuality that succeed in 'othering' LGBTQ people (Kumashiro, 2003).

Three important pieces of research have been published on LGBT students in the UK. The first was conducted in 2008 by Ellis with a sample of 291 LGBT students from 42 UK universities. The second was by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) in 2009 with 4205 responses to an online survey (2704 LGBT students, 781 LGBT support staff and 720 LGBT academic staff) supplemented by 12 focus groups with LGBT staff and students and 18 individual interviews. The latest is an NUS report *Education Beyond the Straight and Narrow* in May 2014, drawing on a national survey of more than 4,000 respondents from 80 higher education institutions in the UK. Surveys were supplemented by case studies from the universities of Bangor, Nottingham, Manchester Metropolitan, University College London, the University of London and from an online focus group with trans students.

All found that that homophobia is still prevalent on campuses. Ellis's study found one in four students surveyed indicated that they have been victims of homophobic harassment on at least one occasion. Five years later, the NUS found one in five LGB and one in three trans respondents have experienced at least one form of bullying or harassment on their campus. LGBT students who have experienced a form of

homophobic or transphobic harassment are two to three times more likely to consider leaving their course.

The NUS study also found that trans respondents are twice as likely as LGB students to have experienced harassment (22% vs. 9%), threats or intimidations (13.5% vs. 6%), and physical assault on campus (5% vs. 2%). Significantly, both Ellis and ECU found LGBT respondents reported major harassment being from fellow students (ECU 49.5%, Ellis 76%). Ellis found that common sites of discrimination are non-teaching spaces with halls, social spaces and student organisations featuring significantly. ECU looked at the impact of discrimination, including stress, loss of confidence and self-exclusion from social and academic spaces.

In terms of safety, Ellis found that almost one in four have feared for their safety because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. NUS found just two in ten (20.6 %) trans students feel completely safe on campus, less than half the proportion of their heterosexual counterparts (43 %) and significantly less than the 36.7 % of LGB students who feel completely safe. However, Ellis also found that only a minority of respondents say that bullying and harassment are common. She concludes that while LGBT students do not particularly perceive a 'climate of fear' they live it. Six years later NUS found that 14 % of LGBT respondents who experienced name-calling, 23 % of those who experienced harassment, 26 % of those who experienced threats and intimidation, and a third of those who experienced physical assault reported it. Only 16 % of respondents who experienced physical assault based on their (perceived) sexuality or gender identity reported it to the police.

Ellis found half of respondents had deliberately concealed their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid intimidation. ECU found that the majority (90.2%) of LGB students are out to their university friends, but almost two-thirds are not out to tutors (61.3%) or lecturers (64.3%), as they fear discrimination (perhaps contextualising the low 10% discrimination rate from tutors). NUS found that LGBT students who are out to their tutors tend to feel more confident to speak up in class (89 %) compared to those who are only out to their friends (79 %). Gay men students tend to feel more confident to speak in class than lesbian, bisexual and trans students: 83 % of gay respondents feel confident to speak up in class, compared to 76.20 % of lesbian, 74.70 % of bisexual and 70.30 % of trans respondents. One in ten trans students never felt comfortable to speak in class

Although the great majority of Ellis's respondents (75 %) agree that the climate of their classes is accepting of LGBT people, they also reported that discrimination and harassment in education are rife. NUS found that students felt that LGBT issues are inadequately represented in the curriculum and only a minority feel comfortable in raising these issues in class. On a scale of one to ten, LGBT students' average score of agreement with the statement 'I see LGB experiences and history reflected in my curriculum' - only 3.9 and for trans students, it is 3.5. For the statement, 'I see trans experiences and history reflected in my curriculum,' the scores are 2.8 for LGB+ students and 2.5 for trans students.

NUS found that LGBTQ students are more likely to consider dropping out than heterosexual students and more than half of LGB+ respondents (56 %) cited the feeling of not fitting in as the main reason for considering dropping out. LGBT students who have experienced a form of homophobic or transphobic harassment are 2–3 times more likely to consider leaving their course. One in two (51%) trans respondents have seriously considered dropping out of their course and of those who had considered dropping out, around two thirds mentioned the feeling of not fitting in and mentioned health problems (67 and 65 % respectively). In terms of coming out, ECU found that only a third of lecturers were 'out to everyone'. Their LGBT student focus groups revealed a desire for LGB. staff to act as formal mentors and to become involved in supporting and developing student groups. While some LGB staff recognise that by coming out they provide a role model for both LGB and heterosexual students, such openness is not always well received by students, and can raise concerns for LGB staff about how to manage the boundary between professional and personal relationships. Yet the staff's experience of discrimination was from colleagues, (33.8%), then admin staff (25.3%) and 18.9% for students. However, 23% of trans staff and 4.2% of LGB. staff reported that they have been denied a promotion due to their trans status or sexual orientation.

We seem to have a very mixed picture, and a marked difference between perception and experience. Since the early 1990s, both qualitative and quantitative studies show a significant decrease in perceived cultural and institutional homophobia within Western cultures (Anderson, 2005b, Anderson, Adams, & Rivers, 2010, McCormack, 2012). Other authors talk about a form of normative masculinity growing more inclusive of feminine gender expression, particularly among university-aged, white, middle-class

men (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012) However, Edwards (2006) argues that just like the ‘new man’ literature of the 1990s, these perceptions, coined in the media term ‘metrosexuality’ is an invention that is more connected to ‘patterns of consumption and marketing, or the commoditization of masculinities, than to second-wave feminism and sexual politics’ (Price & Parker, 2003, p4). My research also showed that heteronormativity, and an often homophobic, hyper masculine form of it, is still prevalent in youth and community work’s pedagogic spaces. As expected, heteronormativity is nuanced, and students’ subjectivities within this heterosexual matrix was even more nuanced and contradictory.

### ***Interrupting heteronormativity***

#### *The use of self as a pedagogic tool*

The use of self as a pedagogic tool has a long history in higher education (Beck, 1983, Cayanus, 2004, Collins & Miller, 1994, Cozby, 1973, Goldstein & Benassi, 1994, 1997, Haney, 2004, Javidi, & Long, 1989, Jourard, 1968, 1971, Liddle, 1997, Sorensen, 1989, Wambach & Brothen, 1997). There are claims that the use of self reduces hierarchy, that it validates difference, counters prejudice and engenders social change (Beck (1983). ‘Use of self’ as a pedagogic tool is also dominant in the youth and community work literature and critical pedagogy, encapsulated in Freire’s (1972) concept of ‘conscientization’. bell hooks (1994, 2003) developed these ideas with her notion of ‘engaged pedagogy’ which requires praxis on the part of both students and teachers. Writers such as Kitto (1986) explored the use of self specifically in the context of educating youth and community workers, arguing, for example, that the pedagogy of autonomy is held not in the curriculum, but in ‘course structures and organization, and in the actions of staff’ (Kitto, 1986 p42). Rose (2005) explored role modelling as a way of developing youth and community workers, although Seal & Harris (2016) extensively critique this, calling instead for the ‘blueprint self’, whereby others can have resonance with one’s experience, but not seek to directly emulate it.

In terms of interrupting heteronormativity, in the 1990s, the dominant view in the literature was of coming out as a necessity was necessary and a duty for a LBGTQ lecturer in higher education, the question being how it could be best facilitated (Bridgewater, 1997 D’Emilio, 1987, Griffin, 1992, Sears & Williams, 1997, Waldo &

Kemp, 1997), later described by Rasmussen as the ‘coming out imperative’ (Rasmussen, 2004). However, Khyatt (1999) felt that coming out ‘freezes’ people’s views of sexuality, with our view of that sexuality being narrowly personified in the person coming out, rather than, as Silin (1999) hoped, that it encourages different voices. Indeed, such freezing has been a feature of my comings out and consequently the focus of this research moved from my ‘comings out’ to how we as a team manage ourselves in relation to sexuality, including, but not exclusively through, use of self.

Rasmussen (2004) further problematised coming out discourses. She viewed the coming out imperative as essentialist and at risk of reinforcing sexuality as a binary. She also felt these earlier accounts simplified the dynamic with students, who may read into the disclosed sexuality through their own paradigms, incorporating factors such as race, gender, class, etc. Khyatt (1999) proposes that we should talk about sexuality in a less forced and potentially more interruptive way. In assuming that students know about our sexuality, but not making a declarative statement, we may interrupt heteronormativity and encourage pedagogic enquiry (Telford, 2003a,b). Telford (*ibid*) also talks about the danger of lecturers thinking the declarative act is enough, and curriculum management is not important. He advocates the reverse.

More recently Clarke and Braun (2009) have edited two special editions of the *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review* that further problematise the issue of coming out in higher education. Issues covered include: managing students’ heterosexism/homophobia and genderism (Ryan-Flood, 2009); issues of class (Taylor, 2009) and race (Riggs, 2009); and managing one’s sexuality when that sexual identity is not fixed (McLean, 2009). Other articles concentrate on re-exploring and challenging the heteronormative environment of higher education (Eliaison & Elia 2009, Hodges, 2009, Schanz & Mitchell, 2009, Valentich and Ursacki-Bryant, 2009) Eliaison & Elia’s (2009) work is of particular interest to this research as it explores how to interrupt heteronormativity as a team, and how a team can be queer while having heterosexuals in it.

### *Post closet/ gay discourse*

It needs to be acknowledged that there are post gay and post closet discourses (Burston & Richardson, 1994, Collard, 1998, Mendleson, 1996) that say that the closet and even LGBT identities are less relevant in late modernity. They saw the closet as a symbol of

how LGBT people police their own sexuality in a way that heterosexuals are never expected to do (Foucault, 1978; Jagose, 1996; Sedgwick, 1990; Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen, 1999). In this way the closet re-inscribes heteronormativity in that it is a 'strategy of accommodation and resistance which both reproduces and contests aspects of society organized around normative heterosexuality' (Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen 1999, 10). Furthermore, the LGBT movement needs to move beyond defining itself by oppression and despair, and to see sexuality as only one aspect of one's experience and identity.

Yet the post closet debate is postulated on the premise of the increasing acceptance and normalisation of lesbian and gay lives. Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen (1999) believe this is at best partial. Geographically LGBTQ people in locations outside of 'safe' gay areas or BTQ people outside of the heterosexual/ homosexual binary, either do not have a closet to hide in or continue to need a smaller closet to seek refuge in. Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen (1999) feel that post closet discourses also ignores stratification. LGBTQ people continue to be othered when they have intersecting issues of race, class, gender, religion or lack of capital. It therefore seems imperative to take an intersectional approach to sexuality. Originally formulated in the work of black feminist social and legal theorists such as Crenshaw (1989), and developed by Collins (2008), intersectional theory rejects the over stabilisation of identity politics and one dimensional conceptualisation of inequalities, or in this case rising equality, on the basis of categories such as gender, race, sexuality, etc. Rather than one category being dominant, many groups of people are seen as experiencing an intersection of two or more identity categories that compound and interlock with each other to produce multiple oppressions. To truly understand the experiences of the participants in our enquiry we needed to reveal the fluid complexity of lived experience within such groups and how inequality operates within, as well as between them.

### *Queer pedagogy*

The concern to challenge heterosexual/ homosexual binaries and to interrupt heteronormativity drew me to queer pedagogy. Having made a case for the dominance of heteronormativity, and its prevalence in higher education, the question becomes how to interrupt it. If we return to our earlier quote from Spurlin (2002), he has an appealing

construction of queer theory and a queer pedagogic space that sits within, and potentially interrupts, larger paradigms of power and politics in educational spaces. His ambitions for teaching are echoed by Berlant and Warner (1998), who once posited that ‘pedagogy should not be about the reproduction of identities or their representation, but about world-building, culture making’ (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p548). However, there is a tension between critical pedagogy, with a materialist realist ontology, and queer theory, which is often post-modern, post-structural and anti-essential. Similarly, there are tensions between activist orientations, often enacted through essential sexual identities, and a queer approach that questions such identities and subjectivities. However, as we have discussed earlier, taking a critical realist stance allows for materialist stance. This in turn means that the adoption of a particular sexual identity is legitimate, as a contingent strategic essentialist (Spivak, 1988) tactic, to enable activism in particular structural conditions, although ultimately, working through a morphogenetic sequence (Archer, 2003), such essentialism should not be allowed to solidify, and may need to be surpassed, as the structural conditions change.

The term ‘queer pedagogy’ originated in 1993 in the article by Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell ‘Queer Pedagogy: Praxis Makes Im/Perfect’ which explored how essentialist notions of identity play out in the classroom setting. While they see the value of post-modernist accounts of pedagogy (Britzman, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989; Hoodfar, 1992; Lather, 1991, Leach, 1992, Weiler, 1988) that talk of opportunities for agency among the oppressed, they were critical of the direction of much queer theory as *‘often overly abstract, aesthetically self-indulgent, politically ambivalent, and obtusely textualized forms of postmodern theorizing’* (Lazarus, 1991 p96). They wanted to make queer theory explicitly activist in nature, and thus coined the notion of queer pedagogy which they describe as *‘a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of ‘normalcy’ in schooled subjects’*. Thus they align themselves with a more critical/radical school of pedagogy using the Freirian/ hooks term ‘praxis’.

While they applaud the queer theory project, DeCastell and Bryson ‘seeks to disrupt and dissolve binaries of male/female gender, heterosexual/ homosexual and essentialist/ constructionist intellectual frameworks for thinking about sexual identity’ (De Castell & Bryson, 1993, p 360). They conclude that queer pedagogy is ultimately going to fail in the classroom if (as with theirs) it is contained in a single module. Later works built



on this, examining the nature of the student teacher relationship in queer pedagogy (Luhmann, 1998). It is this intersection of queer pedagogy and critical pedagogy that appeals to me, to make the whole curriculum and learning environment queer and critical. I also want to explore how the team can interrupt heteronormativity as a collective, seeing this interruption as the start of developing a wider critical pedagogy.

Britzman (1995) agreed with their assessment of the over theorised direction of much queer theory. She explicitly saw queer theory as a pedagogic project: *'The relationship between knowledge and ignorance is neither oppositional or binary, rather they mutually implicate each other, structuring and re-enforcing particular forms of knowledge and forms of ignorance'* (Britzman, 1995 p214) For her, queer theories should aim to elucidate the 'precariousness of the signified' and move away from looking at individualised difference to enabling others to deconstruct normalcy as a social and cultural construction. She outlines three objectives for queer pedagogy: 1) The Study of Limits, 2) The Study of Ignorance, and 3) The Study of Reading Practices (Britzman, 1995, p.155). In each of these categories, Britzman critiques existing educational techniques and offers objectives that are designed to achieve the educational opportunities offered by queer theory and queer pedagogy.

Her approach speaks to my aforementioned conundrum about essentialist and non-essentialist views of identity. In discussing her approach, Britzman questions inclusion-based pedagogical approaches that provide information and 'true' images of LGBT lives. Similarly Luhmann (1998) questions a pedagogy that simply calls for more and more accurate representations of LGBT life. This assumes that homophobia is down to a deficit of knowledge and that if people are exposed to information about non-heterosexualities they will change their perspectives. While inclusion based approaches may create tolerance of non-heterosexualities, it does not challenge heterosexual students to explore how their sexual identities are bound up with systems of privilege. Heterosexual, and indeed some 'good' gay and lesbian students can distance themselves from acknowledging their privilege and avoid responsibility for those who experience social oppression for their non-normative sexual and gender identities. For Britzman (1995), queer pedagogy should mean educators and students examine their identities in social and relational ways.

She believes a pedagogue should work on the ability to recognize others through self-recognition and work on proliferating identities within the classroom (Britzman, 1995,

p. 158). I shall return to this invitation to interrogate heteronormativities and heterosexualities within the classroom in chapter six when examining queer heterosexualities. As Faunce says '*a queer pedagogy draws attention to the parameters of questioning, thus highlighting the process of normalization as it draws attention to the places where thinking stops.*' (Faunce, 2013 p31)

Winslade, Monk, and Drewerys (1997) outline three principles to incorporating queer theory into professional education, in their case counselling. Firstly, we should examine the languages used within a practice, making visible the heteronormativity within it. Secondly, taking a Foucauldian approach, they advocate *positioning* ie being mindful of the power dynamics that are inherent in professional discourse, and its hierarchies. They give as an example of discourse the relationship between the terms *masculine* and *feminine*. Any discourse will simultaneously refer to society's construction of male and female genders. Professional constructions may be different and contradictory, depending on the social situation. Thirdly, there is *deconstruction* - the belief that the customary privilege given to the prevailing knowledge of society must be evaluated and challenged. An example of a way that these power structures may be disrupted in counsellor education is to regularly engage students in conversations and learning activities related to oppression.

Morris (1998) examined how we can queer the curriculum. She identifies four characteristics of those working from a queer curriculum perspective: (a) digressing from mainstream 'official' discourse; (b) challenging the status quo by queerly reading texts (uncovering potentially radical politics) or queer texts (pointing out silences or the absence of marginalized groups and adding them to the text); (c) understanding that curriculum is gendered, political, historical, racial, classed, and aesthetic; and (d) seeing themselves as a co-learner with students (p. 284). Overall, the queer curriculum individual turns academic life 'inside out, upside down, [and] backwards' (p. 285) by radically digressing from previously accepted practices and by altering the ways that educators think about curriculum (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995).

Kumishiro's (2002) work is closest to this study in its aims. He attempts to unite anti-oppressive practice with a critical pedagogy and a troubling queer pedagogy. He is not uncritical of all three, and his criticisms echo my own. He critiques an activist anti-oppressive practice that reinforces binaries, essentialises by prescribing what it is to be a member of that group, and situates all oppression at the level of the structural. He

critiques a simple Frierian analysis with a rigid binary of oppressor and oppressed. He also questions critical pedagogies that ‘merely replaces one (socially hegemonic) framework for seeing the world with another (academically hegemonic) one’, saying that the aim of critical pedagogy should be to develop a critical capacity within students. I would say he is accurate in his attack on the realities of much critical pedagogy, although this is more of a comment on lived practice than method as his solution that we should ‘*extend its terms of analysis to their own lives, but then critique it for what it overlooks or forecloses*’ (Kumashiro, 2002, p 132).

Kumashiro (2002) then offers four approaches for educators to work with oppression in schools. These are ‘education for the other’, ‘education about the other’, ‘education that is critical of privileging and othering,’ and ‘education that changes students and society’. It is the last approach that he favours. For him we have to explicitly examine how we individually and collectively create ‘other’ within our pedagogic spaces. He then outlines a variety of ways in which this can happen, through direct discussion, via an interweaving of critique of othering into specific subject matters, and/or through the implicit embedding of critique of othering into general classroom interactions and discussions.

The study ‘Interrupting Heteronormativity’ edited by Queen et al (2004) at Syracuse University is probably the closest study to mine in context. Its aims were twofold: firstly, to ‘make visible the everyday, seemingly inconsequential ways in which our classrooms become sites for the reinforcement of heteronormative ideologies and practices’ and secondly, as an aid to educators in how to *interrupt* these ideologies and practices, *in the classroom*. Its aims are explicitly practical; it is intended as an aid for educators, but it positively seeks a way of doing this that looks at students’ whole learning experience, and how a whole faculty can approach the subject. The book is divided into three parts. Part one examines the nature of heteronormativity, part two looks at pedagogic issues and part three considers resources. These sections include chapters on the pervasiveness and invisibility of heteronormativity (Adams *ibid*); challenging students’ expectations of teacher training, particularly around diversity (Huei Lin *ibid*); how sexuality can be embedded in unsuspected parts of the curriculum (Afshar *ibid*), how the landscape of a university itself can be heteronormative; students’ experience of homophobia inside and outside the classroom (Stout and Morgan *ibid*); and, again, the politics of coming out as an educator (Beiseitov and Banerjee *ibid*).

It is the final part of the book that is of particular interest to me. They preface the practical sections with a recognition that the book points towards a framework for pedagogy that ‘foregrounds the ways in which heteronormative ideologies and practices are embedded in all classrooms, and suggests ways to interrupt those practices in order to create the most effective learning environment for all students in your classroom’. (Queens et al, 2009, p4). In the final section the chapter ‘*Engaging Nuances*,’ looks in some depth at the nuances of heteronormativity (Dimetman, 2004) and ‘*Constant Queerying, Practicing Responsible Pedagogy at Syracuse University*,’ (Sierra-Zarella) was based on discussions with educators to see how they engage with heteronormativity and highlights the successes, struggles, and work to be done.’

Sierra-Zarella (2004) recommends further work on how heteronormativity is constructed and reinforced, particularly in relation to diversity issues on campus and in the classroom, and how a pedagogic framework can interrupt this. She also advocates interrupting heteronormativity across the curriculum, echoing Bryson and Castell’s (1994) concern that sexuality is often marginalised into single modules, and then presented as an aspect of diversity, or individual identity, rather than the more critical perspective that the concept of heteronormativity demands, and queer pedagogy promises. She again calls for further explorations into how this marginalisation can be interrupted. These calls for more research inform the first two aims of my research, as well as a desire to see if the findings in Syracuse translate to a youth and community work courses. My third aim is to explore whether this pedagogic framework can be developed into a wider ranging pedagogy, informed by critical and queer pedagogies, that can challenge received notions of normality, with sexuality being an example.

### ***Double consciousness.***

In conducting my analysis of how heteronormativity manifests on youth and community work courses, I was searching for a useful framework to explain my findings, or at least a heuristic device from which to work. Double consciousness may be that term. In his publication, ‘The Souls of Black Folk,’ Du Bois (1906) explores the idea of double consciousness, seeing it as a ‘sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others in the mirror.’ He was talking about when black slaves can perceive themselves through their own culture and that of their oppressor. The

oppressor, in contrast, only sees the other through their own perspective. He describes the concept as an existential crisis: identity is split into two parts, making it hard for an individual to have a single, unified identity. He shows how black Americans living in a society where they are devalued, have difficulty with a unified identity because they have learned to see themselves as 'American' and separately, as 'African American'. Rawls (2000), more recently, explains it in terms of her black students having contradictory interactional expectations placed on them. To fulfil the demands placed on them by white society, her black participants had to go against the expectations of their fellow black students. Double consciousness has thus been traditionally used in a negative sense.

However, Jason Orne in his article *Queers in the line of fire: Goffman's Stigma Revisited* (2013) argues that there are two interpretations of double consciousness: one where different cultural orientations are in tension, and another of a positive socio-psychological lens through which people in marginalized positions view themselves and others. In this alternate usage, double consciousness is a mechanism through which marginalized people become aware of the worldviews of those in positions of power, whilst holding their own opinions and drawing on their identities as resources to mediate those in power.

Double consciousness is the dual lens that allows both of these understandings of a situation to co-occur within one individual. Orne also claims that having a double consciousness makes one stigma resistant (Siegel et al.1998). He says 'a queer double consciousness allows participants to mobilize their bifurcated consciousness by anticipating and responding to potentially negative reactions.' (Orne, 2012 p 230). They are stigma-resistant (Siegel et al.1998), aware of discrimination, and its presence in the contexts in which they move. They are regularly put in the line of fire but ultimately they 'see it for what it is', and reject it. Orne (2013) felt that Du Bois used both interpretations at different points, or at least understood both applications, but deployed double consciousness as a rhetorical device designed to engage the 'talented tenth' (Du Bois 1903) that he was trying to stir into political action.

Black (2012) also sees double consciousness as a potentially positive metaphor - as something that we should aim to instil in others, including those with power. He uses the term multilateral double consciousness:

*Instead of black double consciousness being unilateral, it would be part of an equal negotiation where all parties share, explore, critique, and develop their views of themselves and others. This would mean that the imposition of identities would be replaced by the awareness and practice of mutual construction of identities. Double consciousness would change from a form of oppression of some to a form of dialogue and negotiation for all. Absence of double consciousness would change from a privilege for the dominant to a form of insight and shared inquiry into social formation of identities, on equal terms and with mutual dependency between all parties. (Black, 2012 p 304).*

That seems highly productive for this thesis and for what I, as a pedagogue, am aiming to develop in my own consciousness, and encourage in others. Black's (2012) formulation has an underpinning adherence to inter-subjectivity and mutual negotiation. Black's formulation also recognises that double consciousness can still cause tensions and distress, but that is a burden, or gift, to be shared.

However, on reflection, I think the term 'multilateral double consciousness' is confusing. It is ambiguous as to whether the multiple is referring to people or concepts. If it refers to people, would two people, as happened in the data, be multiple. If it is to involve more than two people, as also happened in the data, then the consciousness will cease to be a double, and be multiple. Alternatively, if the multiplicity applies to the perspectives alone rather than the people, that could constitute multiple perspectives of just one person.

For this reason, I instead use the term intersubjective consciousness. Inter-subjectivity is, as Scheff (2006) states, conceptualised as *"the sharing of subjective states by two or more individuals."* (Scheff et al, 2006, 172). Also the implication of inter-subjectivity is about mutual meaning creating through *'the interplay of differently organized experiential worlds'* (Stolorow & Atwood, 2002, p 2). Perspectives involved in that meaning making could be binary or multiple (and certainly multi-layered), whatever the number of people, although there would need to be at least two. Finally the term intersubjective consciousness links well to Baizerman's (1989) existential idea of 'encounter', already discussed as influential in the canon of youth and community work, and intersubjective notions of recognition (Benjamin, 1998, Butler, 2000). This conceptualisation will be built upon in the final chapter and it is fundamental to our

vision of how to co-produce the pedagogical practitioner. I see this as a clarification of Black's vision, rather than an extension of it, and one that is conceptually clearer.

I think Orne's formulation is in danger of minimising the tension a double consciousness engenders - being aware of others' negative views may build stigma resistance, but it can still be distressing. Positively, Orne's analysis usefully identifies how LGBTQ people encounter 'middle positions', between hostility and acceptance, in their encounters with others. He criticises Goffman (1958) and others for only talking about these extremes, whereas many people are often 'ambiguously hostile, uncertain, 'tolerant', socially aware or invasively questioning of them upon learning of their sexuality' (Orne, 2013 p. 230). This was far more representative of the nature of heteronormativity in this study. Orne (2013) explored how 'queer' people respond to these encounters, identifying three strategies; engagement - 'purposefully standing in the way of hostile views of others in an attempt to educate them', deflection - 'tailoring their identity label to be more comprehensible for the uninitiated' and avoidance - 'cutting the person off from future interaction' (p. 230). I use this schema extensively in my analysis.

### ***Transgressive heterosexualities and transgressive heterosexuals***

Two relevant debates within the queer studies literature, particularly in terms of queer pedagogy, are whether heterosexuality can be queered, and whether straight people can queer it. I found heterosexuality to be a very important site for a pedagogic practice. There is a history of sexuality being carried by non-heterosexuals - heterosexuality being absent and ill defined – the opposite of gay is normal, not straight. It is also practically important as the majority of my colleagues and students identified as straight. Unless everyone realises that heteronormativity impacts on them directly, our pedagogic practice will only ever be education about the other, rather than being potentially liberatory. As I shall explore within the queer pedagogy section, trying to interrupt heteronormativity as an individual and within isolated modules has limited uses. (Bryson and de Castell, 1994).

A live debate within queer pedagogy is the degree to which it is possible, and desirable, to pedagogically trouble heterosexuality within a heteronormative matrix. Beaseley (2010) notes that heterosexuality is often written off in the literature as compulsory, a social construction, 'monolithic', unthinking, devoid of radical potential and 'not fun'

(Beasley 2010). For many the idea of 'queer' and subversive heterosexuality is, directly or implicitly, seen as an oxymoron (Beasley 2005, p112). The first piece to discuss, and reject, the idea of queer heterosexuals was Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1994) in 'Virgins and Queers: Rehabilitating Heterosexuality'. They rejected the project as avoiding many of the feminist arguments about the repressive nature of heterosexuality. Taking a Butlerian line, they also argued that as heterosexuality defines and creates genders, and that the queer project is attempting to undo this. To identify as heterosexual simply re-inscribes the binary - a queer heterosexual is tautological.

Schlichter's piece 'Queer at last: Straight Intellectuals and the Desire for Transgression' (2003) is similarly critical of the idea, although her later writings (2008) are more supportive. She is wary of academic appropriation of the queer project, something Butler recognises as inevitable:

*The queer heterosexual as the unrightful appropriator of sexual minorities' specific knowledges and as a subject who uses his engagement with Queer Theory as an evasion of the interrogation of his own privileged status. (Butler, 1992 p12)*

Several writers therefore exclusively see non-heterosexual sexualities as the site for resistance to heteronormativity, and holding the potential for social change (Ahmed 2006; Chancy 2008; Shugart & Waggoner 2008). O'Rourke (2005) maintains, building on Butler's notion of transgressing from within (1996), that the queer project always needs to undo essentialist sexualities, and that includes recognising a multiplicity of heterosexualities. Dismissal of straight subversions and debinarizations of sexual norms may lead to a new and potentially more harmful binary, of straight/*everything queer* (2001, p201). For her heterosexualities and heterosexual acts are part of the queer multiplicity and need to be acknowledged as such. Indeed, to ignore heterosexuality, which at least at the moment, is constructed as the majority, re-inscribes other sexualities as permanently at the margins. As O'Rourke (2016) states, being able to queer and recognise the multiplicity of the majority sexuality, and make it transgressive of heteronormativity, has much more potential to the wider project of 'queering everything'.

Heterosexuality has a long history. Foucault famously deconstructed it throughout his history of sexuality. O'Rourke (2005) cites Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*



(1949) as a root source of the project. Similarly, feminists from the sixties onwards, from Betty Friedan to Kate Millett, were a part of denaturalising heterosexuality by 'publicly marking it as problematic' (Katz, 1995(2007), p113). I have already mentioned the contributions of writers such as Wittig and Rich. However, it is worth reiterating that queer theory troubled the notion of both gender and sexuality as problematic, inextricably linked and constructed through heteronormativity. While the idea of a queer heterosexuality was propounded in activism (Smith, 1997) from 1991, Karl Knappman of Queer Nation famously saying that a heterosexual cannot be gay, but a straight person can be queer, it was not until '*Queer with a Twist*' was published in 2000 edited by Lindermann and Thomas that the idea of troubling heteronormativity from within and creating a new heterosexuality became academically respectable.

Whereas Lindermann and Thomas's (2000) work largely examined the potential and possibility of contesting heterosexuality from within, it was the volume '*Thinking Straight: The Power, the Promise and the Paradox of Heterosexuality*' edited by Chrys Ingraham (2005) that effectively brought together how heterosexuality was actually being contested. Heasley's (2005) aforementioned chapter giving a taxonomy of straight queer masculinities is seminal. For her they fall into two categories. Firstly, straights who are consciously, to one degree or another, challenging heteronormativity and embracing queer, including social justice straight queers, elective straight queers, committed straight queers and stylistic straight queers (although as the name implies this is more stylistic than political). Secondly, those that are unable or unwilling to embrace a hegemonic masculinity, but do not embrace the idea of queer. These are sissy boys, and, perhaps the more disturbing, males 'living in the shadow of masculinity' including informed inactives, those scared stuck, and uninformed inactives.

Brickell (2005) also outlines a typology of heteronormative views on sexuality politics. His typology included libertarians, liberals, conservatives and neo-liberals and he also explored their associated discourses. The primary discourse across these was a construction that heterosexuals are defending themselves against a gay tyranny. According to this logic 'gays' have firstly infiltrated key agencies, from family planning to the royal family to the BBC, and hijacked them. Secondly they have colonised public space, with events such as 'gay pride', and 'art', and the construction of gay only villages (implying that such acts, if allowed at all, should be conducted in

private). Thirdly 'gays' are policing people's minds, making them feel guilty for being heterosexual, perverting their children, and policing the media, linguistically signified by the term 'politically correct', which is invariably used negatively.

This is constructed as a battle over what is ordinary, a code for normal, and by implication, what is outside, inside, marked and unmarked, within that normality. Brickell (2005) asks whether this normality, while certainly heterosexual, is homophobic or not. He concludes that, while this is not necessarily so, the totalitarian image of those on the outside, the homosexuals, trying to get inside, to attack the heterosexual, dominates. A second construction Brickell (2005) notes within this discourse is that ordinariness and normal are also conflated with neutral. It is the apolitical heterosexual that is being tyrannised by the political gay community. 'Gays' want more than equality, they want special privileges and their own space, which makes them political, when space should be neutral ie heterosexual. This unpicking of the nature of the heteronormative very much informed this thesis, especially in the fifth and sixth chapter where we begin to trouble heteronormativity, and tried to help people construct a more transgressive, or at least not homophobic heterosexuality – a key component of which is recognising the public/ private divide in sexuality is not neutral. I work from the premise that we need to countenance creating a counter narrative to the hegemonic cultural heteronormativity that Brickell describes.

### **Chapter three: Research paradigms, methodological approach and methods.**

I have already established that this study sits within the paradigm of critical realism. I will now outline the methodology I have used, the methods and ethical considerations.

#### ***Critical Realism as a research paradigm***

Critical realism has an objectivist ontology and a relativist epistemology (Archer; Bhaskar, 1993, 1996, 2008; Bystag and Munkvold, 2011; Manicas, 2006; Sayer, 2000), whereby a real world exists, but our knowledge of it is contingent, contextual, fallible and socially constructed. In this vein critical realists call for a break between ontology and epistemology. Critical realism accepts most post-modern critiques of a positivist epistemology in so far as its desire to discover truths, and absolute causal relationships, is impossible (Archer 1995, 2000, Bhaskar, 1996, 1993) and in the case of social science, undesirable. From Bhaskar's (1996) perspective our explanations for phenomena need only explain what is known at the time, and it does not matter that they are contingent, as they must evolve as new knowledge and relations are uncovered.

Bhaskar (1996, 1993) also posited a new aetiology, with a different view of causality. Scientists do not need to prove absolute truths, or find universal correlations. Their epistemological claims will therefore always be relative, contextual and mediated through imprecise and ideological language. This allows for a bridge between critical pedagogy, which has a Marxist materialist ontological position, and queer pedagogy, which is more post-modern and de-constructivist in origin. It also means that the concept of human nature and human agency need not be abandoned, something central to the critical pedagogic project - it is just that our conceptualisations of it will be partial, and will continually need to evolve. Ty (2010) detected several epistemological and ontological 'breaks' in Freire's work. Critical realism allows us to see this as evolutionary rather than incoherent. This ontological/epistemological positioning is also a useful device for exploring the pedagogic utility, and limitations, of essentialist, and strategic essentialist, (Spivak, 1988) LGBTQ identities, and how they may need to evolve over time, ie they solidify into dogma and ideology (Archer 2003, 2010).

Agency is also crucial to interrupting heteronormativity. There seems to be a danger in presenting the heterosexual matrix as monolithic, a closed hegemony, with little potential for agency or change. Heywood and Ghail (2012) wrote about how pre- high school children's sexual behaviours, play and identities are not as firmly located within

the heterosexual matrix as one might suppose. They argue that an over-imbrication of pre-existing concepts onto empirical evidence may be limiting how we can develop further knowledge and understanding in this area (Haywood & Ghaill, 2012). Critical realism's aetiological loosening of casual explanations and critique of the demand for independent correlations in positivism, allows for multiple explanations and evolution of ideas, and therefore for agency to arise (Archer, 2003, 2010).

Critical realism's aetiology allows for agency in another crucial way. It claims that, not only is there an objective world, there are real causal mechanisms in that world, physical and social, independent of human perception, but as our perception of them is partial at best, our account of them is equally partial and contingent. This challenges both positivist and relativist accounts, which Bhaskar calls 'ontologically monovalent'. For positivists any phenomena, including causal mechanisms, need to be observed and measured to be considered empirical. For relativists, phenomena need to be a part of an individual's subjective perception and meaning making. As Martinez et al (2014) note, this leaves no room for absence or potential, things that may or may not be active, and are not understood. It leaves the potential that things may exist in the social world, and act on the world, independent of our perception or measurement of them.

For this study, that there may be something transfactual (Martinez et al, 2014) about ones sexuality, gives a person room to feel outside our received hegemony and therefore have the potential to challenge the social constructions we are subject to. Otherwise, heteronormativity would be an unbreakable hegemony, and inescapable part of the ideological state apparatus, yet even within the most oppressive regimes people's impulses come through such conditioning. There is therefore potential to rescue the idea of agency. It is an impulse, logical or not, and while we may not be able to escape our language to articulate it, we are nevertheless aware of it, and it disrupts us. This disruption allows us to break, albeit temporarily, our social conditioning.

#### *Agency and the usefulness of temporality.*

While Bhaskar was primarily a scientist, Mary Archer was a social scientist, and a critical realist. Through books including *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*, (1995), *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*, (2000) and *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*, (2003) she was central to the structure and

agency debate. She criticised approaches she calls ‘methodological individualism’ that favours agency, for ‘upward conflation’ in that they deny the impact, and constraints, of society. She equally criticises ‘methodological holism’, that sees structure as paramount, for downward conflation, denying the impact that individual agency has. She is also critical of attempts to conflate structure and agency, particularly Giddens’ concept of structuration. Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory sees structure and agency as inseparable and mutually informing. For Archer, while this is an attempt to allow for both, in reducing them to each other, it renders them unanalyzable.

Archer sees agency and structure as distinct entities, not denying that there is an interaction, but it is in separating them that we allow for their interaction to be understood, something she call the ‘morphogenetic approach’. She adds a temporal distinction to this saying that current social and cultural structures are a result of past social interaction between agents, which condition the current context within which social agents operate. In this respect, she views social conditioning as coming first. However, how these agents then react to their current conditioning will, over time, change these social and cultural structures which will set the conditions for future social actors. Being distinct, and operating in different temporal spheres, makes it possible to unpick structure and agency analytically. Firstly, we need to isolate and analyse how structural and/or cultural factors provide a context of action for agents. It is then possible to investigate how those factors shape the subsequent interactions of agents and how those interactions in turn reproduce or transform the initial context. Through doing so, argues Archer, it is possible to give empirical accounts of how structural and agential phenomena interlink *over time* rather than merely stating their theoretical interdependence. I use this morphogenetic approach throughout my analysis to try and separate understand structural and agential forces as they evolve.

#### *A typology of reflectors*

Archer’s work on reflection (most comprehensively expressed in *The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity*’ in 2012) is also of interest. Reflection for Archer is not the reflection of a practitioner emphasised in the youth and community work literature, but the everyday reflections of young people and communities - our ‘internal conversation’ (Archer, 2012). She has developed a typology of reflexive actors, and

while this has the limitations of any such schema, it is a useful heuristic device for examining the dynamics of heteronormativity in this thesis and exploring the reflexive capacities we are trying to encourage in the pedagogic practitioner. This is distinct from Finlay's (2005) dimensions of reflexivity that I utilize and add to my own reflections. I would, of course, consider myself to be a meta-reflector, although I to recognize that this is not always the case.

*Communicative reflexives* think and talk. Their internal conversations, and personal and social identities need to be affirmed and discussed with others in their immediate circle. They reduce their aspirations according to their context and constraints, and do not engage in projects that exceed their contextual confines. They reproduce their familial backgrounds and show contentment with their lot. From a more theoretical point of view, they can be considered as 'socially conservative Habermasians and contented Bourdieusians' (Atkinson, 2014, p125).

*Autonomous reflexives* think and act, are generally more internal in their conversations. They are goal orientated and will challenge and change their context if it is not compatible with their stated goals, rejecting constraints but very accepting of any enablements. They often have projects from an early stage that challenge their received contexts, but not the structures that allow those contexts to arise. Archer also notes that they often have a Rawlsian sense of fairness and justice but have a structural conservatism and engage in actions that re-enforce and re-inscribe the system and strengthen its integration.

*Meta-flexives* exercise critical reflexivity. Often idealists, they critically reflect on themselves and their situations, and then reflect on their reflections. Their internal conversation is directed towards their selves. They seek self-knowledge and practice self-critique for the sake of self-improvement and self-realization. They are critical of their context, environment and received social constructions. However, as a consequence they are contextually unsettled, continuously on the move searching for a new job, a new career, a new life, a new self, so they are not as loyal as communicative reflectors: if their family and friends do not share their goals, they move on from them. They are immune to constraints and enablements as they cannot be bought off by inducements and will be downwardly mobile if it realises their ideals.

Only *fractured reflexives* fit into the structuralist view of individuals without agency. Alienated and reified, they are the people to which things simply happen. Their backgrounds are too fractured and painful for them to truly reflect and develop. Reflection and internal conversations (Archer, 2010, 2012) make them emotionally distressed and cognitively disorientated. As a consequence, their identities are equally fractured and they are often at the mercy of their social environment. However, while they have temporarily forfeited control over their own life and can only passively register what happens to them, this is not a static state: for reflective abilities can be worked on.

Archer (2010) admits that people are inevitably a mix of these, and for the need to further theorise their origin, interaction and social implications. She is also criticised (Akram & Hogan, 2015, Atkinson, 2014, Blatterer, 2013, Faruggia & Woodman, 2015) for re-orientating rather than abandoning Bourdieu's notion of habitus, as is her expressed intent. As Atkinson (2014) notes, one's preferred mode of reflexivity is pre-reflective, and therefore a product of habitus. The relationship between agency, reflexivity, social context and identity remain nuanced, complex, multi-layered and shifting. Nevertheless, her keen defence of agency, rather than the more pessimistic view of Bourdieu, gives us scope for using her ideas in our analysis of heteronormativity, and more importantly, in examining the kind of student practitioner that can challenge it, that we want to be a part of co-creating.

#### *Resonance with the notion of praxis*

The notion of praxis is to change things. Implicit in this is a notion of unifying action and theory. Given this, the relativism of hermeneutic post structural accounts is unsatisfactory, with knowledge claims being highly localised, relative, non-generalizable and context specific. Ontologically there are no truths to be known, only perspectives to explicate. As a youth and community worker, I want to find ideas that have commonality; make connections between people; build solidarity and enable people to find ways of changing and challenging the structural forces that bind them, not just to uncover highly individualised accounts of temporary meaning making.

In terms of aetiology, a commitment to action and change means that youth and community work aims to go beyond theorising the constructions of meaning of the players in our work, and seeks to inform others about their own practice. We want to

inform others' practice, to see what educationalists and other students and practitioners can learn from these understandings. However, as I have stated, we do not wish to discover any objective truths, or develop positivist theories. We do hope that the research can serve as a point of reflection for others on their own work and 'illuminate' their practice (Higgs and Cherry, 2009), rather than just being an ahistorical, atheoretical account of the meaning creating of those involved in the research. Critical realism seems to broadly coalesce with this position in its aetiology.

### ***Methodology: Self study***

This was a self-study. There are many approaches to studies of the self: most commonly auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004, Ellingson and Ellis, 2008), a primarily ethnographic approach: and heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990), a primarily phenomenological approach. As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) note, the differences between these approaches are largely in their focus. While I am concerned with exploring and illuminating nuanced life-worlds and exploring where they sit within larger cultures (hence the wish to illuminate the nature of heteronormativity on the course), my primary focus is on my practice, and that of colleagues, in interrupting heteronormativity.

I thereby undertook a S-STEP (Self Study of Teacher Educational Practices) study (Berry, 2004, Loughran 2002, Loughran et al, 2004, Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). S-STEP emerged as a special interest group within the American Educational Research Association in the nineties. In situating myself I have reviewed all the major publications of the field including all issues of *Studying Teacher Education*, a Taylor and Francis journal published since 2005 dedicated to the area, the Conference proceedings from 1996-present of the annual AERA conference dedicated to S-STEP, the *International Handbook of Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (2004) produced by the association, the Springer and Sense series edited by John Loughran, and articles published in other journals cited here.

S-STEP is interested in studies of teacher educators into their own practice, with an aim to improve practice (Loughman et al, 2004). S-STEP draws on both heuristic and autoethnographic approaches, but also on work from reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995; Dewey, 1933; Schon 1983, 1987), participatory action research (e.g., Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kitchen and Stevens, 2004, Mills, 2002) and practitioner research



(e.g., Dadds & Hart, 2001; Day, Calderhead, & Denicolo, 2012, Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). The action elements of S-STEP are focused on the teacher learning from their pedagogic practices and considering how these might be developed, adapted or refined. S-STEP also shares with auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004, Ellingson and Ellis, 2008) a concern with how these individual experiences and behaviours relate and respond to, and are inevitably situated within a particular western, educational, heteronormative context, and what they might say about, and to, that context. A summation of the approach could be:

*A personal, systematic inquiry situated within one's own teaching context that requires critical and collaborative reflection in order to generate knowledge, as well as inform the broader educational field (Samaras, 2010 p54).*

#### *Situating S-STEP within the research paradigms*

S-STEP does not easily fit into the existing research paradigms, but it is compatible with critical realism. It shares with the interpretive paradigm a desire to break with the positivistic scientific approach, and shares in the belief that many phenomena are socially constructed. (Cohen et al, 2007) However, S-STEP differs significantly from interpretative approaches in its epistemology (Lather 1986, Morley 1991) and in its aims (Smith, 1996, 2003, 2007). It is grounded in post-structuralism, believing that self cannot be separated from research or practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004; Cole & Knowles, 2000, Cuenca, 2010). It invokes the notion of praxis in relation to knowledge (Ahmed, 2009, O'Brian, 2008). As such it does not share with positivism or interpretivism the desire for the researcher to be objective, bracketing off their views, or for the researcher to be a passive collector and interpreter of data, it is to be an active creator of it (Ahmed, 2009).

The knowledge it wishes to explore and create is not objective or neutral, as positivism claims to, nor is it about documenting life worlds and allowing voices and perspectives to be heard, (as in interpretive paradigms). It is about actively creating knowledge, and not in a neutral sense, but with a particular moral stance. It doing so it may uncover unheard voices, and as a political project it will undoubtedly wish to do this, but it will also act upon these voices, interact with them, and even change them.

S-STEP differs from traditional action research in that no 'formal' change process in others is envisaged, apart from in the practice of the subject of the studies. As such

respondents are not co-researchers as we might expect in more 'conventional' forms of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988); neither is there an expectation of them that they will change. However, its intent goes beyond theorising the constructions of meaning of myself and intends to inform others about their practice, or serve as a point of reflection and potential illumination. As Loughran & Northfield (1998) point out:

*Self-study builds on reflection as the study begins to reshape not just the nature of the reflective processes but also the situation in which these processes are occurring...reflection is a personal process...self-study takes these processes and makes them public, thus leading to another set of processes that need to reside outside the individual. (Loughran & Northfield, 1998,p.15)*

As such, it echoes post positivist concerns as discussed earlier when considering the benefits of critical realism. As Bulloch and Pinnegar (2001) suggest '*The aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle*' (Bulloch and Pinnegar, 2001 p.20).

I also retain some critical concerns (Cohen et al, 2000). The research reveals contradictions and disguised power structures, which actors, including myself, were party to, and necessitated reflection. I am a white, male, bi-sexual, working class, head of department, and this is not neutral. As a self-study, the main subject I aimed to act upon and change is myself, and my own practice. Moustakas believes that studying the self will 'contribute explicitly to the transformation of the researcher's sense of self or identity' (Moustakas 1990 p14). In this way I have critical concerns to empower myself, and the research has impacted on my own identity as an educator. (Hiles, 2001).

#### *Analytic and evocative S-STEP research*

Within auto-ethnography a distinction is often made between analytic and evocative approaches. As Ellingson and Ellis (2008) note, '*analytic autoethnographers focus on developing theoretical explanations of broader social phenomena, whereas evocative autoethnographers focus on narrative presentations that open up conversations and evoke emotional responses*'. (p. 445). This distinction is not traditionally made in S-STEP research. I see this as an omission, particularly if one's intent is to influence others' practice. A special edition of *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, has been dedicated to this (2006) and I will explore where I sit in relation to analytic and

evocative auto-ethnography, or, as I claim, on a continuum between them (Ngunjiri, 2010) as it informs my concerns, and the methodology I have followed.

Anderson (2006) developed the notion of analytic auto-ethnography, which he saw as emerging from, and compatible with, more traditional ethnographic approaches.

Evocative auto-ethnographers such as Denzin (2006) and Ellis and Bochner (2006) question analytic approaches, arguing that they simply return to the positivist research agenda. They give post-structural and anti-foundational critiques, which they see as central to auto-ethnography. Conversely, analytic auto-ethnographical researchers such as Walford (2004) and William & Ziani (2016) have accused evocative auto-ethnography of abandoning social context, turning instead to 'self-indulgent form of writing more akin to therapy than social science' (Walford 2004, 412).

I would concur with other authors (Ngunjiri, 2010) that an oppositional distinction between the analytic and the evocative is not constructive and is in danger of reinscribing the binaries that auto-ethnography is meant to challenge (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). While I acknowledge the revelatory strength of the evocative approach, I think my project sits more within Anderson's analytic framework. Anderson's (2006) approach has been labelled both realist and critical realist (Walford 2004, p412), in that it involves theorising beyond the individual with a desire to give a tentative account of observable phenomena that has resonance with others. For me, the link between analytic and evocative approaches functions at this epistemological level. To look at auto-ethnography through a critical realist lens, we do not try and explain or find correlations in our practice in a positivistic sense, or simply evoke emotions in others. Rather, we seek to invoke a response in them that connects with their experiences, and gives contingent meaning. We can have analytic and evocative concerns.

I follow Anderson's (2006) protocol which requires analytical auto-ethnographic accounts to have five features. Firstly, as a researcher I am a 'complete' insider, secondly the focus is on my practice, thirdly, in my reflections I have tried to ensure that I am visible in the research. Fourthly as a researcher I have tried to embed within my approach analytical reflection and commitment to an analytic agenda. Finally, the research needs to engage with others, something Ngunjiri (2010) and Vryan (2006) regard as the most significant departure from an evocative approach, but which has been my intent and a part of my method from the outset. It is generally a key approach

within S-STEP research as a way of mediating and continually discovering the self (Berry, 2004, Loughran and Russell, 2002, 2004).

*The notion of the self and others within S-STEP.*

It seems important to outline how I am using the concept of self, and how this relates to others, culture and pedagogy. Other self-researching approaches recognise this need (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 2). Ellis and Bochner (2006) conceptualise auto-ethnography as a combination of giving attention to ‘writing and research processes (*graphy*), culture (*ethnos*), and self (*auto*)’ (ibid p 23).

Taylor and Coia (2014) note the term is somewhat contested and used differently in the S-STEP literature. However, it is possible to trace several areas of common ground (Ellis and Bochner 2006, Ham and Kane, 2004, Hamilton and Pinnegar, 2009, Loughran and Northfield 1998, Taylor and Coia, 2014), namely that the self is situated and socially constructed, that it is social in nature, evolving and contradictory. However, it is in recognising these aspects that we have a gateway to understanding the other, with pedagogic practice as the mediating mechanism. I will extrapolate.

Having a grounding in post structural accounts of research, S-STEP sees the self as socially constructed, an integral and inseparable aspect of the research process, locally situated and historically determined. (Taylor and Coia, 2014). Stemming from this it sees the self as inherently social. This is important because one of the criticisms of S-STEP is that being self-orientated, it is individualistic and in danger of re-inscribing hegemonies based on individualism and neo-liberalism. Instead it sees the self as part of a web constituting the self, the other and the wider culture (Chang, 2008). As Feldman et al explain ‘*when we investigate the self, we are ‘examining one’s self in relation to others’*’ (Feldman, Paugh, & Mills, 2004, p. 971).

This vision of the self is not one of an individual ‘influenced’ by the external world. It is the inverse of this: the self is the gateway through which we understand the world. As Elliott says, we make sense of the world through a negotiation between ‘the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical’ (Elliott quoted in Brown, 2004, p. 528). As Taylor and Coia (2014) note, in order to understand our practice, we study ourselves in the context of our practice (Taylor and Coia, 2014, p10). Ham and Kane (2004) suggest that self-study has its epistemological origins in the fourth turn in research, the crisis of representation (Stronach & MacLure, 1997; Trifonas, 2000;

Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Dadds & Hart, 2001; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997) and in the reflexive turn in ethnography (Walford, 1991; Woods, 1996). Notwithstanding our previous qualifying discussion of reflective practice, self-study draws on the ‘Schon strand’ of reflective practice with an epistemological belief that ‘only the actor can know an action, by virtue of experiencing it and by means of a constant dialectic self-reflection both ‘on’ it and ‘in’ it’ (Schon, 1987, 45).

However, this starting point and gateway of the self is also consciously fragile, developing and contradictory. This should not be seen negatively but, following this thesis’s critical realist approach, as entirely appropriate. Whitehead (1989, 2009) discussed the self as a ‘living contradiction’ and this has become a key concept in S-STEP (Loughran et al, 2004). Others do not see us as the people and pedagogues that we see ourselves as, and our self-belief does not always match up with our practice. This is not a flaw in the approach, but the engine that drives it. The contributors to Taylor and Coia’s 2014 book *‘Gender, feminism and Queer Theory in the Self-study of Teacher Education Practices’*, discuss the self in a Deleusian sense, as a perpetual sense of becoming and negotiation, something that will come into sharp focus in our chapter examining transgressive heterosexualities. This again concurs with my critical realist stance. For Archer (2000), the mistake of much social science is to conflate the *sense* of self, from which stems our agency, with the *concept* of the self, which is ever evolving. As Taylor and Coia (2014) maintain, there is a ‘a process of coming to know in S-STEP; theory as a way to disrupt, confirm, and shape interpretation; and the difficulty of conducting research from an ontological, rather than an epistemological stance.’ (ibid, p12)

Ham and Kane (2004 p 128) concur that, within such an ontological and epistemological stance, having direct access to our experiences is insufficient. The ‘authority of experience’ (Munby and Russell, 1995, Loughran and Northfield 1998), derives from ‘the iterative and repeated self-critical analysis of that experience in a conscious attempt to ‘know’ or understand it.’ (Ham and Kane, 2004 p 137). Part of that is making ourselves vulnerable to the experience and opinion of others. Ham and Kane explore Hammersley’s (1992) critique of self-study and other auto-ethnographic forms of research. They respond to his criticism and conclude that self-researchers have access to their own intentions and motives, a deeper understanding of their own behavior, long-term experience of the setting being studied, an ability to tap into a

wider set of resources and are in a position to test theoretical ideas in a way a mere observer never could do. However, they go on to say that in order to achieve this, researchers need to actively involve others.

When researchers study the self through self-study, we consider our students and their perspectives (Kuzmic, 2002). I will come to the process of involving others when considering my research process. This idea also extends to our intent, as explored previously. To re-iterate: our intention is that what we learn will impact not only ourselves but also on students and colleagues. As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) suggest: *‘our understanding about teaching should appear not just in our own practice but, also in the practice of our students, and therefore, in the lives and actions of their students’* (ibid, 2009 p242). However, S-STEP researchers recognise their limitations, both desirable in terms of ethics and aetiological in terms of reach. We respect others’ autonomy, recognise the limit of situated, transitory and partial nature of our ideas.

#### *Methodological procedure for S-STEP research*

LaBoskey (2004) outlines four aspects of S-STEP methodology that I followed. The first is an ‘orientation to improvement’ (p859-860). La Boskey outlines a process for this that broadly follows the action research reflective learning cycle as developed by Dewey, Lewin, Boud and others. In terms of the act of declaration about my sexuality, I worked with four different sets of students at different points in the course of the research and I learned and developed my practice through associated pedagogic incidents. The second aspect of S-STEP she outlines is the interactive and participatory nature of the self-study. She describes this as *‘interactions with our colleagues near and far, with our students, with the educational literature, and with our own previous work . . . to confirm or challenge our developing understandings’* (LaBosky, 2004 p. 859). I reflected on the thoughts of colleagues, both within the institution and from other HEIs, throughout the study.

The third aspect is that self-study uses a variety of multiple, primarily qualitative methods (pp. 859–860) with an emphasis on innovative techniques. I will describe in the methods section the variety of strategies I have employed. The fourth aspect is to share one’s result with the wider community for ‘deliberation, further testing, and judgment’ (p. 860). I did this through my colleagues, but also through the active involvement of ex-students, colleagues and ex-colleagues, and other lecturers in higher

education, through my professional association (TAG – Training Agencies Group: the professional association of lecturers in youth and community work).

In addition to these processes, I adopted and adapted some of the conceptual insights of heuristic research as developed by Moustakas (1990). While his approach is self-declared as phenomenological, it offers some insight into the processes of self-dialogue necessary for any study of the self. Even though there was external scrutiny later, what I selected from my observations to concentrate on had a discernable impact. It is also fair to say that these processes are under-theorised in the S-STEP literature (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001). The difference I saw is that I was not attempting to ‘bracket’ my bias, or be objective about my experience. I wished to have some awareness of the factors that impacted on and determined it, so that I and others could acknowledge this. ‘Self dialogue’ is where one allows the phenomenon to ‘speak directly to one's own experience’ (Moustakas, 1990 p 45). It requires one to engage in a process of self-inquiry, and an attitude of openness to one's own experience. There is a specific emphasis on exploring ‘tacit knowledge’ as well as knowledge that is easily reached and codifiable. Tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) cannot easily be described or explained and as such is ‘private, personal, and subjective’. However, such knowledge is not unknowable, but rather it needs ‘intuition’, another heuristic concept, to bring together the easily knowable ‘subsidiary factors’ with the tacit ‘focal factors’ to make a complete body of knowledge. (Polanyi, 1966)

To be able to develop this intuition one needs to be able to ‘focus’ and to ‘indwell’. The concept of ‘focussing’ is adapted from Gendlin (1963, 1978, 2003). Richards (2009), who conducted a heuristic piece of research into being mixed-race described it as *‘the ability to develop a reflexive gaze which allows one to receive the content of one’s experience without attempting to control or manipulate it’* (ibid, p 15). He found that he needed to be open to the unjust manifestations of race (which I do with sexuality) and the emotions that this engenders, but he also needed to find a way to put these aside to allow the key issues to emerge. Similarly, Key and Kerr (2011), again building on Gendlin’s (ibid) work, describes how the practitioner moves between experiencing and symbolising that experience and that the process is ‘iterative, and takes time, discipline and patience’ (Key and Kerr p32). They see the process as having a momentum as our symbolism is refined and fresh insights are able to emerge. Richards (2009 p12), citing Palmer (2004) argues that we need to create inner and external places to consider this.

## *Methods*

In order to undertake my research, I engaged in a number of methods. These included:

- Personal memory data around my understanding of my sexuality and its use as a pedagogic tool including a timeline of my own thinking and understandings of my own sexuality and the use of self as a critical pedagogic tool.
- A personal journal of my thoughts and feelings around how I managed my sexuality, its pedagogic impact and the events that unfolded. This included both a periodic diary and a series of critical incidents.
- Reflections on interviews and focus groups with colleagues, ex-colleagues, youth and community work lecturers from other institutions and ex-students, sometimes quoting these people, but within the context of my reflections.
- Ongoing critical conversations with a number of the above, often where I would come back for clarifications, or discussions on points they made, or to seek their views on themes I was uncovering.
- Emails, correspondence, reports, letters and other artifacts, both historical, and obtained during the research.
- Detailed case studies on three students and two specific pedagogical interventions, one on the team's overall approach to creating a pedagogical practitioner and another on a small group of students who asked within an open module for a curriculum based on queer theory and heteronormativity.
- A number of songs exploring emerging themes within the research, and functioning as both memory stimulus at all levels of reflection, although primarily at the third or fourth cycles of reflection (I will explain these cycles below).

## *Memory work*

Collecting personal memory data has an established tradition within auto-ethnography and S-STEP research (Chang, 2008, Weber & Mitchell, 2000). However, memory work is also heavily critiqued and contested (Keitley, 2010) with concerns about its reliability (Nelson, 1993) and validity (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). Typically, Golden (1992) talks about cognitive biases in memory accounts, whereby we select, reinterpret or even



create the memories of events that are most socially acceptable, or fit the narrative we wish to portray of ourselves socially (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982) and/or to ourselves (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). However, Crotty (1998) and Hayler (2012) do not feel that our memories are any more subjective or relativist than our current account of events. Crotty notes how we always weave the *'personal narrative that best suits our self-image'* (Crotty, 1998 p54) even when reflecting in the moment. Some phenomenological scholars (Crotty, 1998, Pruis, 1996) see such subjectivity as inevitable and that the aim of the research is to uncover such *'worlds of intersubjectivity, interaction, community and communication, in and out of which we come to be persons and to live as persons'* (Crotty, 1998, p. 62).

However, not being a phenomenologist, and taking an approach towards the analytic end of the spectrum of auto-ethnographies, I wished to eliminate as much bias as possible from my historical recollection and memory work. Snelgrove and Hartz (2010) note how general memory accounts tend to lose salience and emotional content and are unreliable in terms of recollections of attitudes (Jaspers, Lubbers, and De Graaf, 2009) and beliefs. We tend to view our attitudes as unchanging, when they are not, as we see previous attitudes through the prism of our current views. Ericsson & Simon (1980) and Yarrow et al (1970) found that memory is more accurate with critical incidents as opposed to more general incidents. I will come back to explore my structure for critical incidents on page 62. Nelson (1993) distinguishes between generic, episodic and autobiographical memory. The most accurate memories are where an incident has become part of our autobiographical narrative. However, our interpretation of such formative incidents is most likely to be subject to the narrative we want to create of ourselves. (Snelgrove and Hartz, 2010) A balance needs to be struck here. I have therefore chosen to privilege my coming out incidents in a professional capacity. While I view them as critical, they are not fundamental to me, as, say, first incidents of coming out to friends and family were.

I have also examined a few incidents of becoming aware of my sexuality, but not the most pertinent ones in my narrative. Miller, Cardinal, & Glick (1997) talk about trying to ameliorate bias by exploring critical incidents in a free way. Rather than working through set questions or having a critical incident template, free association, as a method, more accurately captures the emotional content of events. Therefore, I allowed myself to recall these events and write about them, applying analysis afterwards.

Beckett, Da Vanzo, Sastry, and Panis (2001) recommend using artifacts and emotional stimuli such as songs, photos etc to evoke memories. I have largely chosen songs to do this. I have collected songs from when I was younger which, as I shall explore later, are often useful for capturing the emotions of the time, and even the way of thinking (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). These songs also served as a way of interrupting my own narrative, particularly in reminding me of the attitudes I had in the past.

### *Journaling and reflective practice*

Reflective journaling has a long history in both youth and community work and qualitative research (Belton, 2005, Boud, David et al, 1985, Holly, 1989, Klug, 2002, Moon, 1999, Rainer, 1978). However, defining reflection is not an easy task. The consensus is that reflection is a term frequently used, but inadequately defined (Atkins and Murphy 1993, Reid 1993, James and Clarke 1994, Lyons 1999). Difficulties are caused by a lack of clarity and commonly understood terminology (Reid 1993, Teekman 2000, Carroll et al 2000). It is useful to distinguish between the tools for reflection and the process of reflection.

Methods of reflection also depend on the object of concern, and the many models reflect these concerns. Schon (1987), for example, uses reflection as a mechanism for professional development. Kolb (1994) explores the role of reflection in learning. Habermas (1971) is concerned with its role in the building of theory. Moon (2004) views Dewey (1933) as the most holistic, seeing reflection as a specialised form of thinking ‘a kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious thought’ (Dewey, 33 p 24). Ultimately my aim was for reflexivity, or at least critical reflection. Finlay (2008) provides a useful definition of the reflexive practitioner:

*Reflexive practitioners engage in critical self-reflection: reflecting critically on the impact of their own background, assumptions, positioning, feelings, behaviour while also attending to the impact of the wider organisational, discursive, ideological and political context (Finlay, 2008 p3).*

Reynolds (1998) identifies four characteristics that distinguishes critical reflection from other versions of reflection: (1) its concern to question assumptions; (2) its social rather than individual focus; (3) the particular attention it pays to the analysis of power relations; and (4) its pursuit of emancipation (Reynolds, 1998). In addition to this,

Finlay (2002.2003) identifies five dimensions of reflexivity: introspection; intersubjective reflection; mutual collaboration; social critique and ironic deconstruction, with critical self-reflection as the core to all of these. Finlay and Gough (2008, p. ix) maintain that there is a continuum from reflection to reflexivity with critical reflection somewhere in-between. I was mindful of these dimensions - they informed the reflective questions I asked myself and are present in my analysis.

*Reflections on interviews and critical conversations with others*

Originally I thought there would be co-researchers in this research , particularly colleagues, ex-students and external colleagues. However, for a full participatory approach this would mean involving them in the identification of the need for the research, its design, analysis etc, which has not been the case. There were also potential ethical issues as we shall discuss later, particularly with colleagues. However, they were active participants in that I shared my findings with them, discussed themes and ideas directly gathered information via focus group or interviews on more than one occasion.

Current colleagues and ex-students' perspectives on interrupting heteronormativity will come through my reflections in the journal. I conducted interviews with both, and had three focus groups with my colleagues. Interviewing has a strong tradition within studies of the self (Angrosino, 2007, Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, Ellis, 2004, Fontana & Frey, 2000, Lecomte & Schensul, 1999, Wolcott, 2004). Interviews serve as points of self-reflection and, while I occasionally quote from these interviews they primarily served as a source for my own reflections and the quotes are examined in the context of my reflections. This is a change in my original thinking, in which I saw them as co-researchers, and I will reflect on this in the ethics section. Patton (1980) identifies three types of interviews that can be suitable for studies on the self: informal conversational interviews; general guide interviews; and standardised open-ended interviews. I used a mix of these. In keeping with self-study approaches, the interviews, both group and individual, were fairly unstructured (Chang, 2008, Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, Ellis, 2004), but schedules are provided in appendix ii. They were sent out to participants beforehand to aid the unstructured discussion, akin to focused interviews (Manion et al, 2000).

I also held some critical conversations with participants on themes and ideas as they developed. Anderson (2006) sees full membership in the research group or setting as a key element of analytic auto-ethnography. Sharing the self-narrative with ten youth and community work lecturers was the way in which I attempted to situate and contextualise my narrative alongside others. I wanted to draw out some commonalities as well as stimulate contrary perspectives. I concur that because of its direct and unfettered character, self-study can be used to develop and refine understandings of social processes and situations, while taking the reader to the depths of personal feeling in a way that no other research method can, but I also heed Anderson's (2006) warning against self-absorbed digression and insist on the 'ethnographic imperative of dialogic engagement with others in the social worlds we seek to understand' (p 385).

I also drew on the experience of lecturers from other institutions.. I asked them to keep reflective research journals about how they managed self and their sexuality pedagogically and how this impacted upon students, themselves and on the dynamics of their department. I met twice a year with them to interview them about their reflections. This culminated in a wider group discussion with colleagues at our annual professional conference (TAG/ PALYCW).

I also interviewed key ex-students (although not as co-researchers). Identification of these students was done by my colleagues and myself, but also through an open call to our alumni. They were voluntary sessions. While I no longer had a power relationship with them, there may have been residual feelings of obligation and I had a briefing and discussion with them about this. Challenging power dynamics, with the intention of creating a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) consisting of practitioners, students and academics, is an expressed part of the culture of the department. This transition of power is a recurring discussion point throughout the third year and is actualised through many students coming back as lecturers and supervisors.

#### *Songwriting as a research tool.*

Songwriting as a tool of autoethnography and self-study is acknowledged as being under researched and under theorised in the literature (Bakan, 2013, Bartlat and Ellis, 2009, Carless & Douglas, 2009, 2011). Bakan (2013) concludes that it is an embodied practice, emerging from hermeneutic and phenomenological practices and a medium to explore meaning and interpretation, particularly around identity. I would concur

with Spry that the aim becomes to ‘inspire others to critically reflect upon their own musical experiences in relation to the autoethnographic stories being told.’ (Spry, 2001, p 710). Many authors have concurred with Koestenbau (1991, 2008) that music is a mysterious and implicit art form. (Morris, 2006 Peraino, 2006, Taylor, 2009, 2012) Taylor (2012) sees this as a key element of music being a safe and potentially queer space. For her, its aesthetic qualities of fluidity, temporality, deliberate vagueness and shifting territories of meaning when combined with its performative qualities of theatricality and fantasy, make it a queer space or for experimentation with modes of presentation, with few consequences. Neilsen takes this further saying that songwriting ‘draws upon non-rationalist and non-discursive ways of knowing in order to engage in inquiry practice and produce written forms’ (Neilsen, 2007 p94). Many songwriters themselves talk about the power of the conscious, the danger of over thinking writing, and the importance of struggling at the edge of language. As a form of research, songs have the potential to transcend language and hegemony, and the heterosexual matrix: as such they can be a part of a ‘border pedagogy’ (Coburn, 2010, Giroux, 2014).

My original intention was that songwriting would serve as a third or fourth cycle of reflection, as Moon (1999) would describe, a meta-reflection that would bring together and find themes amongst my, often in the moment or just after the moment, rawer reflections. Indeed, many of the songs I have written and referred to in this study have served that purpose. However, in practice I found that limiting. As Bakan (2014) notes, *songs may function simultaneously as the method, results, and interpretation of research* (Bakan, 2014, p ii). They have served as a crystallising of ideas and inspiration for themes to be explored. They have also served as a space for grappling with meaning, particularly at the limits of language. For Bakan (2014) songs are liminal spaces, of uncertainty, but also creativity. As Boucher and Ellis (2003) say, as a product, songs are ‘*something to be used, not as a conclusion, but a turn in a conversation, not a closed statement but an open question, not a way of declaring this is how it is, but what it could be*’ (Boucher and Ellis 2003 p 506.) They have also served as a method, as some of my pedagogic interventions have involved the use of songs, although not my own. In total I wrote 20 songs for this thesis and they will be named and analysed as part of the data.

## ***Data analysis***

In self-study research, ‘the contextual aspects of the work and the theoretical components remain in the foreground as the researchers come to focus on knowledge generation’ (Hamilton, 2004, p. 402). The data analysis therefore focused on theory generation and pedagogic practice. To interrogate the data, I used a number of strategies. It was a process of constant comparison (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993), and efforts were made to keep the data grounded (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) but there was also an ongoing dialogue, especially in relation to colleagues and students, in keeping with action research approaches (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kitchen and Stevens, 2004; Mills, 2002).

However, self-study data analysis is necessarily conducted through one’s own lens and how one sees the data. Chang (2008) and Wolcott (1994) see data analysis and interpretation as a balancing act in studies of the self. Much of the inductive process will come out in the presentation of data, in my accounts of the processes of data gathering and in my reflective focused accounts. However, in order to be able to bracket some of my conceptions, to test my ability to ‘focus’, and in keeping with some of my critical concerns, I wished to uncover my own biases and ideological constructions, particularly in relation to in-classroom dialogue, where there are fortunately a number of pertinent studies to address power in the talk of the classroom (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, Edwards, 1980, Edwards and Westgate, 1987). I used my critical conversations with colleagues to reflect on these issues.

I was also keen to have an overall structure for my reflections and for how I would analyse or ‘harvest’ them (Klug, 2002, 121-8.) The model I adopted for analyzing data was largely a combination of Finlay’s (2002.2003) five dimensions of reflexivity, Johns’s (1995) questions and frame for guided reflection, Klug’s (2002), prompt questions for reflective diaries and Moon’s (2004) stages of reflection juxtaposed with Platzer et al (1997) Appendix iii outlines the overall structure I tried to implement, including the aims for each stage of reflection and how they relate to Finlay’s (2008) dimensions of reflexivity. I had four stages of reflection, with two types of initial reflective stimuli. The first stage was the initial material, either from an end of the day journal or a critical incident. Across both of these I also adopted Klug’s (2002) principle of emotional honesty, as he states: *Write how you really feel and not how you*

*think you should feel. Record what you really think, not what you believe you ought to think'* (Klug 2002, 56).

In selecting critical incidents I adopted Moon's (2004) structure. For her critical incidents are where we capture raw feelings, context, behaviours, observations and any 'facts'. In terms of what may trigger them, she talks about how they may engender a sense of 'inner discomfort' or 'unfinished business' (Boyd and Fales, 1983) akin to Schon's 'experience of surprise' but also positive versions of this such as elation. In my case it was awareness of heteronormativity, either in how it was affecting me or in other's behavior (often manifest through language or discussion), or was 'present' in other forms more incidentally such as in texts, posters on the wall or even, in one case, the presence of rings and what they signified (sample reflection 5).

I used John's principles of aesthetics, ethics and empirics to frame the reflections themselves, with an aim to deepen the cognitive and emotional reflections. The description of event includes a statement of observations, commentary on personal behaviour and a comment on one's reaction and feelings (also adopting Krugs (2002) principal of emotional honesty). In terms of the principles of aesthetics one asks oneself questions such as what was I trying to achieve? Why did I respond as I did? What were the consequences of that for others and myself? How were others feeling and how did I know this? In terms of ethics I asked myself whether I acted for the best (what John's (1995) calls ethical mapping) and also what other factors, either embodied within me or (embedded within the environment) influenced me. Finally, in terms of empirics I asked what knowledge, concepts and frameworks did or could have informed me, including a comment on context. All of these reflections are to be conducted as quickly after the event as possible.

As time went on the critical incidents took on more of the characteristics of critical analysis and synthesis as themes developed and theoretical frameworks for analysis emerged. I kept the schema as developed but there was more of an emphasis on empirics where theory development occurs, although questions of ethics remained a part of this. Triggers for critical incidents also shifted. While I preserved the criteria of discomfort, elation, surprise, unfinished business etc., there was shift of focus from heteronormativity, per se, towards emerging themes around heteronormativity and its interruption such as heterosexual retreats.

In the end of day journal I adopted Klug's (2002) questions as a stimulus. Initial reflections, both critical incidents and end of day journals, largely fitted into Finlay's core activity of critical reflection and introspection but, again, as time went on I moved more towards the later stages of social critique and deconstruction as the reflections related more to critical analysis and synthesis. In terms of methods of recording, these were largely written or audio recorded depending on what method came quickest to hand. Early on these reflections were characterized by Finlay's (2008) dimensions of introspection and critical self-reflection. I coded these with topical identifiers, and pulled them together into larger categories such as 'reactions to interrupting heteronormativity' and 'team interventions in light of coming out'.

Maxwell (2005) recognises such 'connecting' as the bridge between data analysis and interpretation and was part of the second level of reflection described. He also recommended zooming in and out of data, from zooming in to very specific interesting 'ethnographic' details to zooming out to look at how these details and cases relate to other cases to form overarching cultural themes (McCurdy, Speadley & Shandy, 2005 p 67). This second stage of reflection involved a critical analysis of feelings and knowledge with the feeding in of further observations. Importing relevant other knowledge can include incorporating suggestions from others, some theorising and other factors such as ethical, moral, and socio-political contexts.

To aid this reflection, I adapted Moon's (2004) principle of bringing in more information combined with Johns's (2005) notions of reflexivity. In terms of Finlay's dimensions of reflexivity this includes intersubjective reflection and bringing in social critique, in addition to introspection and critical self-reflection. The third stage of reflection entailed using literature and theories to illuminate the analysis of the scenario and make thematic links. This included re-examining data from different points of view, or exploring different contextual factors, then theorizing, linking theory and practice in an iterative process common in self-studies (Chang, 2008, Maxwell, 2004).

This stage entailed a deepening of Finlay's dimensions of reflexivity included intersubjective reflection and social critique again in addition to introspection and critical self-reflection. In doing so I also found Chang's (2008) strategies for auto-ethnographic data analysis and interpretation a useful reference point, (the first eight for this stage and the last two for the final reflective stage). He suggests: (1) searching for recurring topics, themes and patterns exemplified by the reactions to both coming out



and interrupting heteronormativity; (2) looking for cultural themes, exemplified by the case study on comparing black and LGBTQ identity development models; (3) identifying exceptional occurrences, such as one of the participant's reactions to the introduction of Cass's model (chapter five); (4) inclusion and omission (see conclusion); (5) connecting between the present and the past, (discussed extensively in my coming out evolution); (6) analysing relationships between self and others (the basis of chapter six) (7), and comparing self with others, particularly in different coming out approaches and strategies.

The final cycle of reflection involved bringing together ideas, testing and theorising. It involved theorising, integrating theory and practice, and a consideration of broader forces, of issues such as justice, and emancipation, and of political factors. Again, combining elements of Johns (2005) and Moon (1999), this stage entailed a focus on mutual collaboration, social critique and ironic deconstruction. Practically it was in this stage that I involved colleagues again in theory making. It is where I invoked Chang's final strategies of: (8) contextualising broadly (done throughout); (9) comparing with social constructs and ideas (double consciousness, meta reflexivity and stigma resistance), and (10) framing with theories (the development of the concept of the pedagogical practitioner)

### ***Ethics***

I worked to the BERA ethical guidelines in the design and execution of this research. I also followed both Newman and Leicester University's processes and gained ethical approval from them. I established a research ethics protocol concerning such issues as gaining informed consent, confidentiality, disclosure (of both myself and participants), participants' right to withdraw and to privacy, both in the gathering and presentation of data. Dalmau and Guðjónsdóttir (2002) see ethics as the third element of praxis in self research and action research more widely. The interplay of praxis is between practice (what we do), theory (what we understand) and ethics (why we do it). In this way, as Whitehead (1993) describes, ethics is a part of the living theory of self-study. There could have been issues of participants' disclosure of homophobic views that would be of professional concern as we are bound by guidelines on the ethical conduct of youth and community workers (NYA, 2004). However, this is an ethical dilemma that youth

and community work educators have worked with for some years (Banks, 2003, 2010, Jeffs and Smith, 2010), and formed part of the research.

### *Informed consent*

It is worth distinguishing here the different types of participants in the research and the different forms of consent obtained from them

### *Dimensions of informed consent amongst participants*

Type of participant	Relation to data	Consent gained
Active participant (team colleagues and ex-students)	Gathered data from them more than once, discussed themes as they progressed with them and showed them the findings	Signed informed consent forms, negotiated consent as research progressed and showed them the final findings
Active participants (external colleagues)	Gathered data from them more than once, discussed themes as they progressed with them, they gathered data and showed them the findings	Signed informed consent forms, negotiated consent as research progressed and showed them the final findings
Students and other colleagues at the institution	Gathered data and anonymized it	Consent negotiated in the field.

Informed consent was obtained for all active participants in the research, and I abided by the BERA procedures for informed consent (see form appendix iv). Even when I did not disclose my sexuality with a group, I disclosed that I was undertaking the research – this formed part of the process of interrupting heteronormativity. In terms of informed consent for the more ethnographic elements of the research, the observations of how heteronormativity manifests in everyday life, my starting point is the view held by many ethnographic and action researchers (Cameron et al, 2004; Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002 Goodenough et al, 2004, Lawton, 2002; Miller & Bell, 2002; Moore and Savage, 2002) that obtaining informed consent is essential but as a negotiation in the field, rather than a process done a priori. I did state that I would be reflecting on sessions and that if people did not want to have a discussion become data they could state this. Some and some people did and I did not use these reflections, as we shall see.

I also stated that people could see the research and if they thought something identified them then it would be removed and there is one example of where this was done.

Following ethnographic principles, (Lawton, 2002; Miller & Bell, 2002). I also reminded people constantly that I was gathering data so that people continually negotiated their consent. In one group it became a point of humour, with participants adopting the phrase, ‘there’s another critical incident for you Mike’.

As stated earlier I originally intended to use colleagues and current students as co-researchers. However, the ethics process identified two issues of concern. Firstly, there are power issues as I am the head of department. I would be asking people whom I line manage, and students over whom I have authority, to be co-researchers. In the process of gaining ethical approval, the extent to which their participation would be voluntary came under question (Finlay & Evans, 2009). There were consequent concerns about the authenticity of the data as they might be saying things I wanted to hear, or more pertinently, not saying things that they think I might not want to hear. I therefore captured their thoughts through their informal discussions via my journal, but not as co-researchers. Colleagues had a choice about whether they opted in and I re-iterated that to not do so would not be held against them, and it would not form part of their appraisal etc. They could still have felt indirect pressure, but the fact that one of them shoes not to participate is evidence against that. I do not have the kind of relationship where staff would feel under this pressure and the team have expressed this to me and to others continually. An anonymous comment from a colleague said of me in a national teaching fellowship application:

*Mike approaches leadership with the same ethos that underlies his approach to teaching and other aspects of his professional role; namely, he believes in cultivating participation in decision making by those who are likely to be affected by those decisions.*

However, I am aware that power dynamics remain, so examples of how they negotiated their participation may illustrate this. Colleagues had the right to remove anything that they felt identified, or mis-represented them, even anonymously. This happened on a number of occasions, one of which was a case study of an incident between a colleague and a gay student, which they felt could not be isolated in the way I had. Another colleague felt the tone of how they had expressed their heterosexuality with a student was more nuanced than I had portrayed it, and I changed it accordingly. In both the staff interviews and the focus groups there were a number of times when they said, ‘that’s probably not something to go in the research’ and it did not. Another example is

of a colleagues discussing their own sexual history but expressly wanting me to know that this was not to go into the research. They had told about it me so that I could understand the history that had led to their viewpoint on certain issues. I discussed my themes with colleagues throughout, and it was definitely an iterative process with the idea of being ‘reasonably’ heterosexual is an example of this. Colleagues had sight of the dissertation before it was submitted – resulting in some of the changes as described.

The involvement of ex-students had fewer issues of power, and was entirely voluntary on their part. However, I still largely used ex-students and collected the data via my reflections on their interviews rather than directly from the interviews themselves.

There is also the issue of identification, to a degree for students, but certainly for colleagues. The youth and community work team is relatively small, as is the institution, so even if anonymised, readers could work out who the co-researchers were. This issue also applied to their appearances in my reflective journal. I therefore took the research wider and involved participants from other institutions, and individuals agreed to keeping their own journal. Therefore, I will present the data in such a way as to maximise anonymity in terms of which institution a participant belonged to. However, this has been difficult when discussing my current team’s approach. I have tried, however, to remain sensitive to the principles on anonymity.

There is a philosophical issue that may have practice implications for some, particularly those more actively involved. Self-study research has self-consciously humanistic assumptions (Loughran, 2005), particularly privileging autonomy and self-determination in terms of moral action (Beckstrom, 1993), while not denying structural forces. As Beckstrom (1993) suggests, this may be challenging for those who believe that moral authority lies outside of the self. Some active participants were people of faith, and had faiths that have certain views on non-heterosexual activity. I had full and frank discussions with all parties about these implications. Individuals, and the institution itself, assured me that they saw this as an opportunity to deepen both their faith and their understanding of heteronormativity, rather than as a challenge to it.

Similarly, I was concerned that for some participants, issues of faith and sexuality are bound together and they may have been challenged by the research. However, as stated before, the course that people have chosen to be on is meant to ‘produce’ practitioners who challenge oppression, including sexuality based oppression and, in adopting

critical pedagogies (Freire, 1973), have challenged and interrogated their own assumptions. Youth and community work has a tradition of the use of self as a pedagogic tool, and of challenging oneself, both in its teaching (Kitto, 1988) and its practice (Rose, 2005). Interrupting heteronormativity may also have had an impact on students who have tensions between their faith and their emerging sexuality, as mentioned in the introduction. However, this was largely a productive impact (Hylton, 2005, Lance, 2002, Stevens, 2004), as part of the aim was to look at how sexuality is managed by them, other students and the institution and to challenge heteronormativity.

#### *Ethical considerations for myself.*

As S-STEP is also focussed on the researcher, I considered the implications for myself and, participants, in conducting the research. In terms of myself, it was at times challenging, and because of the nature of homophobia and heteronormativity I received criticism for undertaking the research. I was also personally challenged, as I explored my own motivations and feelings about the subject, which changed over time.

However, as Beckstrom maintains:

*No matter how uncomfortable or threatening, (research on the self) will enable one to articulate ethical experiences regardless of perspective and therefore more clearly understand the basis of their thoughts and actions. (Beckstrom, 1993 p 54)*

#### ***Reliability and validity***

In terms of validity and reliability, I would, in common with Key & Kerr (2011 and Lincoln and Guba (1985), view trustworthiness or accuracy as more relevant concepts than reliability and validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, the nature of researcher and subject/object relationship become merged (Buollough and Pinnegar, 2001). They also note that ‘questions of context, process, and relationship’ are at the centre of inquiry in self research. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) point out, ‘This lies in the humanistic commitment of the qualitative researcher to study the world always from the perspective of the interacting individual’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 575). As Carspecken (1996) says

*Researchers must be prepared to become hurt through their work; to allow their contact with others to threaten and perhaps alter their usual ways of conceiving themselves’’ (p.167)*

Action researchers such as Altricher et al (1993), Freire (1982), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) argue that criteria for validity and reliability have to emerge from the subject in the piece of research, the most important criteria being that they are ‘locally valid’. (Cunningham, 1983, p 405). The question that arises is how this is determined. With the emphasis on dialogue and reflection in self-study, and in action research generally, researchers privilege reflective validity (Waterman, 1998). There are two dimensions to this. Key and Kerr (2011) suggest that the principles of prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation of methods aid in this process. There is also the question of the involvement of the other. As stated in the principles of S-STEP research, there is a constant sharing with participants of the emerging meaning and interpretations. Key and Kerr (2011) suggest that intersubjective reflection and peer supervision aid in this process, and I hope the processes I have described with my participants will go some way towards this. There are also ongoing reflective processes carried out by myself, as primary researcher, and students and colleagues involved.

Key and Kerr suggest transpersonal validity which includes giving attention to ‘bodily reactions, intuition and emotions’ (Key and Kerr, 2011 p72), especially in the focusing stage (Gendlin, 1978). They pay particular attention to the ‘slippery slopes of intuitive and inductive process’, be it in coding, reflection or focusing, and acknowledge the tension between the ‘fools gold’ of transference and the real gold of ‘embodied intuitive insight’. (Key and Kerr, 2011 p73). Hiles makes a useful distinction between analysis of experience that is *grounded* in ‘human knowledge systems of our everyday occurrences’, and experience that is more *subtle* and transpersonal (Hiles, 2001 p 4). He goes on to list some useful tensions to be aware of, in what we privilege in our reflections and ‘focusings’, I outline examples of how this informed my analysis in appendix v, and how I tried to strike a balance between them.

## **Chapter four: Dynamics of heteronormativity on youth and community work courses.**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter focusses on the first aim of my research. As noted in the literature review, while the prevalence of heteronormativity in educational settings is well documented, its nature and nuance is under researched (Mac an Ghail & Heywood, 2011). In concurrence with situating myself within a critical realist paradigm (Archer, 1995, 2003, Bhaskar, 1993, 1998, 2008) I start from the position that the heterosexual matrix is not monolithic and all pervasive within educational settings (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2011). As Knights and McHughes (1990, p. 287) note: *'individuals are not the passive recipients or objects of structural processes'* but have the potential to be *'cultural navigators, translators, adaptors and reflexive communicators'* (Ballard 2014 p12). I have taken a pedagogic view on this and concur with Burke et al's (2012) view that pedagogies are *'lived, relational and embodied practices in higher education'* (p.9). The course is a pedagogic enterprise, so heteronormativity within it is similarly nuanced, shifting, contextual and co-created between student and lecturers and other parties.

Moreover, as Burke et al (2012) says *'the dynamics, relations and experiences of teaching and learning are intimately tied to the re/production of particular identity formations and ways of being a university student and teacher'* (Burke et al, 2012 p.9). We therefore need to try and examine how and what identity formations are cultivated on the course and the part heteronormativity plays in these identities. We also need to examine ways of being a student and lecturer of youth and community work within universities, and the degree to which these identities and ways of being re-inscribe and incorporate, or challenge and de-construct, heteronormativity.

Following Archer's (2010) morphogenetic approach, I work from the premise that it is possible to separate and analyse the particular dynamics of heteronormativity on courses over time. As noted in the introduction I adopted and adapted Herz and Johansson's (2015) conceptualisation of heteronormativity as an analytical framework for exploring the nuances of the particular constructions of heteronormativity within our courses. I focus on people's *'everyday life, agency, and the social practices'*, rather than privileging subjective or structural accounts (Herz and Johansson 2015, p1019). I

have also used a combination of Archer's (2012) framework of communicative, autonomous, meta and fractured reflectors and Orne's (2013) and Black's (2010) reconceptualization of double consciousness and stigma resistance (Goffman, 1963) as analytical tools to examine manifestations of heteronormativity, and reactions to its interruption, amongst actors on the course.

### ***The institutional context.***

In concurrence with using Archer's Morphogenetic approach (1995), an account needs to be given of the context for the development of the student cohort's culture in relation to heteronormativity, and a fundamental component of this is its wider institutional context and the group's identifiers (Brown, 1999, Douglas, 1995). Being university students, and training as youth and community workers were both were cultural signifiers for the group. More significant was how these two signifiers intersected. As I will show, it was significant for students to be at 'a' university, but their affiliation to, and interactions with this particular university were loose and negligible – their affiliation was to youth and community work. Furthermore, the youth and community work department, and the students within the department, felt 'othered', and have a culture of seeing themselves as 'other' in relation to the wider institution.

This has important implications. It is significant because it renders the wider institutional heteronormativity minimal and minimalisable in its impact. The student experience of the wider institution, and its heteronormativity, only comes to the fore through particular incidents and exchanges. As one lesbian student said

*No I don't think my experience on the course has been a homophobic one overall in terms of the wider university.. yeah it touches you but it ain't something you're not used to - but then we all kind of come here and do our thing and get off – we're here to become youth workers not have the 'university experience', it's how you lot, and us, deal with the stuff that happens on the course that matters and gives me heart.*

Given this impact, the basis on which I make this claim is that our students are demographically other. Across the three years of cohorts I interacted with during this study (approximately 200 students), there were a slight majority of females, a similar slight majority of black students, and within that a relatively even mix of Black



Caribbean, Black African and Asian Muslim (Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin) students. The cohorts were overwhelmingly working class (see definitions below).

Few of our students identify as LGBTQ. Of the 200 students who were part of the student body in the three-year period, only three were openly LGBTQ, which by any measure is low. Another revealed her sexuality to staff but not students, while another was openly 'curious' but did not define herself, and another was selective as to which staff members he talked to about his sexuality and sometimes identified as LGBTQ and sometimes not, and another is in the process of transing, but is very selective about who they talk to about this. There will, of course be others not known to us.

These demographics are also broadly similar to the demographics of youth and community work students in other institutions (NYA, 2016). This places our students as potentially other. Universities are traditionally culturally white and middle class (Archer, 2003, Evans, 2007), and the class based, and racialized, doubt and feeling of not fitting in that these authors describe (Archer, 2003, Evans, 2007) was prevalent on the course. This was crystalized for one male student at graduation.

*We always kind of always felt a bit 'unusual' and did not quite fit in as your typical student, but at graduation it was stark. I remember looking out at all the other education students and all I could see was a sea of white blonde young women, and then there was our lot, older, rougher, and of colour.*

I do not wish to comment on the potential impacts of the demographics of the cohort in a generalised way in terms of its heteronormativity, except that the impact of race, gender and class on heteronormativity (particularly the perception that men, people who are working class or BME, and their intersections, are more homophobic) is heavily contested (Blanchard et al, 2015, Hill, 2013, Manago, 2012, McCormack, 2014, McCormack & Anderson, 2014, Ruddell-Tabcola, 2009) with such debates seen by some as classed (McCormack, 2014) and racialised (Hill, 2013) in themselves. Issues of race, gender, religion and class were operative, and will feature, but in a contextualised nuanced way.

Our courses' structure compounds the sense of otherness and distance from the wider university. Our dissertations are different, our work placements are also different (900 hours instead of 100: meaning the staff and students' focus is on their performance in the field as much as their performance in class). To cater for students that need day

release, we organise teaching so that students are only in college one full day a week and consequently rarely have time to engage with each other, let alone with the wider cultural life of the university. Pastoral issues, assessment submission and access to support services are mediated through us. We offer single honours only so our students do not mix across other subjects with shared modules only occurring at level six. Most importantly a large majority of our students consistently say that they do not significantly engage with or have affinity with the wider university.

We must also consider the degree to which the students and the team, as youth workers, other ourselves. Many writers, including myself (Davies, 2012, Formby, 2013 Seal and Frost, 2014, Seal, 2016, Seal & Harris, 2016, Trelfa, 2003, 2013, 2014) give accounts of how youth and community workers can position themselves as, and glorify being, other - not understood or respected by other professionals and claiming unsubstantiated unique privileged access to young people and an understanding of their perspective.

I do not want to posit a monolithic cultural attitude towards sexuality among youth and community work professionals. Their cultures are contested, nuanced and localised (Formby, 2013). Also, while historically our students came to the degree already steeped in this culture, this is increasingly less true, at my institution and others. (NYA, 2015, 2016). However, a couple of factors may be worth mentioning, given that students' spend a lot of time on placements. LGBTQ youth work has a long tradition within youth and community work, and statements about homophobia appear regularly in local authority policy statements and youth work's stated values. Yet the quality of these services, their impact, and the views of workers remain under-researched (Formby, 2013). Formby also found that many workers are operating under post section 28 conditions and are uncertain about their role and unconfident to deal with homophobic bullying and even giving advice. While challenging blatant discrimination, they also display heteronormative assumptions in other areas such as adoption and the family. The invisibility of LGBTQ issues is also evident in the academy. In *Youth and Policy*, the main journal for youth and community work, there have been no articles on LGBTQ issues in the last ten years. Again these issues have played out on the course in a nuanced way. To characterise these responses; the field seems to be largely operating as non-heterosexual allies, but demonstrating a single consciousness with regards to heteronormativity and their own complicity in it.

***Touchpoints: Toilets, heterosexual retreats and emerging double consciousness.***

While I claim for the minimal impact of the heteronormativity of the wider institution, it remained a topic of discussion for both staff and students. Students mentioned certain touchpoints where they experienced the institution's wider heteronormativity. Two LGBTQ students discussed their interactions with the wider institution as largely consisting of getting food, handing in work and using services such as the library. Interestingly they both described getting reactions of slight uncomfortableness from administrative staff. They both described themselves as relatively 'butch' and did not present as 'straight women' They rarely felt overt homophobia and they were treated professionally. This echoes Orne's (2013) typology of middle reactions between acceptance and hostility, as does their reaction, which shows stigma resistance. However, there were situations where they did feel homophobia, one being their use of the women's toilets.

*I have got a few funny reactions when going to the loos, to the point where if I see a group of women going in I would go somewhere else. Being relatively butch I often get a reaction that they think I am a man coming in, however when they see that I am not (she points out her breasts) the reaction is probably worse, as they assume I am a Lesbian, which I am, and caught off guard they give off a vibe that I am not welcome, although it may have just been confusion.*

This is an interesting nuance of heteronormativity, and re-iterates two issues for me: firstly, that heteronormativity is as much about gender as sexuality (Butler, 1990, Ingraham, 2002), and secondly the idea of 'heterosexual retreats'. Students in the queer group discussed the politics around the significance of toilets. The full discussion is in appendix vi. As evidenced, there was some initial discussion about transgender experiences of toilets (one member of the group was transgender), and whether all toilets should be unisex, some feeling that this would deny women having space and that students would still 'police' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994) who goes into which toilet. The group recognised the gendered nature of the heteronormativity of the toilets:

*The men, both straight and gay described how men do not talk in toilets, one straight guy describing how he was talking to a friend about fairly personal issues, confounding a heteronormative view of male conversation, but on going to the toilet the conversation stopped until they came out again.*

*The gay men described how their toilet usage was freer, and that sexual behaviour did go on in the toilets, but it tended to be the more anonymous sexual acts and that the heteronormative acts of not talking were present, if not so acutely as the men described. Many of the women, who did not consider themselves bound by female constructions, confessed to engaging in more stereotypical female behaviour such as going to the toilet together. The group recognised, and named, the pervasiveness of heteronormativity and that it had as much to do with gender as sexuality. They also concurred that the toilet, as a less regulated space, was one heterosexuals colonise.*

Students noted that they had learned that they had to ‘perform’ acceptance and challenge heteronormativity in more regulated spaces (Bulter, 1990). However, when in a retreat space, and not performing, deeper hegemonies prevailed. Heterosexual retreats manifested on the course in different ways. A distinction also needs to be made between spaces that were students retreated from, and spaces they retreated to. In the case of the toilets they seemed to be retreating from more public university spaces where they felt they had to ‘perform’ acceptance and a perception that they were LGBTQ spaces, to spaces, such as the toilet, where a heterosexual place was being ‘claimed’ or ‘reclaimed’. It did not seem that students’ behaviour was any more or less ‘genuine’ or ‘authentic’ in places of retreat, rather they were enacting, or inhabiting, the heteronormative element of their double consciousness. (Black, 2010, Orne, 2013) but were not recognizing or working through this duality, although retreat implies they felt the tensions between them. Part of this duality is illustrated by them re-inscribing Brickell’s (2005) concept of a heteronormative construction of public space being somehow colonized by LGBTQ people, necessitating a claim on spaces such as toilets.

In contrast we will later encounter heterosexual spaces that heterosexuals retreated to, which were explicitly spaces that, while heterosexual, were also places where people could work through their understanding of non heterosexualities and heteronormativity, including their complicity in it. The queer group’s discussion about toilet politics is an example of the group developing an intersubjective consciousness, in this case across the whole group. The straight men were thinking about the perspective of women and trans people in a way that they had not before (by their own admission). The group was also revealing and mediating tensions as they became aware of multiple positions and subjectivities. This ranged from recognising that heterosexuality and gender are

themselves somewhat unstable constructions, and are sometimes damaging to heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals alike, to recognising that creating ‘women only’ spaces potentially impacts adversely on transsexuals and LGBTQ people (and begs the question of what a woman is anyway), to recognising that many LGBTQ spaces are equally subject to, or products of, heteronormativity and homonormativity.

***The course context: The performance of being a youth and community worker***

Early on and throughout the course, lecturers talk about the set of values for youth work, as outlined in the literature review. Within this stated culture clear statements are made about valuing diversity, and about tolerance of other cultures and identities, and challenges are made by lecturers, and class members, when people push these boundaries. This seems compatible with the ‘non-heterosexual allies’ position. There is an explicit expectation that students should not just know these values but embody them, and we have made a conscious orientation towards this in the last few years. This embodiment has become characterised by the shift from single to double consciousness, as I will justify. I will explore our associated pedagogical approach to developing this, and its relative success in interrupting heteronormativity, in the final chapter.

Module content also reflects these concerns and is pertinent to interrupting heteronormativity, taking note of De Castell & Bryson’s (1993) concern to address heteronormativity in one module and several writers concern to have it within the curriculum (Morris, 1998, Leumann, 1998, Taylor, 2003). At level four, students gain a grounding in sociology including issues of class, conflict and functional models of society, labeling and stigma, humanistic values and political notions of citizenship, equality, discrimination, democracy and fairness, including sexuality, reinforced in the module on the practices and principles of youth work. In the latter, this will be concurrently applied to their understanding of their own identities and others and how to work with this – they are asked to do a presentation of their understanding of their own identity and sense of self. This is then further applied in practice in the module on working with communities which takes a pluralistic, diverse view of community. At level five there is a specific module on intersectionality, covering issues around sexuality, disability, race, gender, faith, etc. and their interconnections. This module has practice hours attached, so students have to undertake a project with young people on an aspect they are unfamiliar with.

Within the ‘social, psychological and political construction of youth’ module we look at issues of faith and spirituality, race, cultural development, power and discrimination and how it impacts on young people’s development cognitively, morally and in terms of identity. This is then applied within different situation in a context module, and then in practice through the applied reflective practice module. At level six, students have to look at how these issues practically inform their work in terms of management and policy (management and safeguarding) and students’ on the spot interactions (applied reflective practice). These course expectations undoubtedly impact upon the culture of the group: students are expected to perform within the classroom and in practice.

### ***Prevalence and depth of heteronormativity***

Firstly, I wanted to ascertain the prevalence and depth of heteronormativity on the course and at the institution. In accordance with Chang’s (2009) autoethnographic method, I chose three weeks and kept daily reflective diaries of the occurrence and nature of heteronormative discourses. I chose one week where I knew issues would arise (as I was running sessions on the subject), one where I had no sessions planned and another when I had sessions planned where it may have arisen or not. Undoubtedly there was a Hawthorne (Mayo, 1949) effect at play. I would be more conscious of issues and ask questions of colleagues, but most of these discussions were reactions to real incidents with students which would have been discussed anyway. The sessions were a number of months apart, to achieve some distance, but to allow for continuations of themes and conversations that were developing in the student body and the team.

As we can see, the heteronormative discourses were occurring within most sessions. When I ran specific sessions on sexuality, it was simply more intense or framed through the narrative I outlined, or focused on my contributions. Also noticeable is that when heteronormative discourses emerged through sessions without this focus they often arose through, and covered, other issues (see appendix viii) such as race and masculinity (sample reflection 3), the social construction of gender (sample reflection 2), or the social construction of family (sample reflection 1) and sexuality and religion, specifically its contested space within Islam (sample reflection 4). This seems to be identifying a trend we will explore in chapter five on coming out: that when discussions about heteronormativity arise from discussions not directly related to sexuality they often explore wider dimensions of heteronormativity.

### ***My own double consciousness regarding the prevalence of heteronormativity.***

One of my entries concerns my reaction to the prevalence and perceived depth of heteronormativity in the group. This is a reflection on a team discussion after a student-led session on gay parenting where challenging views were expressed.

*Afterwards had a discussion with Andi about the session, she had approached me with concern. I had found nothing really significant in the session, but she thought I might have been disturbed by what some people were saying – John also expressed similar concerns – I was surprised by this as I did not feel this at the time, more being heartened that such diverse and difficult ideas were being brought out into the open – I wondered what they thought they were protecting me from. I am getting affirmed in my ideas that there needs to be an open space to discuss and hold such contradictory opinions.*

On first re-reading of this entry I wondered if I was in some form of denial, or I had simply become numb, probably as a defence, to the level of heteronormativity operating. However, Orne (2013) offers a different reading that has more resonance. I remember being aware of the views being aired, and understanding them, but not internalising them, or even being angry, seeing them as ambiguous and at times antagonistic reactions, but not deliberately hostile, and something that could be worked with (Orne, 2013). As a colleague similarly suggested in the second staff focus group regarding a discussion in his tutor group

*Lots of conversations about bisexuality being greedy, in jest but people were trying to make sense of it. It's a point of pedagogy and not necessarily negative, it's providing opportunities, teaching opportunities.*

A judgement is being made here that the student is in flux, and inhabiting a pedagogic liminal space. This is an issue to come back to in chapter six, as I think it needs at least a team approach to discern, if not one that is co-contained with the students.

### ***Nuances of homophobia and homonormativity on the course***

Mining my reflections on student sessions, I can see a number of common reactions among students becoming aware of heteronormativity. As above, I would characterise the majority of them as, again, 'middle' positions between acceptance and hostility, and

thus potentially transformable (Orne, 2013). The majority of students moved between positions and evolved. I have arranged them to mirror Orne's (2013) schema of tactics for LGBTQ engagement with middle positions, as they are a result of interactions with an LGBTQ person or an ally. I have called them: contested engagement, strategic adjustment and avoidance. Each took a number of forms.

### ***Contested engagement***

Contested engagement occurred when students engaged with the issue of heteronormativity, at least partially, through creating counter arguments, often based on constructs such as culture or faith. As we shall see, crucial to engaging pedagogically with all these contested engagements is firstly considering the context where they happened and secondly, with whom, how and when they can be most effectively engaged with. I would like to begin by simply listing the reactions, and building up to these crucial questions.

### ***Homosexuality as a western imposition***

A number of students, largely, although not exclusively, Black and Asian students, talked about homosexuality as a 'western imposition'. Such talk happened in sessions and outside sessions. Formally, discourses tended to happen either in individual encounters with myself or within tutor groups, which, as we will discuss in the final chapter, were the more liminal, pedagogical spaces (Cousin, 2009. Harris et al, 2016, Land et al, 2014). The discourses took multiple forms, including one student saying in a tutor group that the explanation for the supposed extreme homophobia in Jamaica was that it was a colonial legacy, a reaction to the rape of male black slaves by white slave owners as a means of control. Similar arguments about homosexuality being un-African and un-Islamic were voiced by students.

Characteristic of this kind of engagement was its partiality. Students would typically begin the counter-argument, but would not engage with the counters that were offered in return. Looking at Archer's typology of reflexives, students were closest to autonomous reflexives (Archer, 2012) in that they had often actively researched their blackness, religion and faiths beyond just what they had received, and in relation to heteronormativity, but were selectively taking enabling arguments, while rejecting refuting ones. In terms of double consciousness (Black, 2010, Orne, 2013), they seemed to be trying to instil double consciousness in others, but resisting it in themselves. Such



reactions also happened in spaces outside the presence of tutors, in libraries and the canteen, sometimes to greater effect. In my notes I reflect on a conversation with a lesbian Muslim about a Library conversation she had, after a session I had run:

*Iram talk to Ahmed about books one can read but also that Islam historically was very tolerant of homosexuality, far more so than in the west. She said that it was ironic that many fundamentalists talk about the corrupting influence of the west, yet with homosexuality this intolerance is a product of western thinking, rather than the other way round. Ahmed seemed to 'hear' this more than when I mentioned it.*

Significant is when such contested encounters happen, and how and who does the countering. I will return to this when looking at issues around religious texts as the dynamics are similar.

#### *Justifications of heteronormativity from religious texts*

Many students, particularly those who undertook faith routes on the course, sometimes cited religious texts as justifications for their views on LGBTQ people. As a colleague reflected in a staff focus group:

*Verrona was feeling surprised and a little angry at the tolerance of some members of the group, feeling that the bible is very clear on the subject.*

In terms of context, many of these religious discussions happened in the faith based tutor group. While this has a logic given the groups' focus, at times the colleague who ran it described it as a space of 'heterosexual retreat'. However, my colleague and I agreed they were spaces that people retreated to. They were heterosexual enough for people to feel 'safe' enough to discuss these issues. While this again buys into the Bricknell (2005) concept that part of heteronormativity was a construction that public spaces, including the wider classroom, were somehow colonised by LGBT people, some stigma resistance was required here, as they were also spaces where people were explicitly working their issues through and had the potential to interrupt heteronormativity and be liminal, a potential which, as we shall see, was often realised.

Manifestations of faith based heteronormativity within the group were nuanced. One of the staff focus group discussed a particular student who, on a surface level, very much rejected homosexuality based on his religious beliefs. However, colleagues felt that for this student it was gender first and sexuality afterwards that was a major issue as he had

very set cultural views on family construction and roles that then informed his views on sexuality.

An interesting manifestation from those with faith was apparent tolerance in the form of a ‘love the sinner but hate the sin’ argument from Christians. I think this argument is heteronormative as it classes homosexual acts as wrong. Many Muslim students took a similar line, as I recollect in an engagement with a Muslim student after a session, where she had worried about her comments about not supporting gay adoption and what I would think:

*She was saying that while she cannot ‘condone’ the issue as a Muslim, it is a Muslim’s primary issue to look after people and not to judge, it is only for Allah to judge – so she felt it is something she can hold.*

I will come back to this idea of ‘holding’ as it is can be an aspect of transformative pedagogic spaces (Cousin, 2009, Land et al, 2014). While the faith justifications have elements of autonomous reflection, in that student are reflecting on their received wisdom, it is very much a communicative style of reflection (Archer, 2012) in that their framework is very much internal, with a need to it to be affirmed and talked through with others in their immediate circle. The student above came and discussed sexuality many times, particularly once she knew I am not heterosexual, and seemed to be working something through. Cousins recognises liminal spaces are ‘messy journeys back, forth and across conceptual terrain’ (Cousin, 2009p p 9). Such reactions seem initially to be single consciousness (Orne, 2016), differing from the western imposition argument, they were not trying to instil double consciousness in the non-heterosexual, but simply to justify one’s own position. However, the student above, in her liminal state, was very much developing a double consciousness, hence the ‘holding’, but struggling with it, closer to Du Bois’s (1906) original use of the term.

This faith position is in contrast to a colleague’s position where she feels the church is wrong and needs to change and will state this, sometimes to the surprise of the students. The colleague is very much operating from a position of double consciousness here, and her stigma resistance lies in being prepared to wait for a change in the church that may not come in her lifetime, as she explains.

*It is part of the Catholic way, in that it is not wrong, as any expression of love cannot be, but that Catholicism tends to outlaw something until there is*

*overwhelming dissent, but that Catholicism tolerates this dissent and sees it as part of the process.*

Examining Archer's typology, my colleague seems to be a partial meta-reflexive. She fulfils most criteria: highly reflexive, questioning received social constructions, privileging values over material gain. However, she does not meet the criteria of mobility, instead displaying loyalty, which, according to Archer (2010) is closer to that of the communicative reflexive. For Archer, the meta-reflexive always moves on from organisations and people where their values are compromised. This seems to me to not do justice to the intent of my colleague's stance. I will come back to these tensions when considering other similarly 'corrupted' meta-reflexives.

#### *Reconstructing the personal and the private*

Another common reaction was to try and reconstruct sex and sexuality as a private concern, thus denying the heteronormativity of public space and ignoring its gendered, racialised, classed nature. It was a common reaction to my coming out in sessions, as we shall discuss in the next chapter, so even when I expressly gave students permission to question me, there were attempts to close down the students who did so for being too 'personal' and because issues of sexuality were private. An interesting twist was that it was often constructed as expanding the protection of privacy to non-heterosexuals, as I reflect:

*Very interesting discussion about the personal and the private and what should be discussed. The students, including the gay students, seemed very split down the middle on this – some felt that it (my coming out) was 'imposing' my sexuality on others and that sexuality was a private matter, and that the battle should be to allow the privacy of sexuality to be extended to LGBTQ people.*

This could take the form of wanting to protect the tutor or generalised LGBTQ others, and not understanding that constructing sexuality as private re-enforces heterosexualities hegemony. In terms of reflexive archetypes, there is definite autonomous reflection, but it remains socially conservative - not our pedagogic vision. As Kumashiro (2002) writes. 'learning is about disruption and opening up to further learning, not closure and satisfaction' (p. 43). There is an effort to understand non-heterosexualites, but not heteronormativity. It has a degree of trying to understand the double consciousness of others, but not of oneself, and is thus not intersubjective. It

does not recognise the links between the two worlds and the oppressions within heteronormativity. There is an absence of discussion about sexuality on a personal level, and the staff focus agreed that heterosexual colleagues not doing so reinforced a view of gay sexuality as 'other'. Certainly many students lacked a vocabulary for talking about heterosexuality, or sexuality at all. As I reflect:

*When I asked people about their own heterosexuality, they were far more reserved, joking about things but finding it hard to discuss their own constructions around sexuality. There were interesting comments, both dismissing it as a 'real' conversation and resistance particularly from the black students who seemed to be unsure what to discuss about it, as it was so alien to them and definitely not something they were able to discuss openly at all.*

Rather than wanting to hide, some student simply could not articulate their positions as so re-inscribed the idea of sexuality as a private concern. It is for this reason that I have classified this reaction as contested engagement rather than avoidance, although as we will see in the next chapter, sometimes there was avoidance.

### ***Strategic adjustment***

This took the form of either shifting the terms of the debate, claiming that it was a non-debate or containing the debate within certain quarters.

### ***Minimising and separating***

Perhaps one of the most common reactions from students was to question the potency of heteronormativity. The song 'have we forgotten' is written about such exchanges. It is about a number of exchanges but told through a particular student discussion. I had explained, after questions about the subject of my doctorate, the premise of this study. The majority in the group had wondered if it was an issue anymore, saying that they did not have a problem with different sexualities. This prompted a discussion about this pedagogic 'space' and its artificiality. I asked if they were comfortable with it in all situations, pushing people with the question of whether they would 'take me home' and explain who, and what, I was. The tenor of this debate, and others, is best summed up in these lines

*We fought for this, it's something we have earned*

*But it is just four walls, have we really learnt*

*A place that is safe, to be and to roam*

*I'll look you in the face, but would you take me home?*

There were a number of interesting reactions, including the following.

*The debate prompted Dave into quite an emotional exchange. He talked about how at work one of his closest colleagues is gay. They were close but he felt he had to keep him separate from his private life because his friends, family and community were quite homophobic, or appeared to be. Recently one of the friends in this circle came out. He (the friend) had been nervous to do so, particularly because of Dave, who he thought quite homophobic. Dave reflected on having let both his friends down and for erroneously coming across as quite homophobic. He described it as a 'waste' and a 'mess' – adding that heteronormativity had 'a lot to answer for'.*

The tragedy of heteronormativity for this student, and the assumptions that he had made because of it were palpable. The student had maintained a one-sided double consciousness instead of trying to broker an intersubjective consciousness (Black, 2010) that, he went on to say, would have been gratefully received. He fulfilled all but one of those mixed characteristics of a meta and communicative reflexive, being reflective, recognising social constructions, However, similarly to my colleagues who runs the faith group he had loyalty to family and friends. The difference is he did not test their consciousness, erroneously thinking they were homophobic. Other students talked about keeping quiet around homophobic exchanges at work where the homophobia was all too real. I relay a reflection on a student talking to her masters group about her experience:

*Allison started talking about the homophobia in her workplace. One of her colleagues was talking with young people and re-enforcing some quite homophobic and violent images, disgusting act, should be banned, stoned, kept away from children etc. When Allison challenged this, she did not get support and was accused of not understanding the cultural context, etc. She found this quite distressing and was not supported by her management. Colleagues found this shocking but it was not a unique experience amongst them.*

When we explored these experiences, with both a masters group and the group Dave was in, students expressed the familiar sense of anger, shame and guilt, but also

hopelessness about what to do in such situations. In Orne's (2013) words, they had double consciousness, had not been able to engender intersubjective consciousness's, but had displayed stigma resistance. Again their double consciousness here was not a positive negotiation, but engendered stress, closer to the Duboisian usage of the term. Positively they had found that the opportunity to admit not having challenged, without being judged for it, had been useful and allowed them to explore the topic further. This was quite a departure from the initial discussions about whether heteronormativity is an issue at all.

Other students seemed keen to keep the separation of university, work, and their 'real lives'. Some took it a step further saying that in 'their worlds', such conversations would not, and sometimes should not, happen. One student 'Ed', talked at some length to me about his views on this, that he did not have a problem with 'gay' people, but he did not agree with 'it' and did not 'want them in his life'. He felt that keeping a separation between his professional, university, and personal selves was fine. I will come back to the impact of this in the conclusion.

### *Keeping it real*

One of our modules entails students undertaking an alternate task, one that pushes them out of the comfort zone of their experience. This is a precursor to them undertaking an alternative placement in a practice setting that is unfamiliar to them. The task is set by their tutor group, who will have been together weekly in this small group for a year by this point. One common thing chosen by the group, often for quite heteronormative men, is that they have to spend a night in a gay club. On one occasion a tutor group was trying to persuade a young man that this should be his alternate task. He resisted for several weeks and at the end of one of the sessions his friend congratulated him for 'keeping it real'. This annoyed my colleague, whose tutor group it was, as he felt it was re-enforcing certain prejudices. The following week I happened to be taking this tutor group and the discussion opened up again. The conversation carried on for some time afterwards, informally, between myself and both young men.

The discussion was nuanced, and 'keeping it real' was multi-layered. In part there was resentment towards the group for assuming they were homophobic – they felt they were not, although they admitted they found the area of sexuality challenging. The man being asked to go to the club felt it was unfair that the group had focused on him when

he felt there were others in the group that kept their more vehement homophobia quiet. He also felt aggrieved at the group for not realising the consequences for him if he was spotted in the nightclub. He felt it would have real negative reactions from friends and family and also give the wrong impression about his sexuality. He was particularly concerned for his brother who might be picked on because of it, and his parent who culturally and religiously would find the idea very upsetting. There was also resentment about the university spaces and their artificiality, that did not reflect the worlds that he lived in, where homophobia, sexism, racism etc were very real. He questioned the point of them, although he had valued this discussion, (which I pointed out was as a result of one of these spaces). In the song 'have we forgotten' I try and capture such exchanges:

*While it dissipates, cultures still collide*

*It's still only play, tangled up in pride*

*The different worlds where we live*

*There is not always room to give.*

He seemed to be exhibiting a high level of double consciousness, although he found some aspects of heteronormativity challenging. He was also still keen to maintain a one sided double consciousness and was struggling as a consequence. He had not engaged in trying to develop intersubjective consciousness's, with other students or in his private life. He was again a meta-reflexive with loyalties to a heteronormative life. He could not move on, although, like our first example, he had not tested this, not knowing how his parent would react, or whether his siblings would actually be 'picked on'.

Other students justified professional separating on grounds of 'expertise', although other students were quick to challenge this

*Abib was challenged by another student about his refusal to engage with a gay young person, reasoning that someone else should, and would be better placed to do so, because it was not something he knew anything about and the young person would not approach him anyway because Abib was a Muslim. The student, another Muslim, said that he had a duty to work with any young person and a duty to find out about issues that affected young people, regardless of his opinion.*

*Responsibility blurring*

One reaction, which is another form of minimising, was to shift responsibility for homophobia back on to LGBTQ people, although, how this manifested was nuanced and multi-layered. A reflection on a session at my previous institution illustrates this. It was reflecting of a session examining different faith traditions.

*Sarah (a lesbian student) was talking about the rejection she felt because of her religious upbringing and the consequent difficulty and fear she had had with people of faiths and their potential reaction to her sexuality. Another student challenged her saying that her church did not see it as an issue and that Sarah should seek out other churches that had a more enlightened view and not view all faiths in this way.*

An interesting discussion ensued about responsibility. It centred around the degree to which Christians and Muslims had a responsibility to counter and challenge what is done in their name, and whether it is enough to ensure that your own church/ mosque has a different view. There was a big debate on who represents faiths. Contrasts were drawn between the portrayal of mosques as bastions of extremism, re-enforcing Islamophobia, and churches where generally their liberality was emphasised. Another student pointed out that, aside from prejudice against Muslims, the majority of both mosques and churches opposed both gay marriage and recent legislation making it illegal to discriminate against gay people in terms of services on religion grounds illegal.

Given this, the lesbian student's view was generally well founded. This seems an example of asking the lesbian student to have a double consciousness of the church, and saying that she needs to display stigma resistance, but not trying to develop intersubjective consciousness's, through examining ones own double consciousness and seeing where power and responsibility lies. In this way they were displacing their own need to develop develop consciousness, and projecting it onto the other. Participants agreed that it was for people of faith to develop double consciousness (though they did not use this terms, using the more vague terms awareness at the time) and challenge other interpretations of their faith on LGBTQ issues. However, whose responsibility it was to represent or investigate the views of a faith remained contested.



### *Qualified queer straightness - 'no homo'.*

A common statement used by some male students after they had had a conversation with another man, where they had interrupted heteronormativity, was to add 'no homo' at the end. This could be where they had admitted their emotions about something, or their liking of another man, or after having a conversation about something that could be considered outside the lexicon of 'normal' male conversation. I explored with a number of students what this phrase signifies and had a number of interesting responses:

*Richard discussed 'no homo', laughing as he did. He described it as one of those phrases that you start off saying literally, out of anxiety and self-censorship, particularly with people you do not know that well or feel secure around. Then as you become more secure you use it ironically, sending up constructions of maleness and showing you are aware of them, but behind this irony there still lies an element of self-censorship, because you are still asserting your heteronormativity.*

This dynamic seems more reminiscent of Mac an Ghaill's work (1994, 1996, 2003) on young men policing each other's masculinities in schools as opposed to Heasley's (2005) work on queer straightness. The men in question did not seem to be 'contesting heterosexuality' through queering or 'living in the shadow of masculinity', although it seemed a liminal space. Their self-policing seemed to indicate that while they had a double consciousness, it was not intersubjective - they had not built up enough stigma resistance to be able to queer their heterosexualities yet, or at least not without a qualifying statement of 'no homo'. They were again meta-reflexives (Archer, 2012), but were not prepared to give up the enablements their constructions afforded them.

### ***Avoidance strategies***

There seemed to be both passive and more assertive versions of avoidance, although silence can convey borderline aggression.

#### *Asking questions*

Asking questions is, of course, legitimate and a part of any pedagogy. However, it depends what the effect and intention is behind these questions. I explore this phenomenon in much greater detail in the next chapter, as questioning was often a response to my coming out.

## *Humour*

The use of humour as an avoidance strategy is well documented (Cann et al, 2008), but it can also be used as way of de-toxifying difficult debates (Nielson, 2011), as a by-product of anxiety (Townsend & Mahoney, 1981), as a way of minimising oppression (Sorenson, 2008) or not taking a minority group seriously (Reilley, 2015) or simply a form of oppression itself (Mulkay, 1988). All of these seemed to be at play with the students. At one end, humour did occasionally take the form of homophobic anal orientated jokes that were then put down as being ironic. On a milder end, sometimes nervousness, anxiety, deprecation and release were all present at the same time.

*Took the group on a trip to look at community groups in town. We did end up in the gay village which made people giggly. Interestingly the name of a road had been changed from Kent St to Bent St which many found amusing. I find this low level of homophobia interesting, LGBTQ life as something to be laughed at and not to be taken seriously*

When challenged later, the student gave a mix of responses, from seeing it as ‘just funny’, to wanting a sense of relief after having had a series of ‘heavy’ conversations on the trip (having looked at old Poor Houses and homeless shelters etc). One person said that it was a nervous reaction to consciously being in a gay space for the first time in their life. When questioned further they said that this anxiety was a mixture of not knowing what to expect or how to behave, similar to the straight student’s reactions to the idea of going into a toilet in a gay club. Heteronormative humour was something that I myself colluded with, or played with, on occasion. This is my reflection on a teaching session and subsequent discussion.

*When discussing research one student was talking about looking at men as part of his research, which got giggles because of the innuendo. I joked about how I could spend a long time looking at men and the group laughed, including one comment, from a woman, about how she likes me and finds me funny.*

I discussed this with the woman afterwards, having felt a little disturbed by the idea of being ‘funny’. She qualified herself saying that yes I had been funny, but she had liked what she had seen as, a subtle way of challenging the group: I had highlighted that their giggles were, by implication, saying something homophobic. She also liked that I took this approach, rather than direct challenge which she thought would have been less

effective. I thanked her for this but said that I had worried that I had also colluded with a stereotype of gay men looking at men a lot and being over sexualised. She could see my concern but felt that the group knowing me, and me having discussed and deconstructed this stereotype before, could recognise that I was playing with that image. I had displayed double consciousness and used humor to move towards inter-subjectivity, whereas being too 'serious' may have closed down the opportunity for such inter-subjectivity, even if it was partial. A colleague reflected similarly on this approach:

*If you can use your own identity to illustrate the absurdity about something, or a paradox then that's good as it makes it real.*

Tellingly the student said that some people probably would interpret it that way but they were the ones who didn't want to challenge their own stereotypes and were 'fixed' in their views.

*Conscious non-understanding.*

One form of resistance that happened on a number of occasions was an almost conscious non-understanding of a discussion, or a challenging, not of the thrust of the discussion, but the details of it. One pedagogical device I have used is a heterosexuality questionnaire (see appendix vii). This takes common statements about non-heterosexuals such as it being a phase, or that all they need is a good straight lover and inverts them to be about heterosexuals, so as to illustrate the absurdity of the statements and the nature of heteronormativity. As I reflect on the session:

*The reverse heterosexuality questionnaire went down interestingly. Some of the students asked to borrow it. Others found it challenging, including some of the very bright students who would normally pick up on ideas quickly almost seemed to deliberately not 'get' it.*

On another occasion I was discussing the idea of monogamy and having a partner for life. I said that it made sense in terms of children's upbringing but perhaps had not anticipated modern day lifespans, rather than say, 40 years in the past. Two students persisted in challenging not the challenge to monogamy, or even the challenging of religious texts, but how I knew what people's life spans had been.

I could easily categorise these students as avoiding. They later said that they had concentrated on challenging lifespan because they did not think I would 'hear' their

challenges about heteronormativity. The question of how we engender double consciousness is important. On reflection, my overall challenge had been to counter to their worldview such that they could not ‘hear’ it. My approach had been too direct and put them off and importantly, was counter to the critical pedagogic principle of starting with the world views and experiences of the people you are working with, (Freire, 1973)

### *Silence and avoidance*

Some people responded to discussions about sexuality, my coming out and heteronormativity with silence and avoidance. In the next chapter I will discuss how many students, if I came out overtly as part of the session, were keen to move on, but this also happened when the topic was brought up at all, as I reflect:

*People generally did not develop the points we made about this and seemed keen to pursue other activities.*

Here is a section of a reflection on one of my session about this attrition. It was only on re-reading it that I realised how group’s reticence had a slow impact on myself. I concluded that this had been a hard session, and internalised it, saying that I had run out of ideas and would have to think again.

*There was a little challenge about this ..... many remained silent and did not seem to want to engage with the subject. .... I did put them on the spot..... which again got fairly muted responses.*

Silence is difficult to work with, but also difficult to maintain. I think this again comes back to the question of pedagogy and timing of that pedagogy. The silence I experienced above was during a one off session where silence can be maintained, whereas in a whole module, or programme it cannot. This leads into the next chapter where I argue for a holistic approach. Colleagues in other departments often talk about problems with silence and lack of participation, whereas this is not common on our course and I think it stems partly from our pedagogic approach.

### *Heterosexual retreats revisited.*

Even in more established groups, students could exercise avoidance in the form of absence. Here is a reflection session where the previous week a student had come out. For the following few weeks certain students, who had made clear that they did not

‘approve’ of homosexuality were noticeably absent. It was a pattern that happened with several cohort groups.

*Holly was discussing going to the cinema and a show and again mentioned her partner who was a woman, people in the group did not seem to react to this, but the more noticeable Christian and Muslim members of the group were noticeably absent.*

While it is difficult to speculate on people’s absence, one can observe, in the case of this group, that they did turn up to other sessions, particularly their faith based tutor group, which, at times became a place heterosexuals ‘retreated’ to. We have already discussed the idea of heterosexual retreat from, in terms of toilets. No doubt, such retreat happens in other spaces created by students. As we said earlier retreat also happened on the course. In particular, it seemed to happen the faith based group was a space heterosexuals retreated to.

*XXX was talking about the discussion being about sexuality in the Christian group, and that this is a common discussion, if not an obsession with them.*

We have already talked about how there was in the group, on one level, an assumption that a more religious view on non-heterosexuality ie condemnatory, would be permissible. However, as the colleague above indicates, it was something more, as it was made clear by her early on that this was not that kind of space, and they did not use it as such. It was a space where a different dialogue to the main spaces could happen. As my colleague said on the day.

*The group did not necessarily see it as a safe space for homophobia and discrimination, it would be challenged, but you would not be judged for saying things that you had a problem with and wanted to explore, and not be immediately closed down. It became a dialogue*

My colleagues also had an understanding of this and a unique ability to relate to the individuals concerned, while at the same time using this leverage to counter any heteronormativity. I will explore this in greater detail in the next chapter. Developing double consciousness is a process that takes time and periods of retreat, both from and to, are a part of the process. Similarly, while people may initially display communicative reflexivity, seeking the comfort of the familiar, as is the case of heterosexual retreat from, Archer recognises that reflexive states are not static and

communicative reflexives can be worked with to become autonomous reflexives, who may still need heterosexual spaces to retreat to, and meta-reflexives, where retreat is rarely necessary.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter highlights a number of theoretical and practice agendas that I hope subsequent chapters will build on. In terms of practice, examining the spaces for pedagogy seems paramount, especially heterosexual retreats where those in the middle spaces between acceptance and hostility can go to when challenged. A colleague from my old institution commented:

*Students aren't daft, people learn what they can and cannot get away with saying in the group. What happens in the corridors and other spaces created by students, who knows?*

While this seems close to the definition of heterosexual retreats 'from', the process is again illustrated. We therefore need to be able pedagogy that goes beyond the classroom, and part of this necessitates a deconstruction of notions of the private and the public.

Theoretically, as the queer group discussed, the middle positions between homophobia and acceptance is not as simple as a continuum. Using Orne (2013), Back (2010) and Archer's schema (2010) we have seen varieties of double and single consciousness, and indeed displaced double consciousnesses. Furthermore, responsibility and power need to cut across this schema, particularly when looking at stigma resistance and how much stigma should be tolerated. We have also seen an intersecting spectrum between fractured and meta reflexives.

Returning to Archer's concept of the meta reflexive, as I said, it does not do justice to my colleague who runs the faith group. Archer (2007) notes that meta-reflexives, oriented by values, experience an incongruity between dreams and aspirations and contextual factors that obstruct their realization, which she calls 'contextual incongruity'. Her vision of a meta reflexive is someone who abandons friends, family, jobs and causes that fall short of their principles and values and finds other avenues. This feels a little individualistic. It also does not seem to take account of Archers own morphogenetic approach which emphasises gradual change *over time*, and that we are all subject to structures, including our own, which by definition do not reflect our

current conditions and experience. In this way, loyalty to institutions and people in the belief that they will change in time, from students to our universities and faith institutions to our seemingly homophobic friends and family seems legitimate. Perhaps more useful is Scrambler's (2013) vision of a dedicated meta-reflexive 'whose value-driven commitments become central to identity for self and others and transmute into life-long advocacy on behalf of the 'community as a whole' (Scrambler, 2013, 146).

Finally, it seems important that the dedicated meta reflexive continues to engage in developing intersubjective consciousness's. The difference between my colleague and Dave is her view of the Catholic Church's need to change its stance on homosexuality and that she continued to engage with it, seeking to instill an intersubjective consciousness no matter how long it took. Dave had erroneously written off friends and family, who had done the same to him. As indicated, such separation seems to be hard to maintain and causes existential angst in a Du Bois (1906) sense of double consciousness. Ed's situation was similar. His desire to not associate with gays and to keep a separation between his private and professional university life, was ultimately not sustainable. Another aspect of his self he felt he had to keep secret from his community, his mental health issues, increased his isolation and self-described feelings of fragmentation, until he had a breakdown. He came to me and discussed how all these separations, including sexuality, were ultimately not sustainable and detrimental. The question therefore seems to be what we as educators can do to help foster intersubjective consciousness's.

## **Chapter Five: The Coming Out Experience**

### ***Context and a reminder of method***

The concept of coming out, and its corollary, the closet, which has a rich, but contested history. (Chaucerey, 1994, Humphreys, 1970, Sedgewick, 1990, Seidman, 2003) I have been out, overtly, since I was eighteen, although I ‘played’ with coming out since I was fifteen. I have chosen not to examine my early comings out as my motivations for this were not related to a professional or pedagogic role. Professionally I have come out since 1992, although I have not done so in every workplace. My aims and motivations for coming out have changed and expanded over time, although some of my early motivations are still pertinent.

My reflections on the first ten years of employment are retrospective and the data is subject to the limitations discussed in the methodology. I have chosen a number of salient critical incidents (Ericsson & Simon, 1980. Yarrow et al, 1970) that have become a part of my self-narrative as an educator. I have also privileged tales where I have access to raw data in the form of a song written about those experiences, preferably at the time. In the last ten years I have kept a professional reflective diary of incidents, but it is only in the last three years that I have kept the systematic account, as described in the methodology. In addition to this, I have undertaken a series of interviews with ex-colleagues and ex-students and a staff focus group. I have then reflected upon their experiences as a comparator to my own.

### ***Coming out conversations, the personal, the political and the pedagogic***

As Manning (2014) suggests, most models frame coming out in terms of personal identity formation, typically placing coming out as a part of, or by-product of, forming a gay identity. Using Cass’s model (1979) as a yardstick, most people come out somewhere between the identity acceptance and identity pride stages. Subsequent authors have questioned aspects of Cass’s model, particularly its linearity (Troiden, 1988, 1989), its eurocentricity, whiteness and maleness (Chan 1995; Gonzales and Espin 1996; Loiacano 1989, Rosario et al. 2006) and that individual nuances need to be taken account of (Fassinger and Miller, 1996) and it needs to be seen within the lifespan of a person (D’Augelli, 1994). Most pertinently the model is homonormative (Meyer, 2005) seeing bi-sexuality as a stage before acceptance of one’s gayness.



What is under researched and theorised is how people come out, what conversations and mechanisms they use to do this, and the impact of different approaches. In this respect I found Manning's (2014) typology of 'coming out conversations' useful. He delineates planned, emergent, coaxed, romantic/ sexual, useful and educational/activist approaches. The last two were particularly useful to my coming out as an educator. For Manning (2014), educational approaches are where a person comes out, often as a guest speaker or part of panel, as an LGBTQ person and makes a presentation and/or answer questions, about their sexuality. Activist approaches are where a person comes out to make a political point. Manning (2014) recognises the differences between these two approaches, but situates the difference as context.

*Unlike the previous coming out categories described in this study, this type of coming out is situated in a public, as opposed to interpersonal, context. This different context changes the aim and scope of the coming out conversation, and based on the provided narratives it also changes the stakes. (Manning, 2014 p 938)*

While the distinctions about public coming out are useful, I think the distinction is more about motivation and pedagogy, what you want to achieve by coming out, and how you want to achieve it. I detected a number of distinctly different motivations for me declaring my sexuality, and concurrent evolving pedagogical approaches. I have also seen these mirrored in colleagues from other institutions. I think it is important to make a distinction between personal, political and pedagogical motivations for coming out.

In my first employment I did not come out. My initial reasons for this were personal, I was nervous of the reactions I would get from colleagues and the homeless people I worked with. While contested, it is generally agreed that the concept of the closet developed as a tool to protect LGBT people from social, familial, legal, medical, and cultural discrimination (Seidman 2002). In contrast a colleague was openly gay, but also homonormative, as were the times:

*His reaction seemed negative to me, both about my sexuality and not coming out. He had gone out with a number of bisexuals and was dismissive of it being those who did not want to come out properly, either through having a family or because they had not made up their mind (B memory reflection 1)*

My personal comings out were broadly allied to the formation of my sexual identity, varying from me exploring and then affirming my sexuality to myself and to others, or to have more 'honest' relationships with friends, family, existing and potential lovers, and ultimately, myself. I did not extend this to my work context.

Political motivations, as Manning notes (2014) are to issue a political challenge through being out, either to individuals or institutions. It is often about being visible and challenging heteronormativity through this. We covered in the literature review how coming out as a political strategy was prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s (Rasmussen, 2004), particularly in an educational context. It was seen an embodied way to challenge the hegemony of heteronormativity (Rasmussen, 2012).

It is worth recognising the political context of the time. The age of consent for gay men was still 21. This was also at the height of the battles around Section 28 of the Local Government act which was being interpreted by many councils beyond its stated impact of not allowing schools to talk about gay relationships as a pretended family to not allowing discussion with young people about sexuality or LGBT sexual health at all, even in the youth service to which the legislation did not extend Alldred & David, 2007). Critics saw this as a reaction to try and make LGBT lives invisible again, particularly in the professional sphere and within education. (Dee, 2011, Woolfe, 2009). I became a member of the LGBT workers support group who took a stand of being out and working with young people around sexuality issues, so as to be visible.

For me, this marked my own view of sexuality moving from viewing it as a purely private sphere to recognising that it had public dimensions and that public space was heteronormative. This stage also marked a move towards recognising heteronormativity, and, to a degree, homonormativity, although I did not articulate it in this way. Motivations were partly solidarity with others, but only for those who still closeted might find solace in my open sexuality and to encourage them to become visible; again the motivations were political.

Pedagogical reasons for disclosure include wanting a group or individuals to learn something through one's coming out, be that behavioural or attitudinal (Manning, 2014). In conducting the analysis, I also found Kumishiro's (2002) pedagogical taxonomy useful. He talks about education for the other, about the other, challenging privileging and othering and transformative education for all. I add to this education for

the self, as I see this as part of becoming a robust educator who can then contemplate education for others. There is obviously crossover between personal, political and pedagogical reasons for coming out. As we discussed in the literature review, to say that they are mutually exclusive is a particular separatist construction of the professional (cayanus, 2004, Rose, 2005). There might be political reasons for personal revelations which are about challenging notions of ‘neutral’ space, or that professionalism is constructed with a binary view of the personal and the professional. One may also have a particular pedagogical approach for making one’s political challenge most effective. However, I claim that this is a useful distinction.

### ***Coming out in higher education***

In 2000 I secured a position as a part time university lecturer. I still had a political stance on sexuality, but in becoming a lecturer I took a decision that my subsequent comings out would be primarily pedagogic in intent. Before examining what I meant by pedagogic, I want to examine the limitations of political comings out.

#### *The limitations of political comings out*

As I have suggested, Rasmussen (2004,2012) recognises that coming out as a lecturer has long been seen as an imperative for both political and pedagogical reasons. Of course, they are not unrelated, as we have explored; heteronormativity can be seen as re-inscribing neo-liberalism, and views of gender roles and constructions of the family that support this. In the focus group I held with other LGBT youth and community work lecturers, one participant, Jane describes her motivation as the student ‘can no longer say that they have never met a gay person’. This seems to be a distinctly political motivation about the visibility of the LGBT community, and Jane agreed that this was her primary motivation. However, this seems to be a relatively hollow victory, depending on what one is trying to achieve. Looking at the previous chapter, many of the avoidance and retreat reactions (particularly retreat from) were partly as a result of a pedagogic approach that pushed people out of their comfort zone too directly. As a colleague at my current institution explained, citing John Henry Newman, a person encountering a non-heterosexual for the first time is powerful, but what you do with it pedagogically is crucial.

*John Henry Newman has this distinction between real and notional apprehension, there is something about relationships, and we talked about it in*

*terms of pedagogy, experiential learning through relationships that creates a different kind of learning, that you are the first gay person they have had a relationship with is real apprehension, it's a teachable moment*

Herek (1996, 1997) found that coming out only discernibly effects heterosexuals when the person coming out is known to them and is not the only person to have done so: preferably, they should be one of three or four such experiences, which was not Jane's approach. More recent meta-analyses while showing that contact overall generally reduces prejudice, if the person is unknown to them, or the interaction is negative, it can increase anxiety and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, Plant and Devine, 2003, Smith et al, 2009). We have already seen in the literature review that unless further work is done coming out may simply enable the student to freeze, project, deflect, incorporate and reject the person (Kyatt, 1999.)

Jane also, inadvertently, re-enforced certain aspects of homonormativity and heteronormativity. In her coming out tale she described that she had always known, or at least suspected that she was gay, i.e. that she was other and that it was a heteronormative world that had prevented her realisation (that sexuality is fixed). She had also had children and was monogamous, again heteronormative. In short she remained other, ie not like the students, and therefore not a threat to them, but also conformed to other views of a homonormative lifestyle. Another colleague at another institution, Lisa, in contrast, was less easily fixable.

*Sometimes people get a bit confused because I do not look like a lesbian. Some might get curious as a result, often, crudely about who played what 'role' in the relationship. Others get a little irritated, because they cannot get it and want to pigeonhole it, but can't.*

Reactions could be fairly extreme, she describes one case where a student took against her, and while she could not say it was directly because of her sexuality, it was after the student found out about her sexuality that the student's attitude towards her changed. Apparently part of her anger was that she did not know where she 'stood' with Lisa, in reference to her lesbianism, because it was not obvious, implying that it might also not be genuine. When the opportunity came about to make a complaint about Lisa, the student pursued it all the way through the disciplinary procedure. This person appears not to have double consciousness, or a desire to gain it, and was a fractured reflective at

best. However, in both their cases Jane and Lisa did not talk about attitudinal change as their motivation for coming out, it was discernibly political as Lisa says.

*Yeah, I always come out quite quickly in my teaching. Just so they know that I have a right to be here and it is their issue if they don't like it*

However, she goes on to admit that this has a mixed impact upon the students

*For some, it just becomes normal, they seeing being gay as a normal thing, this may well be those who were tolerant anyway, or have the potential to be so. Others after a few arguments with me learn to be quiet about their views, if they are dodgy, they know that they will be challenged, by me, but also, in time, others. It's about creating a safe space isn't it, for gay people, to know that certain views will not be tolerated.*

In Kumishiro's (2002) terms, Lisa certainly was trying to create a safe space for LGBT students. However, going back to the previous chapter's concluding comments, we do not know what happens in the corridors, and given the negative reactions to antagonistic comings out mentioned before (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, Plant and Devine, 2003, Smith et al, 2009), it could make the situation outside pedagogic spaces worse for LGBT students. Following Kumishiro, an effective queer pedagogy should be a critical one – it aims to change students and society, whereas an overt non pedagogical approach seems to close down discussion and cause heterosexual retreat from perceived LGBTQ spaces.

#### *The politics of not coming out*

Before I move onto an examination of pedagogical comings out, I will consider the politics of not coming out. I discussed in the literature review how post closet discourse does not seem to be an appropriate framework for examining youth and community work courses. At my previous college there was not a culture of self-revelation and there was a strict distinction between the private, the public and the professional, following a particular Tavistock pedagogical model (Kitto, 1986). The principal at the college was a lesbian, but not out – although there was widespread speculation amongst students. She regarded her sexuality as a private matter, did not see a pedagogical role for coming out and this concurred with the prevailing view at the college. However, Lisa thought the principal's not coming out had a wider impact.

*What sort of message does it give out if you are gay in a position of power and you won't come out? At best it says that sexuality is a private thing, and by extension, that your opinions about sexuality are a private thing as well. At worst it says that this is not a place where it is safe to come out.*

I talked early on about the difficulty of someone coming out for extensively political reasons and Maureen, the college principal was not in a pedagogical position (she did not teach) but a political one at the head of the college. However, this seems different. Lisa's assertion about the impact of not coming out concerns pedagogy. When one comes out, others will work with the pedagogic issues of your act after your declaration. However, without this, they cannot and a culture of silence about it is maintained and sustained. If that person is in a symbolic position of power, it sets a precedent. This for me, is an important part of the coming out imperative (Rasmussen, 2004) and is a worthwhile strategic essentialism giving a message about the rights of LGBTQ people. As a colleague, John, says:

*I think making an early statement has benefits, particularly for those who don't feel safe and they might feel safer to come out and be accepted, I think one of the powerful things is when you come out, it gives us stuff to work with - it is also symbolic that you are the course leader.*

This coming out extends to other issues. I talked with a student at my current university, about the politics of not coming out with regards to mental health issues, which he suffered from. He felt that lecturers who had mental health issues also had an imperative to come out, arguing that if a lecturer, in a relative position of power, (at least compared to a student) will not disclose, then why would a student do so? He appreciated that when and how to come out about mental health issues could be a pedagogical matter, but to refrain was to delineate mental health as a private not public issue, and gave a message that it was something to hide or at least keep quiet about, which increased marginalisation, isolation and stigmatisation. It seems the pedagogic approach is paramount.

### ***Pedagogical comings out***

I initially meant pedagogic in the broad sense of an aim to educate heterosexuals about the legitimacy of LGBT identities, and/or to achieve an attitudinal change (Manning, 2014). In Kumishiros's (2002) terms my initial pedagogical intent was somewhere

between education for the other, creating safe spaces for LGBT students, about the other, raising understanding in heterosexuals about LGBT issues, and education that challenges privileging and othering, that raises people's awareness of their part in oppression. While I will continue to explore my evolving approach chronologically, I will also do this thematically, particularly when looking at the contexts for coming out.

As well as drawing upon a number of critical incidents I include two songs - 'Can't compare' deals with the anger of a student when I compared gay oppression and identity development to its black counterpart. 'You ain't welcome here' deals with coming out to a group of students from another course in a one off sessions on sexuality. I will also draw upon my reflections on a focus group I conducted with other lecturers in youth and community work in other HEIs, and subsequent follow up interviews and a number of interviews with ex-students about their experiences within HEIs.

#### *One off comings out*

At different universities I have come out in one off sessions, where I do not go on to teach the group, similar to what Manning (2014) describes as educational comings out. However, I would concur with more queer pedagogic authors (Bryson and Castell, 1993, Fuss, 1989; Luhmann, 1998, Phelan, 1989; Sedgwick, 1990) that one off sessions are rarely effective, are hard to measure in terms of effect and can re-entrench views rather than change them. I sum up my experiences of these sessions in the song 'you're not welcome here'. It was conceived and sketched out immediately after one particular session, but draws on other reflections. It is a country rock song pastiche. Country is a musical genre with a contested history regarding LGBT issues (Hubbs, 2014), with a level of outward tolerance, but much homophobia underneath. The song is in three verses, a changing chorus and a middle eight. The first verse reflects the first half of the session where I came out to a muted reaction, but little animosity. It became one of those 'ask the gay questions session', outwardly supportive of LGBT issues, but concurrently othering non-heterosexuality and not explore the majority sexuality's complicity in, and potential victimisation by heteronormativity. As I reflect both in my diary and the song:

*The group was quite subdued when I did come out, most saying nothing and a few naming the gay friends that they had etc. I also revealed that I was bisexual.*

*One black woman did ask me who played what role – which gave me dilemma about how much I talked about myself. Others told her off for asking such personal questions.*

This start is reflected in the general positivity of the first verse

*Vrs1 We'll think it's fine, have a good time, You should live life without strife  
And be who you wanna be, Yes I'm cool to know, What you wanna show  
I'll even learn to discern, see what you wanna be seen*

*Chrs/ cause you're all welcome here, You're all welcome here  
You can scream and shout, You can even go and come out  
Cause you're all welcome here*

However, the point where the group became uncomfortable, was when I started talking about heterosexualities and its variants, as I reflected:

*This led into a discussion about sexual diversity and how married couples and heterosexuals had variety in sexual behaviour, who dominated etc and how often they had sex – which some found interesting but participation was much less – there was also a discussion about asexuality, although it seemed to be brought up in a spirit of curiosity about 'other' sexualities – I challenged that this shattered the myth that sex is inevitably healthy and desirable. I talked about internalised homophobia, taking heterosexual men to gay clubs and how their fear, and mine, about being come onto revealed internalised myths about male gay predatory nature.*

A young woman left the session just at the point when we were talking about internalised homophobia, as I recount:

*I came back from the first session and Kate (the main module tutor) shared with me that the student had walked about because of a comment I made in discussion about internalised homophobia. I had said that when I was younger I might have internalised my own homophobia and have hit someone when I had really wanted to fuck them. She had been sexual assaulted and found this description and the word fuck aggressive and it had made her want to leave – I felt very mixed about this – I obviously did not want to cause this woman distress and was sorry to have reminded her about her sexual incident. It also*



*reminded me on the danger of discussing sex in large group because you cannot be sure of people's experience – but does this not apply to any discussion about sex.*

While several educators talk about the intense levels of emotionality that adhere to learning about gender and sexuality (Allen, 2016, Boler, 1999), responsibility shift may have been going on, as I reflected a week after the session.

*In retrospect, I wondered about the use of the word fuck, perhaps I was trying to be controversial, but it was the only time I had said it and the aggression was meant to be there as this is the nature of internalised homophobia. I also thought there may have been a little homophobia or avoidance in the woman's reaction in that I was not discussing rape, but the reactions of a 12 year old boy coming to terms with his sexuality.*

As I say the rest of the group was also uncomfortable when we touched on heteronormative behaviour and what is 'normal heterosexual behaviour' with students in the second half of the session seemed much more defensive. Suffice to say that the conclusion that Kate and I came to was that that coming out does bring these issues to the fore and heightens any unresolved issues about sex that students may have, and brings them into a public arena. However, a one off session does not give time to explore these issues. It does, however expose them, as I reflect.

*At the end it did explode into some comments about the relevance of the bible and what is meant by a family, which started to explode and I think needs a lot further exploration, Indeed people were only really starting to engage with the issue at the end, and I felt that people's real views were only just starting to really come out.*

Kate and I agreed that what was important was what happened afterwards.

*I also felt that this was something she would have to work through and expressed this to Kate, she said that it was true that people need to be able to do this, but in their time and it will not happen immediately – again very true.*

Unfortunately, Kate said that the group was very resistant to her later attempts to discuss the session. She felt my presence would have helped as they either minimised the session, said that did not understand it, or said that 'you had to be there', closing her

down pedagogically. These reactions echo the minimising and dismissing reactions discussed in the previous chapter.

### *Coming out as part of the curriculum*

At my previous college I came out almost exclusively as a part of the curriculum within the modules I taught. On reflection the process was quite forced. I had decided to come out, albeit as a pedagogic process, and was looking for the opportunity to do so. At my first college I taught group work, and initially came out during these sessions through the notion of subcultures for a number of years, framing the LGBT community as an aspect of this. As I reflected upon my second year of doing this that reactions in both years had been similar,

*I introduced the idea of subcultures, and that gay people could be seen as a part of a subculture, and came out in this process. I had previously asked them to identify sub-cultural groups that they were, or had been, a part of. When I said that I was not straight there was some gaps of disbelief and giggles, one blurting out that they would never have guessed that. Others gave a muted reaction.*

I went on to analyse how this discomfort seemed unusual, although these could, of course, be my own projections.

*There were a number of students who kept quiet when they normally did not, and looked uncomfortable. One student was curious and wanted to ask a series of questions. Other students tried to silence him saying that he shouldn't be nosy and that this was a private matter. They seemed, and expressed, that they were doing this in the spirit of protection, but it also felt a little like they wanted to silence the subject.*

Such reactions seem a combination of silence and re-constituting the private and public. Other opportunities to distance themselves were taken.

*The group reacted well when we went on to talk about the gay lifestyle as a subculture. On reflection I think this was partly because they could distance it from themselves and myself, my revelation being a little real.*

On reflection there were a number of learning points for me pedagogically. To introduce sexualities as a subculture is to re-inscribe non-heterosexualities as, at best, subsets of heterosexuality (Gelder, 2007), as reaction to it (Hall et al, 1993, Hegbie, 1984), or, at worst, a deviation or inversion of heterosexuality (Brake, 1980). It also invites students to other, as they can legitimately say they are not a part of that subculture. Secondly it re-enforced my view that to successfully explore heteronormativity as an aspect of us all, we need to first to deconstruct the notion of the private and the public.

In later years I came out as a part of human development. Reactions were more mixed. I recognised the limitations of the subcultural approach and tried to discuss sexuality in terms of a discussion about human sexuality generally. However, as I reflect.

*Discussion about sexuality in human relations had tended to talk about it in a somewhat clinical biological way, prompting memorable discussions about the 'Gay Gene' and the like. I tried to couch it in sociological terms, but this wasn't the nature of the sessions and/ or people could steer it back to biological or more abstract discussions.*

I had consciously adopted what Manning (2014) describes as an educational stance of coming out, albeit as a panel of one; although some years I invited other LGBT students to talk about themselves. However, as you can see I had obviously grown quite weary of the 'ask me questions approach' noted in the previous chapter - as I again reflect.

*Even when I came out as part of introducing the idea it became the typical 'ask the gay questions' session with people professing and nodding acceptance, or remaining quiet*

I think I was experiencing a more nuanced version of Khyatt's (1999) freezing of sexuality. While she was talking about a freezing of a people's view of sexuality and what a LGBT person is 'like', I was experiencing a freezing of discourse. The group were framing the 'ask the LGBTQ person questions' session in a way that appeared to be supportive of non-heterosexual people in their oppression but at the same time did not allow for an interruption of heteronormativity, or an examination of student's complicity in the maintenance of heteronormativity. This approach, while humanising sexuality and non-heterosexuals, did not counter othering. They were able to

understand my oppression, and see how other heterosexuals might be oppressing me. They did not, however, see their complicity in heteronormativity, or the privilege they gained from it. Using Orne's (2013) framework, they had single consciousness in that they wanted to understand LGBT issues, but not intersubjective consciousness, in not wanting to see their culpability in it, and to explore this with others. Others used silence, again discussed in the last chapter, remaining quiet and not looking at themselves until the session was over.

Consequently, I moved to discussing sexuality through identity development, which seemed to have the potential for more psychosocial dimensions (Lucey et al, 2006), and to touch on the idea of social construction. I started using Cross's (1991) model of black identity development, which normally went down well, with appropriate critiques of it. I introduced Cass's (1979) model of sexual identity development, and made comparisons with Cross's model. The comparison I had made were that these were both models of how a minority created an identity within a dominant culture that oppressed it. I critiqued the models that they in themselves re-inscribing the dominant culture as they defined non-dominant identities through the lens of the dominant cultures, akin to my earlier critique of the subcultural thesis. Reactions were revealing.

*The two gay student in the group reported afterwards that they had found it very empowering, (although both of them were gay rather than b or t). However, two of the black male students reacted against it negatively. One in particular, had previously had a strong relationship with me but distinctly rejected me afterwards, citing his religion as part of this, and also that I did not understand him or his oppression and had diminished it in my comparison. Apparently, although it was never said in the lessons or made official, they were insulted that I had compared black oppression with gay oppression. Part of this was that I, as a white person, could not understand the nature of their oppression.*

I did have an encounter with one of the students, Donovan, after the module finished. He reiterated that I could not understand the nature of his oppression and they were insulted that I had made a comparison. I wrote a song about the encounter with Donovan at the time in appendix xiii. It was in the form of the conversation, Donovan being the voice of the first verse and chorus, and I the second verse and second chorus.

The shift of position throughout the verse is telling, moving from a rejection of the model as imposed, while accepting some of my critique, to a rejection of the possibility that I could understand his position, even though I was not claiming this. He then very much retreats into an essentialist idea of identity with a concurrent rejection of non-heterosexualities as a western cultural imposition – an extreme of the idea of heterosexual retreat from perceived LGBTQ spaces. He rejected the idea of having a double consciousness, both in that he did not want to understand LGBT perspectives, and that it was not possible that I could have a double consciousness of his perspective. He was also certainly a selective autonomous reflexive, accepting aspects of the models as they applied to his experience, but rejecting them as they applied to others.

However, I have to look at the pedagogic space I was, or was not creating. I was asking him to face how his culture was oppressing me, that he was a part of doing this, and that this was a parallel to his own oppression. Furthermore, I was offering a direct challenge to his cultural values, if not his belief systems around sexuality, and by extension, gender. I was also asking him to consider that some of the values and culture by which he defined himself, were in themselves constructions of the dominant culture he was rejecting. This all coming from a person, from his perspective, from a dominant culture,

Furthermore, I had used my personal relationships with Donovan, and other students, as a crude pedagogical device. I was aware of the dynamics of their views and how my revelations would impact on them and was playing on this. I would encourage students to like me, and have an affinity with me, knowing their homophobia and heteronormativity, whether they were conscious or unconscious of it. In many cases, like Donovan, I think that had they known my sexuality, they would have distanced themselves from me. I knew that when I revealed my sexuality it would be harder to ‘other’ me, because they knew me personally. They would be effectively forced to examine their own opinions and constructions on a personal level because they knew me on a personal level. On a cruder level, I was daring them to reject me. In many cases it did get people to confront their views, as they would not want to reject me. However, for others, like Donovan, it was simpler to do so.

I had been playing a game with him and put him in this position. I had knowledge about my sexuality that he did not, and manipulated that knowledge in order to put him in a position, on my terms, where he had to choose, with both choices representing a loss –

all of which was true. His sense of betrayal was in being manipulated and his reference to the 'game' I had played expresses this. It was also a game that he felt white people had systematically played on him, and other black people, throughout history. He talked about how many black people had similarly had their knowledge denied or hidden, and had been manipulated into re-inscribing their own oppression, the basis of hegemony, that was a strong part of his identity that I had, in a way, reinforced and re-inscribed. He had rightly accused me of re-enforcing in him a Du Bois sense of double consciousness (1906.)

Several lessons were to be gleaned from this incident and more widely my approach at this time. Firstly, in relation to coming out, I needed to find a way to discourage people from closing down the subject in the name of 'protecting' me, if indeed they were doing this. In terms of curriculum, situating heteronormativity within human development is in danger of allowing it to be biologically constructed. Even if it is examined through the lens of social constructionism a wider, longer term approach is needed. Even the previously mentioned gay students who had described the session as empowering, and later expressed that it had made issues of sexuality briefly visible, also said that that wider discussion of sexuality had been subsequently lost to the more enraged debate about race.

My shock tactics had certainly failed on a pedagogic and personal level. Prior work was needed for students to understand their own identities, and be strengthened in them, before shaking them up through a thorough exploration of heteronormativity. I had broken through the performance of tolerance that student had learned to display towards sexuality. As Van de Ven (1994) argues, when discussing programmes that encourage performance rather than embodiment, 'the result may be outward tolerance but underlying hostility, perpetuated in part by anti-discrimination policies and equal opportunity strategies that put a premium on acceptable behaviours toward minorities and less emphasis on cognitive notions, while all but ignoring 'inner' feelings' (1994, 118)

As noted in the previous chapter, this was compounded by a course and university culture where the tutor does not talk about themselves and students' own values are not to be similarly exposed or explored. The pedagogic focus was very much within formal sessions, and the interventions of tutors were very much focused on psychodynamic group processes, rather than exploring social constructions of subjects like sexuality

and heteronormativity – this resulted in a culture of silence, or avoidance. A pedagogic dynamic was created where students could retreat into a construction that a white person could not understand black oppression, although of course this may have been their view all along. Nevertheless, I had created an impasse where the subject could not and would not be debated.

*Making the experience visceral and focussed on the private and public*

Initially I continued my practice of coming out via the curriculum at my next college, within the diversity module. I led on this for two years, and had an input on them from then onwards. This module was generally perceived as ‘not working’ in that, in line with critiques of diversity modules it was invariably education about the ‘other’ (Kumishiro, 2002). Evaluations by tutors, student and external examiners saw it as being a succession of sessions about different others, be that LGBT, BME, disability, class and women (Annual Monitoring Reports, 2008, 2009, 2010). As such, it did not get people to look at their own culpability in these oppressions (Thompson & Disce, 1992), and certainly not the construction of the normalcy they were subject to, and a part of re-inscribing. One factor in this is that the majority of the class would be potentially oppressed in some way (our typical course will contain very few white, middle class, able bodied straight men). While it was hoped that this would give people empathy with others who were oppressed, it also gave them an ‘opt-out’, in that when their culpability in other oppressions was highlighted, they focused on, and often claimed the primacy of the issue most pertinent to them, be that race, class, gender etc (Harris, 2009).

Initially I would come out on the sexuality session. I introduced ground rules that said that people could ask me what they wanted, and not feel they had to worry about offending me or expressing their views. To do this had been an active decision on my part and I said that I did not need to be ‘protected’ by them. I also said that they would not be expected to do likewise. While this did stop the ‘protect as avoidance’ reaction, the ‘ask the LGBTQ person questions and sympathise’ dynamic persisted. It still felt like a form of positive othering, constructing sexuality as private - or silence and avoidance, including avoidance of students’ complicity in the construction of heteronormativity although the reactions were not as exacerbated by the college’s general heteronormative culture as described before.

As indicated earlier, I used this interaction in class to discuss the issue of the private and the public. In another session I acknowledged the public/private dynamic at the beginning of the session, using my coming out as an example of trying to disrupt this.

*I said that people should be able to ask me anything about it as I had made a conscious decision to talk about personal things, I was asked some quite personal questions about my sexuality, and even my sexual behaviour, but decided to answer what people were saying and asking. This led to a very interesting discussion about the personal and the private and what should be discussed. – I said that some of this was about trying to get people to break down the idea of what is personal and to be brought into the classroom*

This was a different tack from the ground rules tactic; in fact it inverted it, showing that you cannot create these neutral spaces, or indeed police them, and that we contest them all the time. I used the real example that had happened to me a few days ago, feeling that I had had a choice about being complicit with heteronormativity or not.

*I referenced that I had come out to a group of students in a cigarette break, even saying that I had felt that I was in a position where I had had a choice to conceal my sexuality or reveal it - I thanked that group of students for giving me a reason to discuss it now.*

This then led to an initial discussion about space, but again at a distance, with people wondering what it must be like to be put in that position. I did not mention that I had found out that I had been put in that position deliberately, thinking this would put the student too much on the spot, although positively the student in question, Jake, brought this into the group anyway. He illustrated his own complicity in the dynamic that had been created, and by implication his own heteronormativity. I thought his admission of this, and subsequent intervention, was both brave and reflective.

*Jake repeated his justification for doing so in similar terms to those described earlier. He also acknowledged that while he had just felt annoyed that I had brought this up in the group, it being something that happened outside of sessions, he then recognised that this was exactly what he had done and so it was fair enough.*

It opened up a discussion about public and private space, power and heteronormativity, that had not really happened before. While initially there was a discussion about



whether Jake had been fair or not in what he did, I quickly moved people away from this individualising of the issues and towards reflecting on their own feeling about sexuality and public and private space. A pivotal discussion was initiated by a young woman about the ‘gay village.’

*Fiona initiated a very interesting discussion about Birmingham, and Manchester’s, gay village. Some of the students had felt uncomfortable about these spaces and that it was not fair that they should feel this way in a public space.*

Luckily this was the same group that had giggled when in the gay village on the trip to see community events (previous chapter), and I brought this incident up again. We then discussed the neutrality of public spaces and how non-heterosexuals would feel in them. As I reflect:

*Some people felt that no sexual behaviour should be displayed in public, whatever your sexuality. Others discussed the impossibility of this, and questioned why it was desirable, to which others said sex was a private thing. Some of this discussion then went on about the sexualisation of the media and advertising, including its heteronormativity.*

The group did start addressing heteronormativity and public space, with some recognising their complicity in it, consciously or not,

*It then went deeper, with a discussion about flaunting, with people having problems with ‘flaunting’ in the gay village. When questioned by others those people could not answer what was flaunting consisted of, and then how it was different from what heterosexuals did in ‘public space’ – a particular discussion about holding hands and kissing in public arose. Some students continued to place themselves outside of heteronormativity and its construction, saying the problem was with ‘other’ heterosexuals. Others thought that any flaunting of sexuality in public was wrong*

Others, including the woman who had initiated the discussion about ‘gay villages’, individualised it and distanced themselves from it.

*Fiona (straight woman) was adamant that people should be able to walk down the streets with their partners whatever their sexuality. When asked whether they would feel safe from the responses of others she replied that that was not*

*her fault, and that they should have the courage of their convictions, quickly adding that if they were criticised she would be the first to step in and defend them,*

This is another example of responsibility shifting as discussed in the last chapter. Fiona was putting the responsibility on to the LGBT person to show increased stigma resistance. It would also be unlikely to achieve what she intends, instead re-inscribing the ‘gay tyranny’ discourse (Brickell, 2005), whereby LGBT are colonising ‘neutral public space’ rather than challenging the heteronormativity of public space. Another student made a more nuanced individualised intervention. In combination, both had a minimisation and responsibility shifting effect.

*Gee expressed that we were making a lot of fuss about the issue. He said that he had no problem with ‘gays’ and had been a bouncer for years in the village and found it pretty much like being a bouncer anywhere. I challenged him saying that he was a very admirable example of a heterosexual black guy who had challenged himself, but did he take this through to other spaces, such as his own community and social group, did he express what he said here there, and challenge some of the views he encountered – I said what a champion he could be – his reaction was muted.*

I eventually supervised Gee for his dissertation and afterwards he said that the above conversation had been a pivotal conversation for him in making him realise that he kept many aspects of his life separate and that this had ultimately started to fragment with the hypocrisies, tensions and self-deceptions in his personal, professional and social life, one of which I had illustrated. Concurrently how he treated women, his own masculinity and the lack of intimate relationships he had with male friends also caused tensions, again reminiscent of the original form of double consciousness (Du Bois (1906), and he started to address some of these things. Gee was also illuminating in what can be challenging for students about coming out. This seems in stark contrast to Ed and Dave in the previous chapter.

My initial reflection on attempts to come out in the diversity module through discussing the idea of normality and sexuality was that it still seemed too much for people. I shared this with Gee and he said I needed patience and that the real work started after I had come out. What he, and others he had discussed it with, had found difficult was the

viscerality of the situation, not just about sexuality, but also the dissolution of public and private barriers and those of tutor and student, and also student and student. The call for patience had resonance in that time factors are central to a morphogenetic approach (Archer, 2010), but also for enabling people to move from and to different reflective positions. The coming out might be the one off event that disrupts the binaries, but it is the ongoing conversations that re-constructs them.

The other point that the research illustrated to me, particularly in my discussions with Gee and my reflections on the diversity sessions, was that as the default position heterosexuality is an absent category (Beasley 2010, Rossi, 2011). In the previous chapter I noted that students do not have the vocabulary to articulate issue around sexuality, apart from in a constructed heteronormative way, and sometimes not at all. A colleague re-iterated this particularly in the context of faith

*It is so deep rooted in many faiths that we do not talk about sexuality, any sexuality, let alone anything not heterosexual. Either that or it is romanticised either as this magical union, or the right to good sex and an orgasm that is perpetuated through the media. All that human discussion about clashing teeth, odd noises and smells, cramps and getting your foot stuck in a mouldy cup is just not spoken about. It's all made taboo through church, family, community culture, it's going to take a lot of undoing.*

This led to a change of emphasis for the aims of my coming out. Rather than opening up a discussion about sexuality, it seemed to be most powerful when it opened up a discussion about how we construct the private and the public, in relation to both space, and self-revelation as a pedagogic tool. This, in turn, seemed to lead into discussion about heteronormativity more naturally and safely, although people would still not see their own complicity within the dynamic of heteronormativity in those moments, but this takes time. I will discuss in chapter six how this led to change as a team in how we approached challenging heteronormativity within the whole curriculum and other mechanisms on the course.

#### *Coming out without being fixed*

I was still looking for a way to come out that did not result in the fixing of ideas about sexuality (Khyatt, 1999) or lead to diversionary or avoidance reactions. The team wanted to co-create the pedagogical practitioner we wanted to tackle Van de Ven's

(1994) criticisms of existing anti-oppressive pedagogies and statements so as to get behind outward tolerance and performed acceptable behaviours, unearth and deconstruct any underlying hostility and attend to and develop spaces to discuss ‘inner’ feelings’.

We developed a first year module, half of which explicitly looked at the notion of the self within the context of the private and the public. This module required student to give an assessed presentation on themselves and how they understood their identities, acknowledging how they appeared to others, and how they mediated this. It was in this session that I would come out. However, I recognised in order to not fix my sexuality as the point of focus, and in acknowledgment that there are other comings out that, while they may not directly interrupt heteronormativity, certainly interrupt notions of normality, and this is perhaps more important.

I am dyslexic and have always talked about this openly on the course, as has another colleague. I have had incidents of mental health issues in my life. This is something I have rarely shared with students, probably through fear of stigmatisation. I also come out about my political views, problematic drug use, the jobs I have done and what is important to me personally and professionally. As well as these comings out, I would talk about the privilege I have as a white, male head of department with relative economic affluence and how I try and manage that. One student afterwards commented in the evaluation of the module.

*When Mike talked about the different things that he was, and I did the same, I could see that sexuality is only a part of him, and that he is a whole complex person, and that his sexuality is consequently complex, as I suppose is mine. It also made me realise that this is probably the same for anyone in terms of their race, gender, and any aspect of them. They are only an aspect of you and these things shift. In fact, it helped me see people beyond their labels, though it was confusing at first - in a couple of cases other students seemed to want to hang on to these things, their labels, as their definitive selves and get defensive about it – we are all on our journeys I suppose.*

They could not freeze in me as a fantasy of what an LGBT person is like (Khyatt, 1999). because of all the other intersecting aspects of me (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 1994, Martinez et al, 2014). A part of this was recognising that a person should not be

defined entirely through their sexuality. As part of this, following a morphogenetic approach (Archer, 2010), I talk about how my view of self is evolving, giving an account of how the structural changes, and changing societal and person views about sexuality have affected my view of self over time. My use of the term bisexual is an example of this, it was empowering at the time and a best description and hence I still use it, although queer may be a more accurate description. A colleague notes the impact of the approach.

*Part of it is that you are not one or the other, they may say I know some gay people but when you talk about your life and your sexuality it is not clear cut so sexuality becomes not clear cut and that's what's frightening to people, it's difficult to get their heads around that you are not in a fixed position.*

This moment also seems to be an un-freezing of the discourse. In seeing the intersectional nature of myself and my oppressions and privileges, and how this related to them and others, it was revealing some dominant discourses. A part of this was revealing how I, and others, can hold essentialised views of our oppressed identities that we are invested in, and nervous to un-freeze. However, this is not an easy process for students, or myself, as another tutor describes

*It draws people to you as well. You have disclosed your mental health issues in the past and in a funny kind of way I think students find that more challenging, because they are not in a position to contain their own mental health,*

This containment seems crucial for the development of a holistic team approach that challenges heteronormativities, and other social constructions, to expanded upon in the final chapter.

### **Conclusion.**

Coming out can be a legitimate method of interrupting heteronormativity, as a legitimate act of education for the other, so that other LGBTQ people do not feel isolated. As a programme leader it is also symbolically important to come out in this regard. However, coming out needs to be done thoughtfully, strategically, and pedagogically. It seems effective when done within the context of a wider approach to interrupting other forms of social constructions and located within a greater examination of other binary oppositions. The coming out experience is powerful when it is within the context of other personal revelations, and other comings out, so people

do not fix their views on sexuality. It is similarly powerful when done as part of breaking down understanding of who are knowledge creators, and public and private notions of professionalism and pedagogic relationships. LGBTQ practitioners need to be clear about, and make a distinction between their personal, political and pedagogic motivations and practices for coming out.

One off coming out session seem to be of limited value. I concur with the literature that, in general, coming out within singular modules is not that effective, apart from giving student a visceral experience of being in the room with an LGBT person, which can, in some cases, re-enforce negative views. However, such visceral experiences are critical to be able to get behind people's performances of cognitive tolerance and explore their underlying conflicting attitudes, fears, feelings, avoidance and defensive reactions. Ultimately, pedagogues need to enable students to become committed meta-reflexives, and develop a language to unpick the negative double consciousness and sufferings through heteronormativity. However, such visceral experiences need to be co-created and co-contained and will not happen instantly. This hopefully sets the agenda for the final chapter.

## **Chapter six: Developing a pedagogic approach to interrupting heteronormativity beyond coming out.**

### ***The importance of heterosexual allies and transgressive sexualities***

As indicated in the literature review, I argue that there is legitimacy in, and a necessity for, heterosexual allies, as part of a holistic team approach to interrupt and re-construct heteronormativity. Heterosexuality needs to render itself visible, question its privileging of the private, and examine itself in the public sphere.

Mohammed (expanded on in appendix x) illustrates the importance of heterosexual allies. As described, Mohammed was a Muslim ‘in the shadow of masculinity’ (Heasley, 2005), who made a number of conflicting statements about his sexuality at different points. This could be read simply as him exploring his sexuality. Although he stated that he had found my coming out important and affirming, he did not want to engage with me directly, as it might mark him (even though many students did engage with me without this concern). Such avoidance of contact with other LGBTQ people, as part of negotiating one’s sexual identity is well covered in the literature. (Boykin, 1996, Cass, 1979 Clare, 1999, D’Augelli, 1994, Troiden, 1988, Rhoads, 1994, Wilson, 1996) However, talking to non-hegemonic heterosexuals did seem to help at points, as did talking to more hegemonic heterosexuals, who actively disrupted their hegemonic masculinities and sexualities.

Looking back, in my practice, there was a difficult incident where a male client was referred to me who had just been abused by another male client. He was referred to me because of my sexuality. On further reflection, I think that I was not the appropriate person to have worked with the young man. The young man was not gay but had been abused by a gay man. Sexuality was not the issue here, it was abuse and manipulation. The visceral presence of a non-heterosexual was distressing and he said it reminded him of the abuse he had just suffered. My challenge to his homophobic language came across as, or was interpreted as, a defence of the abuse he had suffered. He did not address his own homophobia and as importantly, did not feel supported. I suspect a heterosexual colleague could have given him support, and challenged his homophobic comments with less danger of it being misconstrued as ‘someone gay defending another gay person’.

In this way the heterosexual ally could have acted as a ‘near peer’ (Seal and Harris, 2016) to the young man. Inhabiting a different kind of heterosexuality would have allowed the person to be supported in the abuse he had unjustly suffered but would have showed him a different vision of heterosexuality that was not homophobic. As a colleague said in one of the staff focus groups:

*Sometimes it's more powerful if the person from the hegemonic group challenges someone else, be that a heterosexual challenging a heterosexual or a white person challenging another white person, it's harder to shrug it off.*

Students similarly recognised the power of this, both within and outside the classroom. As one of the queer group reflected:

*It was much more powerful in the group when Gemma challenged Adam about not recognising his white privilege, similarly when Karen challenged Habib about the bullshit he was coming out about being gay being a white middle class thing*

These allies’ interventions seem particularly important in places where heterosexual’s retreat to, where only another heterosexual could intervene. As discussed earlier, a significant heterosexuals retreated to, at least for these cohorts, was in the faith based tutor group. The tutor who ran this group recognised this, and the power that a heterosexual person of faith can have.

*There is value in those who have faith hearing about those areas where they come into conflict from someone who they perceive to be part of that faith too – it has a resonance - they also can't dismiss them as they would someone from outside of the faith, you don't understand or share my values.*

Again, this does not have to be limited to the tutor’s interventions, students can challenge each other, and in public.

*Heartened by a discussion about sexuality today, I was talking about the tolerance in medieval Muslim society and some of their great poems being written by men about men. This led to a lengthy discussion between two groups of Muslim students about Islam and homosexuality, and whether it was for them to condemn, or for Allah. It felt like a conversation where I did not need to intervene, and perhaps was not in a position to do so.*



I talked to two of the students afterwards and they named the Muslim faith group not so much as a place of retreat but a place where they gathered confidence that enabled them to talk about Islam in the wider group, something they had not felt able to do in previous educational situations. I was reminded about comments from tutors at my previous institution that faith, as well as any potential homophobia, could be something that people learned to be quiet about and not to share. It seems that faith based groups, rather than becoming solely places of retreat, were places where people could discuss their faith in a way that was accepted and gave them enough confidence to have the discussion in the larger group.

Similarly, on our courses it was sometimes difficult to challenge heteronormativity from the 'outside', Donovan in the previous chapter being an example of this. To only give non-heterosexual counter narratives is in danger of simply re-inscribing the (counter-counter) narrative of the embattled, politically attacked heterosexual normative (Brickell, 2005). As O'Rourke (2005) says, being able to queer and recognise the multiplicity of the majority sexuality, and make heterosexuality transgressive of heteronormativity, has much more potential to 'queer everything' (O'Rourke, 2005, p 54). It also goes beyond interrupting heteronormativity, and gives a vision of a valid heterosexuality outside of it, one that Donovan might have found harder to dismiss.

***Coming out straight, being reasonably heterosexual, and the development of transgressive heterosexualities,***

One of the major impacts of my colleagues is that they will disrupt heteronormativity when it arises, particularly when the groups or an individual is expecting collusions, as a colleague notes:

*It's what I like about this team, when someone who is in the dominant hegemonic group allies themselves with those who are not, in an effort to disrupt a student who is trying to get you to collude with their majority views and attitudes.*

As implied, this approach is not limited to interrupting heteronormativity. However, for now I want to focus on how allies discuss their heterosexualities. The question becomes what kind of tutor can do this, and how do they construct and perform their heterosexuality. O'Rourke (2005) talks about the need to create accounts of

heterosexuality that are ‘radical, progressive, nomadic, queer-affiliated, queerly positioned, anti-homophobic and antinormative’. (O’Rourke, 2005 p 112), stating that:

*it is crucially important to begin redesigning heterosexist codes by proliferating queer theories which celebrate non-normative heterosexualities, the queer practices of straights, and the lives and loves of those men and women who choose to situate themselves beyond the charmed circle at the heteronormative centre. (O’Rourke, 2005 p 112).*

Using these characteristics as a lens, this study highlights a number of tensions. I will explore three themes: coming out straight as a tactic; the problem of being nomadic as a heterosexual; and, adding to O’Rourke’s themes (something this research necessitates), the need for these accounts to be public, as a challenge to the public/ private construction of heterosexualities.

Allen (2011) advocates coming out as heterosexual as a pedagogic tool, but within a strategy of undermining the dominance of heterosexuality. She talks about the need for a transgressive heterosexuality needs to aim to de-naturalise and decentre heterosexual identity and the heteronormative practices which sustain its privileged position. Part of doing this is to recognise that all sexuality and identity is a journey. One of my colleagues describes, coming out in a staff focus group:

*I have, leading from our conversations, set up a dramatic scenario, saying I have to tell the group something and then gone on to say that I need to reveal my heterosexuality.*

He then goes on to explain that he had done this to illustrate heteronormativity in that it is LGBTQ people who have to come out, which is some way marks them as different from the norm, but a norm that does not really exist, echoing post closet concerns (Burstson & Richardson, 1994, Collard, 1998, Mendleson, 1996). While coming out as heterosexual in this way challenges heteronormativity in terms of its construction of LGBTQ as outside normality, it does not deconstruct heterosexuality itself, in fact it re-enforces the binary. Afterwards we agreed that his declaration, while making a point about heteronormativity, did not detail any of his own history of sexuality and his sexual identity. He admitted to being reluctant to do this.

*Long discussion with John about the aftermath of the discussion about coming out as straight – he was initially reticent to discuss his own sexual journey,*

*probably because of the level of infidelity involved - he was questioning about what worth this would have. However, he went on to have a fascinating tale about his sexuality. He would not rule out some sexual encounter with the same sex – often liking and fantasising about anonymous sex and sex without consequences and could imagine a gay experience in this context. However, he could not imagine having a loving, emotional relationship with a man, growing old cuddling etc. But he certainly would not want to share these aspects with anyone.*

Smith (2009), in a study of 17 heterosexuals engaged in contesting heteronormativity found two significant struggles: their relationships with sexual minorities, and articulating their own sexual journey where it includes their same-sex erotic experiences or fantasies. Smith (2009) then describes how these struggles trigger intra-psychic dissonance and subconscious conflict manifested in them reproducing heterosexism.

In contrast many of gay and lesbian colleagues were quite open in their coming out discussions in talking about previous opposite sex encounters, deceiving partners and other indiscretions, sex addictions etc. It was normally portrayed in the culture of finding their true sexualities, but they displayed no compunction about going through their indecisions, depressions and isolation. This was often framed within a struggle against heteronormativity, but this could still be done by heterosexuals, (in fact just as powerfully) giving accounts of how heteronormativity has damaged them. Rossi (2011) shows how normative heterosexuality can be challenged, through highlighting performances of ostensible ‘wrongdoings’, forms of ‘unhappiness’, or ‘infelicitities’ within heterosexuality. In order to do this, as Spivak says, they ‘need to learn to unlearn their privilege as their loss’ (Spivak, 1990). My colleague recognised the need to work these issues through and found it helpful to think about his losses through heteronormativity, particularly in his isolation and deception entailed in following a particular construction of masculinity - it has yet to become a public debate for him, although, as I shall go on to argue, this is necessary.

Beaseley (2005) considers a range of transgressive heterosexualities, including more sensational ones such as group sex, women paying for sex, public sex and new heterosexual technological intimacies (Hazell [2004] 2008; Bell 2006; Holmes 2004; Mazur [1973] 2000; Anapol 1997; Easton and Liszt 1997; Segal 1994). While simply

identifying as heterosexual re-inscribes heteronormativity, developing a multiplicity of public heterosexualities that are transformative, and challenge gendered, racialised, classed and other aspects of heteronormativity, including the essentialist construction of homosexuality itself, is transformative, or at least has the potential to be so. Another colleague, Steve, came out in a very different way, as I reflect on our conversation.

*Steve described coming out to the group, saying that he revealed to the group that he had decided that he was straight. This was after some time of experimentation, and a recognition that he liked certain acts such as being penetrated, but by a woman.*

Beardseley (2011) examines whether a woman penetrating her male partner with a dildo was a transgressive heterosexual act. This is highly relevant to Steve's coming out. Much of Beardseley's (2011) analysis looked at the history of the view of penetration within feminist discourse, concluding that it would be a transformative political act in that it challenges a binary view of penetration as either active or passive. For me, it is also transgressive because it passes from being a private discussion to a public one. It also gives a fairly extreme example of personal revelation of what is often considered a gay act. This also brings us back to Smith's (2009) tension about the admission of such a 'gay act' including intimacy with someone of the same sex within one's history, and whether this is a necessary part of being a transgressive heterosexual.

A term the team developed that has resonance in this regard is 'reasonably heterosexual'. In a discussion about the idea of coming out as a heterosexual, a colleague recognised the potential danger of it re-enforcing the binary.

*Sarah agreed about heterosexuals having a role in challenging heteronormativity, but also felt that it coming out as heterosexual again denied the other side of a person's sexuality, whether acted on or not, ie it denied queer and asked people to identify as straight or not.*

Another colleague then described themselves as 'reasonably' heterosexual. I was interested in this double play on words. It simultaneously implies that he may not be entirely heterosexual and invokes an imagining of an opposite, 'unreasonably heterosexual', both terms quickly became team terms for heterosexualities that re-inscribe heteronormativity (unreasonable) and those that interrupt it (reasonable).

Several empirical researchers (Beaseley, 2011, O'Rourke, 2005, Schlichter, 2003, 2008) maintain that queer heterosexuality needs to operate within a Deleuzo-Irigarayan framework, with an emphasis on heterosexuality being an open ended process of becoming, rather than an identity, hence 'nomadic'. However, a question here is how far this fluidity goes. Critical realist writings on sexuality are sparse and tend to cover its gender dimensions (Connell, 2002, Gunnarsson, 2013, Hull, 2006, New, 2005).

Nevertheless, from a critical realist viewpoint, seeing sexuality as entirely fluid and socially constructed is essentialist in itself ie we are all queer. From a critical realist perspective rather than a process of becoming, the truth of human sexuality is permanently transitioning, emerging and contingent. However, it may not be liquid.

For a critical realist it is crucial whether human experience mirrors the discourses that currently frame it. Aetiologically, there are forces outside of human discourses that impact upon humans and therefore where there is dissonance, there are seeds for change and an imperative for a new epistemology. If, as with heteronormativity, obvious dissonances occur, including for heterosexuals (as discussed in the literature review) something definitely needs to change. Human sexuality may not be liquid, and could well be different for different people at different points in their life. Dissonance indicates that it is not as binary as heteronormativity and homonormativity portray.

Pedagogically a message that the world is queer and that heterosexuality is wrong may be counterproductive. What seems imperative is to have a repositioning of heterosexuality.

On a pedagogic level, and acknowledging some of the concerns of critical pedagogy to engage with the world as it is, we need to acknowledge that this Delusian approach comes from a particularly hermeneutic perspective. In a similar vein, a colleague of mine critiques a Butlerian (1990) approach as unrealistic within the communities where our students operate.

*I think Butler is living in a very different world, where you can queer everything and deconstruct everything and play with everything but in the world our students are living in you absolutely can't.*

Beasley (2011) also recognises some of the limitations of such a Delusian approach in that it ignores the material barriers to an infinite range of possibilities. Such an open ended and propulsionist view of sexuality and being human is in danger of re-inscribing

a consumerist, neo liberal, individualist view of human development. She concurs with Jenkins (2009), who qualifies a Delusian view, saying we should talk about an 'ethical becoming'. With this in mind she qualifies the types of heterosexual discourse, or indeed queer discourses, that are transformative, transgressive and ethical or (in the team's parlance) 'reasonably heterosexual'.

For Beasley, some sexual practices, heterosexual and non-heterosexual, are expressive rather than instrumental innovations. Some will simply be described as 'lifestyle' or self-help, and re-inscribe heteronormativity, particularly around gender. For her, the idea of 'ethical becoming' helps avoid a confusion with 'a liberal celebration of a smorgasbord of choices that might simply uphold normativity' (Winslade 2009, 336).

Transgressive heterosexualities are both unusual and counter-normative conduct encouraging forms of social equity such as gender/sexual equity. Beasley (2011) discusses how a transgressive heterosexuality needs to aim to de-naturalise, de-normalise, and de-centre heterosexual identity and the heteronormative practices which sustain its privileged position. Similarly, Smith (2009a), one of the first academics to identify as a queer straight (Smith, 1997, 2000) asserts that heterosexuals who identify as inclusive 'may need to consistently reflect upon their investment in heteronormativity, and that subconscious sexual prejudice may remain even though one identifies as pluralistic.'

It would seem that in working through same sex relationships, both emotional and sexual, may be a part of developing a transgressive heterosexuality, and also the indiscretions and hypocrisies that one may have experienced as a heterosexual may need to be shared in public. It may also mean heterosexual colleagues need to share thoughts about same sex experiences or fantasies, whether acted upon or not. This should not necessarily mean saying one has had same sex fantasies or experiences for the sake of it, but a real danger here is a construction under heteronormativity of a one-drop mentality, (Davis, 1991; Harris, 1964), whereby any historical, or even indication of fantasies, of same-sex sexual desires or intimacy prevents one being heterosexual. (Anderson, 2005a; Lancaster, 1988; McCormack, 2012; Messer, 2004, Parker, 1999).

### ***The importance of play***

Colleagues had different views, at least initially, on the importance, or not, of play around sexuality. One of my colleagues, Jane, at a different institution responded to the

question of how we involve heterosexual colleagues in interrupting heteronormativity as follows:

*Jane responded to this saying that some of her heterosexual colleagues 'played with their heterosexuality', another gay colleague said similarly that, while being lesbian, she played with the idea, mentioning children, but then at times her partner, sometimes admitting their same sex gender and at other times not.*

Other colleagues in a focus group were initially very much against such ideas, seeing them as deceptive, or as manipulative and patronising. However, we discussed how if you are non-heterosexual you play, or choose not to play, with these things all the time. Most students I have known, heterosexual students at least, assume I am straight as I do not fulfil their stereotypes (should they have any) of being non-heterosexual. Another colleague saw the pluses of this.

*You are a complete surprise because you are not effeminate and that disrupts things.*

This statement itself begs the question of what effeminate means, and the focus group went on to discuss this. I also explained that the non-heterosexual is used to policing their language at times, aware that sometimes it can be the simple use or non-use of pronouns that is revealing. As Kopelson notes that *'To teach is to be watched'* (Kopelson, 2002 p29), so while there is an assumption of heterosexuality as a given, any transgression of this is quickly picked up on. I routinely use the pronoun 'they' rather than 'he' or 'she', recognising that the simple use of 'he' when referring to a partner would define and 'out' me.

Similarly, I once came out through using the words partner(s) instead of partner and someone picked me up on it and I therefore had to make a decision to come out or not. Another time, after I had come out, a student said that their 'suspicions' had been arisen when I had said partner(s) rather than partner, and now it made sense – we are indeed watched. In a focus group the team agreed that while deception or pretending you had a same sex partner when you do not is manipulative, sometimes having the same ambiguity about something as simple as pronouns could be immensely powerful.

### *Making sexualities public*

A second linked debate to nomadicy when considering what constitutes a transgressive heterosexuality is that of privacy. As Mac ah Ghail et al (2002) note in a piece examining boy bonding in schools, within heteronormativity there is a lack of congruence between the private, subjective, undisclosed self and a public subject position. We have also extensively discussed the dangers of such fragmentation in a Du Bois sense of double consciousness (1906). As noted, Brickell (2005), saw privacy as essential to the creation of the illusion of the neutrality of public space.

Heteronormativity constructs sex as a private act, whereas public space is seen as neutral and non-sexual, when in fact it is heteronormative.

A transgressive heterosexuality can challenge this, and it needs to be public. If anything has been silenced and made invisible by the heterosexual matrix, it is alternative heterosexualities. The heteronormative matrix only allows a narrow, classed racialized and gendered forms of heterosexuality to pervade (Warner, 1995) – thus the need to expose the political, rather than neutral, construction of public space (Brickell, 2005). Public declarations of transgressive heterosexualities challenge heteronormativity and make visible the neutrality of public space as a sham. A part of this is the need to challenge transgressive heterosexuality's construction of itself as purely private, as this renders the public space as neutral, and therefore heteronormative. As Schlichter notes,

*In other words, queer straight talk about sexual desires and practices has to confront its access to and use of heterosexual 'epistemological authority' (Halley, 1993, 83), which includes, for instance, the right to a private sexuality, a right that is not granted to sexual minorities.*

Heterosexuality needs to render itself visible, question its use of the private, and examine itself in public. This is no easy process, within Heaseley's taxonomy: only committed straight queers and social justice straight queers meet O'Rourke's (2013) characteristics, and both may fail on the question of nomadicy. This is the bravery that a transgressive heterosexual who wants to be a critical pedagogue needs to embody and make public. It was another colleague that put this well, although ironically in terms of why it needs to be non-heterosexuals who challenge others through coming out

*There is an unfairness in that why should you be the one who has to carry it, but to a certain extent you do, you're the one who can, there is a level that you can*



*only disrupt certain issues. Not in society but as a critical pedagogue. She (previous head of department) distinctly set a culture of don't say, don't tell, which was to do with sexuality. It's something about being a critical pedagogue, being prepared to talk about yourself and put aside your rights.*

### ***Characteristics of transgressive sexualities***

The queer study group ran with the idea of transgressive and transformative heterosexualities and my reflections are interesting.

*I remember xx struggling with the idea of role models, laughing and saying that she wouldn't want anyone to live the life she had led, but she equally thought we should not be a bad role model, talking about anti-sexism while playing that out in our own relationships – young people aren't daft, they spot these things.*

The group developed a list of things that they thought a transgressive heterosexual should do, be, and challenge, detailed in appendix. This list has not been empirically tested, nor is it exhaustive, and reflected the group's own experience. However, it definitely seems to be compatible with Beasley's (2005) concept of the transformative and transgressive heterosexual and serves as a point of reflection. The group's perspective also resonated with the idea of homonormativity, and came up with a similar schema for transformative homosexualities. The group also talked about how transgressive queer would look for other sexual minorities. These centred on examining the degree to which one you counter, collude with or internalises prevailing constructions of gender, race and the wider cultural and political hegemony and one's sexuality at the time.

### ***Interrupting heteronormativity: a team approach.***

*Physically interrupting the idea of what gender means and what sexuality means. You can viscerally see them being really confused by it. But I love and revel in the confusion that that causes because that state of confusion is the beginning of them looking at the social construction of meaning.*

The colleague above is talking about an incident where they interrupted some student assumptions about their heterosexuality following an intervention by me where I similarly interrupted heteronormativity. The specific incident has been covered but it

illustrates my overall point that we need transgressive and transformative heterosexuals, to build on my acts of coming out, or their own interruptions, within a team approach. The question then becomes what features of our pedagogy interrupt and reconstruct heteronormativity and whether those features build towards a wider critical pedagogy.

The empirical work in this thesis focuses on the features of such as a pedagogical practice. To these ends I draw on my reflections on a series of interviews and discussions with ex-students, who have gone on to be associate lecturers and involved in the re-validation of the programme. My criteria for their selection was that they all described the programme as transformative in some way, including in their understandings of sexuality. I am not claiming that the programme is transformative for all, but want to draw out the features for those who did find it so.

Again employing Archer's (2003, 2007) morphogenetic approach, it is necessary to outline the structural intent of the course, as it will impact on, but hopefully be separable from, our pedagogy and interactions with students. To give some context: in developing the programme, we employed the framework of 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land, 2005, 2006), which are core concepts that 'open up new, previously inaccessible ways of thinking and can be thought of as a portal to another level' (Meyer & Land, 2005 pp 12). They are intended to transform not just understanding, but identities and world views (Meyer & Land, 2005). Cousins describes their characteristics as 'transformative, troublesome, irreversible, integrative bounded, discursive, reconstitutive and liminal.' (2006 p5) As importantly, we moved away from the idea of concepts, with their traditional etymology as cognitive symbols, or mental phenomena, and use of the term threshold praxes, 'where conceptualisation and abstraction needs to be embodied, enacted and realised, and then re-conceptualised' (Seal, 2016). Hence, there was an expectation that students embody youth and community work values, and that this might entail a transformation of their professional identities and world views.

Four seem to have a potential impact on this study and the nature of heteronormativity. The first threshold *Deconstructing the nature of youth and community work, informal education and social pedagogy*, has an epistemological base in that we expect students to understand the contested nature of knowledge, learning, education and pedagogy, albeit within the framework of the principles and values of community work. We expect their initial certainties to be interrupted and deconstructed, and this includes

sexuality. In *Constructing the social, psychological and the political*, we expect students to apply a range of sociological, psychological and political ideas to themselves and the young people and communities they work with, identifying, tensions and gaps and actively exploring, challenging and working with the complexity of their own and others' interpersonal relations and identities. They therefore have to deconstruct themselves, their identities and subject them to analysis, including heteronormativity.

This personal deconstruction is re-enforced in the threshold *Understanding and working with self and others*; we expect students to be able to analyse their own and others values, appreciating their contested nature. We also expect them to put this into practice and engage groups and individuals for collective action and social change, creating inclusive environments which identify generative and transformative themes countering oppressive attitudes, behaviours and situations including those around sexuality. Finally, in *Applied reflective practice: towards praxis* we expect them to be able to become critical pedagogues and understand the interaction of practice and theory and understand their wider context and implications for their future practice, bringing in multiple perspectives and understanding their own impact on practice. This reflection is expected both in and on action and on the impact of self and others, seeing the significance of the moment, the situation and making wider connections.

This expectation of personal examination of self and transformation is common across youth and community work courses, as we noted in the literature review. My aforementioned colleague, L, from another institution, relayed how their flyer for the course had the word 'Change' as its header, with an explanation that the course would and should change you, and that this is necessary if you want or expect to be able to work with and change others. Structurally our modules map across these thresholds and the assessments reflect them. Students are assessed for attendance and participation and part of the participation criteria is the degree to which they espouse and enact youth work values and these thresholds. Assessment also applies to the field work modules, which at level five and six are double modules. Students have to produce a piece and undertake a viva where they map their practice across the thresholds and then defend that practice. At level four this is with their tutor and a practice supervisor, and at level six it is the tutor and supervisor and two independent practitioners. Tutors also write a collective report on them regarding their professional conduct and readiness to be a

youth and community work practitioner. They have to pass this element to qualify professionally.

***Characteristics of a pedagogic approach to co-producing the pedagogical practitioner***

Harris et al (2016) recently wrote an article where they noted something unique about our approach.

*(students) spoke of their university experience as the place where subjectivities, identifications and identities became reconfigured...they spoke of the pedagogical opportunities offered by the youth and community course to reflect on multiple identities and subjectivities that enabled them to re-read their earlier educational biographies – reflecting on the interconnections between their past, present and future.*

They described this re-writing as the ‘pedagogical self’. They saw a number of themes present on the course that enabled the formation of the pedagogic self: the central role of the lecturers; dialogical encounters with peers and intersubjective recognition of the self in the ‘other’; a working through of earlier educational experiences and acquiring a new (academic) literacy to name past and current experiences. These certainly seem to be present in our pedagogic approach, although there were some nuances and additions encountered in interrupting heteronormativity. Some of these were also features of, and departures, from our approach to interrupting heteronormativity. Our features were:

- ***An emphasis on inter-subjectivity, encounter, recognition, and working in the moment***

We noted in the literature review the importance of the concepts of encounter, recognition and working in the moment in youth and community work. These were of central significance in interrupting heteronormativity, as was the courses emphasis on bringing theory into the moment and making the pedagogical spaces visceral and embodied, with an emphasis on inter-subjectivity and jointly exploring dialogical and dialectic processes at work. This emphasis stems from the aforementioned existential notions of encounter, and intersubjective notions of recognition (Benjamin, 1998, Butler, 2000). As one student describes in a pedagogic encounter with me:

*When I spoke, I was convinced that he was listening and hearing me, not waiting to speak. When I had finished speaking he would not relate what I had*

*said to his own or anyone else's experience, the topic would always remain unique to me and my perspective.*

Encounter and recognition (Benjamin, 1998, Butler, 2000) are combined with elements of hooks's (1994) engaged pedagogy. Lecturers, as experienced youth and community work practitioners, and students are encouraged to be open about their biographies including discussion of professional challenges within their own practice, but also personal reflections on experiences as members of privileged hegemonic or marginalised and oppressed groups. Students' experiences seemed to echo this, recognising the importance, as Baizerman (1989) describes, of the everyday, but also specifically how this impacts on one's thinking about sexuality, and by extension, other social constructions. One student describes it thus:

*Mike has an ability to make the mundane and boring spring to life and become challenging and surprisingly interesting, revealing its layers and relevance to each individual's life, particularly around the subject of sexuality, and once I had challenged that, as a black guy, well then I started challenging everything.*

Significant here is that there seems to be a wider connection between the interruption of heteronormativity and the development of a wider critical pedagogy. Once this student questioned heteronormativity, he started questioning everything. It was a sentiment that many students also expressed. Recognition was also a key component of the pedagogy:

*Mike made me feel totally comfortable in sharing my thoughts and opinions with him, even though we were completely different people.*

While this gives some evidence that the pedagogy was happening and was being valued, I think we need to unearth the characteristics of those spaces more, and again looking at Archer's morphogenetic approach (2003, 2010) explore how these spaces expand over time.

- ***An emphasis on the de-construction of power and the concept of knowledge.***

Deconstructing power, existing knowledge, and the process of knowledge creation was also key, especially to developing new heterosexualities. We start this by breaking down notions of the classroom, hence the emphasis on queer pedagogy, challenging who is the learner and the learned, the nature of pedagogical relationships and who has the right to create knowledge. Some ideas central to queer pedagogy were also present

in the above two statements. Specifically, this included a concern for interrogating the student teacher relationship (Luhmann, 1998), the role of identities in the classroom, the nature of disciplines and curriculum (Bryson and Castells, 1992), and the connection between the classroom and the broader community.

*It made me realise that understanding this stuff and doing it in the classroom is not enough, we have to take it back into our work, and even more difficult, take it back into our communities and families, because unless we achieve change there, particularly in the black community, we are always going to have a mentality that holds us back.*

This is from a student who after leaving university held workshops with his own family looking at how they looked at family, sexism, homophobia and, most importantly for him, gender roles that they constructed. He has subsequently set up a music project for young black men to examine their own masculinities. Another talked about their personal change.

*The team's teaching style and personality encouraged me to challenge myself and what is presented to me, including from them, to be open to change and also to be a leader of change*

Students thought that the creation of knowledge was a process of co creation that needed to be emphasized from the beginning of the programme and integrated throughout. I will return to this in the conclusion of this chapter. Lecturers should not privilege their own intelligence and insights, recognizing them to be inherently partial and contingent. This echoes Morris's (1998) fourth characteristic of queering curriculum, seeing ourselves as co-learners with students.

- ***The liminal space of youth and community work pedagogic practice: co-containment and an aim of developing intersubjective consciousness's.***

Several tutors recognized that one had to 'contain' or hold these difficult spaces.

*It requires on the tutor to be able to hold people in that space, because one is in it as well. Sometimes in the classroom you try to move them through theoretical understanding but they can't even begin to do that until they have moved through their biographical experiences and how that has left them.*

Some writers talk about making these spaces ‘safe’ (Baber and Murray, 2001; Galbreath, 2012), while others see this as a fantasy (Allen, 2015, Britzman, 2003, Schippert, 2006). My findings questioned both the idea of ‘safe space’ and suggest that these spaces need to be co-held with students, rather than by the tutor alone. Empirically, participants in the inquiry thought the term did not capture it, as these spaces were often experienced as difficult and challenging, although hopefully ultimately rewarding.

*Sometimes I hated being in that group, and in those spaces, because I know I would not be left alone, or more to the point, be allowed to leave myself alone and not examine myself and my opinions, and sometimes that was hard, but totally necessary.*

Some exploration is needed and I would like to start with staff’s views on safe spaces. A certain incident happened at an institutional level that could identify us as being homophobic. A heterosexual staff member commented:

*I would say no, this university is not a safe space and it starts at the top, especially with what has happened recently.*

In contrast the staff member said

*When I heard about xxxx I thought, well, what would you expect. No the course isn’t a safe space, you have to ignore a lot of comments that are often said out of ignorance, although some are deliberate. What I do like though is that you can contest these spaces, and the tutors are a large part of making sure that this happens.*

This seems to be an instance of double consciousness with stigma resistance (Orne, 2013). She sees the other side, and its contradictions, but is not hugely affected by it. My colleague (P), on the other hand, while he had double consciousness, was very much affected by it, lacking stigma resistance. I had several further discussions with P and, when pushed, he could not really give any evidence that Newman was such an unsafe space. He reflected that there was an element of guilt here. He had never felt spatially threatened as a heterosexual, and realised that Newman was a safe space for heterosexuals, and felt guilty for taking advantage of this privilege and for all the other times when he had more unthinkingly taken for granted the safety of public spaces as a

heterosexual. He had not had the chance to develop stigma resistance, which necessitates being rejected by a majority culture, and this had consequences.

The student above fundamentally questioned the idea of safe space, seeing it as a majority construction. She rejected the whole idea and reconstructed it in such a way that it did not affect her to the point of giving up, it was still a space to work with again demonstrating double consciousness and substantial stigma resistance:

*I think the term safe space isn't helpful, it's one of those middle class counsellory things, which is really about creating a safe space for them. In lots of ways there are no safe spaces for lgbt people, same as there aren't for many black people, apart from your home and I've had dog shit posted there before. Its what you do with those spaces that matters.*

My colleague made a similar comment, but with a different nuance.

*Is any university a safe space, for all its diversity it is still a white normative space, and incredibly patriarchal.*

He was pessimistic, and does not give much room to manoeuvre, or for the agency of students and staff. LGBT students, on the other hand, saw more potential in these spaces. Without stigma resistance my colleague John did not see hope or potential in these spaces, but descends into guilt and hopelessness. It therefore seems crucial to understand how heterosexuals, or indeed anyone from a majority culture, may react when entering into this space of intersubjective consciousness.

Another important consequence illuminated in the staff focus group, was that the tutor who does not have stigma resistance through being a member of the majority culture is less discerning about when a student of a minority culture is not in a liminal space. The last student quoted was quite clear about there being the 'middle' positions between homophobia and acceptance (Orne, 2013), but also those of outright hostility. My colleague, in contrast, cannot distinguish between middle positions and antagonistic ones, conflating the two. Positively he recognised that some workers in his practice did not do this

*I remember a case of a lesbian worker complaining about a young person who had been homophobic towards them. This person had same sex abuse in their biography and it made it really complicated.*



There is a really fine line here: stigma resistance, as I suggested earlier, if over-emphasised ignores structural oppressions and discrimination. Even if one is stigma resistant this should not take away from the morality that you should not be subject to the stigma in the first place. A clear line of responsibility needs to be established. To further illustrate that fine line, I would like to reflect on an incident where I reacted quite emotionally to a Muslim student who came out to me.

*I felt some anger as it felt more like desperation to approach a white middle aged lecturer – where is the support in her own community or her own social circle. I felt angered at the isolation and lack of knowledge/ need for reassurance that this unearthed. I was also moved but angered by her desperate question of whether I think her girlfriend would come back. It felt as though she was asking a question a 14 year old would but then why would she know gay relationships can have similar or not dynamics*

However, on reflection I may have been displaying my own lack of stigma resistance. Similarly, to my colleague John's reaction around sexuality and safe spaces, I do not know what it is like to hold a double consciousness of embracing a heteronormative faith and being non-heterosexual. The student concerned was adamant, and remains so, about holding onto her faith and reconciling it with her sexuality, as I express in the song 'holding sand' written about such double consciousness, recognising that it is not always something I can understand or hold.

*When it feels so right, but they say it's wrong, must be like holding sand*

*Your heart says Yes, but your faith says No, It must be like holding sand*

*Holding all those tensions, in your hands, must be like holding sand*

Crucially, this also hampered my judgement of when the culture should be taking responsibility or be tolerated. Positively some of my colleagues of faith recognised where the responsibility lies, as we explored in the previous chapter, where my colleague said the church had got it wrong

*People expect me to say, yes I really like him, but he is a sinner and they are almost gobsmacked when I say the church has really got it wrong on this. I can also point out where the theology is wrong and where it could be right.*

However, this is not always a simple process, as we also explored, like the Muslim student described above they might have to live with the faith's 'wrongness' until it changes its stance, which may well not be in their lifetimes, showing themselves to be highly dedicated meta-reflexives (Archer, 2010).

The queer group and the staff focus group in reflections on the course concurred that our pedagogy needs to be multilateral, intersubjective and co-created. Assessment of the appropriateness of these fine lines about multiple stigma resistances, when spaces are too safe, or too conflictual to be pedagogic cannot be held by any one tutor, or indeed by tutors alone. The idea of Kriachy (Fiozenza, 1992) means we are all made up of privileges and oppressions, depending on the context and to work with this seems to necessitate a collective endeavour to hold each other to account. Another student commented on this co creation of space as a play:

*It was like being in a play and sometimes the lecturers were the directors and sometimes we were directing ourselves. You know, I think even the lecturers were learning things from us....*

Several tutors similarly recognised the importance of inter-subjectivity and identity creation within those spaces as part of what made them important, but also 'not safe'. This links to the comment I made in chapter five about how sometimes running sessions that are not directly on sexuality, but are more intersectional, can lead to wider and more productive sessions. My colleague who runs the faith group reflected with the group on yet another session, where they had discussed sexuality as a sin, asking them to consider the tenor of the conversation.

*I asked how they would feel if they had the same conversation but had substituted gender for sexuality, this made some of the group think. I then asked how they would feel if they had substituted race for sexuality and the group, who are predominantly black went very quiet.*

Another tutor recognised the importance of an intersectional approach, but also the importance of a holistic look at pedagogic spaces, and the tension within them.

*They were tying sexuality to their identity as Asians and Muslims, they were exploring whether their value system and identity fitted in and whether this was a space for them to do it in, - there is intersectionality - As soon as you come out it gives permission to talk about it and opens up other avenues of discussion*

*and that might have an impact in terms of silencing but because of the nature of the team and the teaching we do it comes out and is discussed.*

A part of our pedagogic practice needs to be challenging such silences and the places people retreated into, including when they retreated into their practice, or even private lives or particular pedagogic spaces. One student sums this up, also conveying some of the raw difficulty of true encounters.

*It's that you never gave up talking to me, knowing what I thought about gays and stuff, you wouldn't judge, but wouldn't let me off the hook either, (laughs) you always looked to and spoke to me as a person and eventually that rubbed off on me, cos I had to look at you like that. You never made me feel ashamed for the things I said in anger, and that helps me do the same with young people now when they are lashing out with their own frustrations.*

The open expression of students views and attitudes, however unpalatable they may be to others, was an important element of the educational process. Students recognised the importance of this.

*There is a space for dialogue...so even if people do have views that I wouldn't like or question, I have to force myself to listen acceptingly and people are allowed to say whether it's right or wrong. We can air these topics and it feels like it's important, these aren't just side issues.*

Creating these spaces also demands of participants an ability to 'swim with', or be 'at ease' with, the troublesome tension, dissension and discomfort engendered by pedagogical exchanges. The threshold literature calls these 'holding environments for the toleration of confusion' (Cousins, 2006). Participants need to be able to 'contain' (Bion, 1961) the inner conflict and sometimes pain for both tutor and student groups which can result from the disruption of worldviews and the deeply held values that reside therein.

*To recognise and treat each student as an individual, without judgement or favouritism and making the seemingly unachievable into a passionate goal.*

It also helps work with the liminality of the spaces, containing the irrational, the unknowable, the affective and the contextual.

*Sometimes in the classroom you try to move them through theoretical understanding but they can't even begin to do that until they have moved through their biographical experiences and how that has left them. When we start to talk about things, we don't know students' biographies. While we don't think it is something controversial, it often is, and will get unpredictable reactions - and we then handle it.*

This entails a commitment to honest, but challenging, exploration of views and personal identities, raw, often previously hidden emotions and projections need to be absorbed, detoxified and re-articulated. However, this containment while present in the lecturer, was most effective when held in common.

*I'd like to say it's all me, but I know it's not, they learn some such from each other and can deal with the difficult challenges and difficult responses to challenges, but in a space that's, well it's definitely not safe, but people are given permission to be irrational, make mistakes and learn. And sometimes the best challenges come from each other.*

We need to have faith that students also have the resilience and emotional intelligence to do this, although, as with cognitive intelligence, we made need to work on their will to exercise it. One student describes how it felt going through this experience.

*to know you were all going through that together, including even the tutors sometimes, made you realise it was worth it, that you could not do without it.*

Others rose to the challenge

*I have enjoyed my study almost like a team based sporting event, with the tutor being one of my successful team mates that I will forever remember*

- ***A morphogenetic approach and being a dedicated meta reflective***

Finally, while I have concentrated on describing pedagogic spaces, in concurrence with a morphogenetic approach (Archer, 2003, 2007) we need to acknowledge that this pedagogy happens over time. It involves a series of encounters where, as actors, we have choices to re-inscribe the structural framework we inherit in our intersubjective encounters, or interrupt and re-construct them. A case study seems pertinent to bring to life our approach. It also details an encounter outside the classroom, which, as we have seen, is as much a part of the pedagogic space as formal sessions. As described in the

full case study (Appendix x) Shale and I had already had three significant encounters around sexuality, one that I would characterise as a 'heterosexuality is a western imposition' encounter, which was countered by another student, and another a 'distancing' encounter, whereby he said he did not have the expertise to work with an LGBTQ student, and so would not, again countered by another student. A third was his softening towards me, using the 'love the sinner but not the sin' argument, to which I had countered that the sin was an essential part of me and this separation was not possible. The fourth encounter was perhaps the most significant.

*Shale was with a Muslim student who, previous to re-finding his faith, had been involved in criminal activities – about which he was open. He approached me with a dilemma. Essentially the police had raided his home and seized his computer, saying that it might contain data about his previous associates, that could be helpful to them. They said he could not have his computer back until after his due dates. He believed that this was deliberate sabotage of his university work and would affect his degree classification. I believed him. However, I told him this would not be accepted by the university without evidence - I would need to say that I was aware of ongoing issues that had caused him stress and my testimony could be used as a substitute for evidence, even though he had only just told me about this (although I had been aware of ongoing discussion he had with other tutors about such issues). He seemed happy with this, although still conflicted.*

*However, an hour or so later he came to me and seemed agitated. He wanted to know why I had done this, because I had not had to, and indeed had potentially put myself in a vulnerable position by doing so. His reactions were part resentful, part puzzlement, part guilt. He wondered aloud why I had helped, given some of the shit he had given me - was it that I wanted something over on him, was it that I fancied him - he genuinely felt conflicted. He also resented that I was in a position to do this and stated his anger that this was a typical dependant position of a white lecturer over an Asian student, re-enforcing all his views about the nature of the university the course and colonialism etc.*

*My response, though garbled, was that, I did not fancy him, but that I believed he would have come and discussed these issues with me, had not the sexuality issue got in the way - I did not resent him for this, seeing it all as part of the*

*processes of us working each other out and finding a way to work together. I also agreed that I was doing this because I could - I had that privilege as a white lecturer in a position of power, firstly to do it, but also that while I might be criticised, the consequences were less for me.*

*He later said that this was the moment of connection for him. I had recognised my own privilege in the situation, which in that moment was powerful. His homophobia towards me was present but not dominating at that point. It made him reflect on when he had moments of power, such as when a young person approached him about their sexuality. It was also a moment of human connection that he said made sense of his unease about the 'love the sinner not the sin' challenge I had given him. After that our relationship changed. He was still a 'strict Muslim' by his definitions, but was trying to find a way to reconcile his faith with the job and the people in his, and other, communities. We had discussions on a variety of topics, including faith, sexuality and politics.*

This case study illustrates double consciousness (Orne, 2013) on both our parts, developing into an intersubjective consciousness (Black, 2010). We both also displayed stigma resistance, me to him and him to me and the police and the institution. Pedagogically there was an interplay between our histories and a following of a morphogenetic sequence (Archer, 2003, 2007). The experience was definitely visceral, in the moment, and liminal, and a power play, as it entailed me making myself vulnerable to him. Finally, we had both been dedicated meta-reflexives (Scrambler, 2013), him holding to his belief system, but also youth work values and the tensions between them. I held onto a belief in the pedagogic process, that we could find common ground, and that the tensions would need to be co-held.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that this chapter has outlined and pointed the way towards a pedagogy for interrupting heteronormativity and potentially other social constructions. I hope I have made the case for a team approach being essential, and that while coming out is legitimate and may have pedagogic impact, more important is how other colleagues work with students in other sessions and particularly in places considered to be heterosexual retreats. Transformative sexualities, need to be publicly articulated. This

may mean, that heterosexual allies need to admit to same sex attractions, whether acted on or not, to counter monolithic views of heterosexuality.

Reactions of guilt and hopelessness are borne from having an idealistic view of safe spaces and ultimately leads to their abandonment. They are often argued for from those in a position of privilege, rather than oppression, from someone who has developed double consciousness, but has not developed stigma resistance (Orne, 2013).

Interrupting and reconstructing heteronormativity necessitates the development of intersubjective consciousness's and this can only be done through a collective pedagogy, where people hold each other to account for the fine lines between containment, oppression, retreat and necessary stigma resistance. There is therefore a necessity to co-create and co-hold meta-reflexive liminal spaces that emphasise inter-subjectivity, encounter, working in the moment, the de-construction and reconstruction of pedagogical power and its epistemological base, and contests the concepts of the public and private. The pedagogic process also takes time and will have a number of iterations of the morphogenetic sequence, until structural issues are identified and the arising potential for autonomy is articulated.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations.**

This chapter begins with a reflection on methods, and how they contributed to the analysis and discussion. There is then an overview of the main findings of this *self-study into developing a queer and critical pedagogy on youth and community work courses* and then highlights the contributions of this research to knowledge, reflecting on previous literature, findings and discussions of the study. The theoretical and practical implications of the contribution to knowledge are thus considered, as well as the study's limitations. In the penultimate section, I outline further work that is needed in the context of the current research findings and then conclude with recommendations on how I, colleagues, policy-makers and educationalists can reflect upon them in light of this study's findings. This chapter presents an overall picture of the conclusions and recommendations. Three sub-questions were addressed throughout the study:

1. What are the dynamics of heteronormativity within teaching practices on youth and community work courses in a range of HEI institutions?
2. How can I, and the team, interrupt heteronormativity in our teaching practice and challenge wider notions of normality and social construction?
3. Can we integrate queer and critical pedagogies within our teaching practices?

### **A reflection on methods.**

It is worth noting that the methods mentioned on page 55 influenced different chapters of this thesis in different ways, and their significances differed from what I initially expected. The dynamics of heteronormativity chapter drew quite heavily on my reflective journal and reflections on interviews with colleagues, majoritively internal but also external, ex-students and the group discussions with the queer study group. Conversely the coming out section drew extensively on both the journal and colleagues from other institutions, but also on memory work, particularly in the development of my own perspectives and movement from personal to political and then pedagogical primary motivations for coming out. Ongoing critical conversations with colleagues featured quite heavily throughout both.

The chapter on developing a pedagogical approach to interrupting heteronormativity drew particularly upon two critical conversations with colleagues. A large source was



also the two focus groups and interviews that I held with colleagues specifically exploring our approach to interrupting heteronormativity (questions are outlined in appendix ii). This section also drew upon other artifacts including testimonies from students as to my personal teaching styles and the impact it had had on them (used for a National Teaching Fellow application). Theoretically and pedagogically the characteristics of a pedagogical approach to developing a pedagogical practitioner drew on ideas developed by Mairtin Mac an Ghail in research conducted for a forthcoming article on the idea of the pedagogical self. While I did not draw on the data, discussions about their framework informed the framework that I developed here. Songwriting did not feature as I thought it would. Many researchers, particularly those concerned with self-research (Key and Kerr: 2011, Moustakas: 1990, Richards:2009) recommend keeping and collecting forms of personal documentation other than the traditional reflective diary, particularly those that tap into one's intuition, including poetry, prose, sculpture, drawing, music and so on. As I said in the methodology section, these did not just serve as a third or fourth cycle of reflection but also as stimuli, critical incidents and as a way of working through themes. The four songs that directly featured in the analysis were all presentations of data, in that they used direct quotes as lyrics, but were also a culmination of data in that they illustrated theoretical themes. *Can't compare* showed someone struggling with double consciousness, *You're not welcome here* examined the limits of stigma resistance and how tolerance can mask a deeper reluctance to face the privilege, and suffering, some heterosexuals get from heteronormativity *Have we forgotten* explores the dynamics of starting to develop an intersubjective consciousness, while *Holding Sand* explores how one can be meta-reflexive while holding an intersubjective consciousness.

The other 20 songs mentioned in the appendix were not wasted or peripheral, but part of a process. As Boucher and Ellis (2003) note, they were not always conclusions but a part of meaning making. Several songs explored the idea of heteronormativity from multiple perspectives and show me working these ideas through, particularly how heteronormativity negatively effects heterosexuals and the notions of transgressive heterosexualities. *What about me* is a song about gender constructions within heteronormative heterosexuality, particularly the invisibility of women who define themselves and are defined through their partner and their children. *Everyday wisdom* examined everyday racism, sexism and homophobia and how, when you are within the

dominant group, you are expected to collude with them. *Once again on my own* is written from the perspective of a heterosexual who subscribes to the romantic ideal, the logical conclusion of which is isolation. It deconstructs ideas around hegemony and working towards what a transgressive heterosexuality might look like. *Love you so*, is a working through of the negative side of heteronormativity and ideas about fidelity, guilt and possession. It is a stalking song about a man who will not accept his own abusiveness and that the woman has left him, full of male blame constructions. *We're the last to show* was a song of resentment about having to always take the lead, and working through of someone my ideas about stigma resistance and being tolerant of intolerance.

*Now you know how it feels* is based on the exercise we did in class around the heterosexuality quiz mentioned in chapter seven which inverts and challenges some of the assumptions of heteronormativity. *Heterosexual junction* develops this further, with a humorous tone. *Old stories of love* is a song about refusing to be defined in terms of sexuality – critiquing the idea of homonormativity as much as heteronormativity. Similarly *Who made those rules anyway* is a song questioning all conventions about sexuality, fidelity etc

Some songs were a part of the process of working through issues that culminated in a more formed way in the songs that appeared in the analysis. *Loving you* is about one research participant talking to me about her lesbian lover, who rejected her because of family pressure. It uses an image of a boat sailing that but that ultimately it sails past her and disappears, the chorus asking will she come back, building to anger in second half of the song about her being denied the emotional vocabulary to think through her repression and the denial in her culture. It's where cultural tolerance breaks down because it has real lived painful consequences for people. This theme developed as the relationship with this research participant developed, culminating in the song *Holding sand* which is more about managing double consciousness. Both of these groups of songs could also be considered an expression of the indwelling, that Moustakas (1990) recommends when developing themes in self research

Other songs were simply cathartic or humorous in tone, reaction to some of the more somber themes in the research. This is a process that Moustakas (1990) and Boucher and Elis (2005) recommend when developing themes in self research. It is a way of countering the insular tendencies of self-research, actively seeking an alternative and

counter narrative on the same theme. Interestingly this is something recognized as useful in music and called counterpoint. For instance, after writing and working through *You ain't welcome*, which has some difficult undertones I wrote *Come on in* which is a joyous song inverting the idea of coming out and inviting heterosexual people to come on via image of a party they are missing out on. *Open minded heart* is a similar plea for more open minded attitudes towards sexuality being of benefit for us all ie to take a pro-sexual stance, but written, as *You aint welcome here* is, through a very traditional country arrangement, a genre often seen as very heteronormative (Hubbs, 2014). *Forever Young*, *Coming Back into the Light* and *World to Win* were all working through themes that I either did not develop

### ***The main themes***

This was a self-study (S-STEP) (Berry, 2004, Loughran and Russell, 2002, 2004) into interrupting heteronormativity. In common with other authors (Taylor and Coia, 2014, Kitchen, 2014), I found commonality between queer theory and self-study in their shared embrace of ambiguity and tensions. Emerging themes are first that the series of reactions the team and I encountered from students when trying to interrupt heteronormativity were both a legitimate working through of the tensions of developing an intersubjective consciousness and a result of the pedagogic interventions we employed. A second theme is the legitimacy of coming out as a pedagogic tool, if done concurrently with interrupting other social constructions and binary oppositions and within a team and whole course approach. Third, is the legitimacy and necessity of transgressive heterosexualities and allies. Finally, were the characteristics of pedagogic student/ practitioner who can interrupt heteronormativity and the characteristics of a pedagogic practice that can co-create them.

Many of my findings concurred with the aforementioned study by Queen et al (2004) at Syracuse University, in that they are nuanced and contextual (Dimetman, 2004): I concurred with the pervasiveness and invisibility of heteronormativity (Adams *ibid*), that sexuality can be embedded in unsuspected parts of the curriculum (Afshar *ibid*); and with the importance of considering students' experience of homophobia inside and outside the classroom (Stout and Morgan *ibid*). I hope that I succeeded in my aim to 'make visible the everyday, seemingly inconsequential ways in which our classrooms

become sites for the reinforcement of heteronormative ideologies and practices’ (Queens et al, 2004, p4)

In terms of coming out, I found this to be a legitimate method of interrupting heteronormativity, but that it needs to be a pedagogical act done co-currently with interrupting other social constructions and binary oppositions. I found that coming out in itself, without pedagogical intent, is not enough (Taylor, 2003). I also concur with Allen (2015) and Khyatt (1999) that coming out can be counter-productive as it is in danger of freezing views of sexuality and re-inscribing LGBTQ as other. However, while I concur with Ramussen (2004) that the coming out imperative needs to be countered, it does not mean that it is always counter-productive.

For those in a position of power, such as myself, it is important to come out, as it gives a message that to construct sexuality as a private thing re-inscribes a public heteronormativity – however more important is how then to work with that coming out, and particularly important is the role of others, as Eliason & Elia (2009) also found. I maintain that a purely political coming out, while seemingly countering public space as heteronormative, unless approached pedagogically, can re-enforce a heterosexual ‘siege’ view of the political queer trying to invade neutral public spheres (Beasley, 2005). I also concur with Róisín Ryan-Flood (2009); Taylor (2009) and Riggs (2009) that coming out is a multi-layered intersectional event, and that to prevent freezing (Khyatt, 1999), needs to be treated as such.

My study finds resonance with previous research (Allen, 2015, Britzman, 1995, Bryson and Castell, 1995, Kumashiro, 2002) suggesting that the ability to interrupt heteronormativity pedagogically is minimal when contained within a single module. I counter Manning’s (2014) valuing of one-off educative comings out, finding them even less impactful, and sometimes counter-productive. Pedagogically this is difficult if the person who came out is absent in the subsequent learning. I agree with Kumashiro (2002) that interrupting heteronormativity is most effective within the context of a whole course and involving the wider team (Eliason & Elia, 2009) The team also needs to operate a morphogenetic approach characterizes by a perpetual examination of the intersubjective and structural constructions as they change over time, mediated through relationships and a commitment to pedagogy.

I also found that there is a legitimacy and necessity for critical pedagogues to develop and publicly declare transgressive and transformative sexualities, especially heterosexualities that counter, rather than collude with or internalise prevailing constructions of gender, race, and/ or wider cultural and political hegemony through revealing dominant constructions of sexuality. As Alexander (2005) powerfully argues:

*If queer pedagogy is foremost concerned with a radical practice of deconstructing normalcy, then it is obviously not confined to teaching as, for, or about queer subject(s). ..., the call to 'work' or think queerness in the classroom should not focus solely on introducing our many straight students to queer lives and stories; rather, working queerness in the writing classroom should be an invitation to all students – gay and straight – to think of the 'constructedness' of their lives in a heteronormative society (Alexander: 2005p. 375).*

This perspective is not dominant within the queer pedagogic literature, but the legitimacy of queer heterosexual allies is present in other research (Beaseley, 2011, O'Rourke, 2005, Schlichter, 2003, 2008). However, I found, building on previous work (O'Rourke, 2005, Seal & Harris, 2016) that sometimes interruptions are more powerful coming from heterosexual allies. The Syracuse study also called for an examination of 'the reasons for why you do what you do in the classroom' (Queens et al, 2009 p5). In our case this became the development of pedagogical practitioners, who can interrupt and reconstruct heteronormativity, but also other normativities.

My final theme is an outlining of possible features of a pedagogy that co-creates the pedagogical practitioner who can de-construct and re-construct heteronormativity. I found that the development of pedagogical practitioners necessitates co-created and co-held meta-reflexive liminal spaces. I challenge those who call for these spaces to be safe (Baber and Murray, 2001; Galbreath, 2012), and concur with Allen (2015) and others (Britzman, 2003, Schippert, 2006) that this desire is a fantasy. As Allen (2015) says, 'a 'truly' queer pedagogy might embrace a lack of 'safety' as pedagogically productive, dislodging it from its negative connotations for learning. (Allen, 2016 p 767). These pedagogic spaces need to 'de-construct and reconstruct pedagogical power and knowledge, in line with critical pedagogy's ambitions, and concur with queer pedagogues such as Talburt and Rasmussen (2010) p2 who call for 'spaces that reveal liberated subjects, liberated moments and political efficacy'. Similarly, Allen (2015) and Eliason & Elia (2009) maintain that in order to 'queer' our teaching we need to

make the social construction of the class apparent. We also need to ‘teach our students how to look at the world from a queer perspective by pointing out the socially constructed nature of current events’ (Allen, 2015 p 749).

These spaces are most effective when they are intersubjective, visceral, with an emphasis on encounter, working in the moment. Quinlivan (2012), recognises that sexuality is a ‘rich queer pedagogical vein to be tapped’ (ibid, 2012, p. 514), as do Lovaas, Elia & Yep, (2006), and the approach builds on concept of the engaged pedagogue of hooks (1995) and others (Freire, 1973.) The call for spaces to re-conceptualise the public and private in pedagogical space concurs with several queer pedagogues, such as Hawkes, (2004) and Allen (2015) who call for open discussion, questioning and countering of the inhibitions surrounding a multitude of discourses in which sexuality is socially constituted as private, embarrassing, taboo and danger filled.

### ***Contribution to knowledge***

I think I have made a contribution to both theoretical and practice based knowledge. In terms of theory alongside the concept of the pedagogical practitioner, my contribution has been to bring together different theoretical frameworks and concepts in a way that has not been done before, and may be useful. For practitioners, including myself and my colleagues, I hope the study serves as a point of reflection that may illuminates their practice, and continue to illuminate my own. As I noted in the methodology, S-STEP research “does not focus on the self *per se* but on the space between self and the practice one is engaged in” (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001 p.15). My intention was to inform others through an illumination of my own practice. I hope it is a reflective piece for educationalists who want to interrupt heteronormativity; for lecturers deciding if, when and how to come out, and for the colleagues who will of necessity have to work with the impacts after the event. As importantly I hope it becomes a point of reflection for student practitioners, without whom we cannot create the pedagogic conditions to interrupt heteronormativity.

On an ontological level, I think critical realism is a useful bridge between queer and critical pedagogy in that it mediates the materialism and structural concerns of critical pedagogy with the more relativist and post structural epistemological concerns of queer pedagogy. I think that a combination of Herz and Johansson’s (2015) framework for

heteronormativity and Archer's morphogenetic approach (2003, 2007) recognises that pedagogy takes time, and will entail numerous liminal pedagogical encounters to unravel the structural and intersubjective nature of heteronormativity. It also allows for a future orientation, something Allen (2015) is conflicted about allowing within a queer pedagogy - she wishes to impact on others transformation, but:

*In queer theory's work of radical deconstructionism, time itself is a concept to be dismantled, so that we might understand there is 'no future' (Edelman, 2004). With no future, conventional thoughts of progress and transformation become defunct. – (Allen, 2015, p772)*

Critical realism and the morphogenetic approach ameliorates Allen's concern about queer pedagogy seeking to be transformative. A future orientation does not negate a queer approach or necessitate a collapse into essentialism. Pedagogically, there is nothing wrong with questioning heteronormativity and imagining a better future, one that better fits the facts: it is part of the pulse of the critical side of queer pedagogy - as long as one recognises that our explanations will always be partial contingent and need to evolve. I also think that a combination of Orne's (2013) concept of the continuum between acceptance and hostility, when combined with the use of Archer's typology of reflexives (2010), as a heuristic device, can be power tools to examine the nuances of reactions to the interruption of heteronormativity, and indeed normativity itself.

I think my claim for the characteristics of the pedagogical practitioner adds to the literature on two levels. Firstly, that a re-focusing of the anti-oppressive practitioner (Kumashiro, 2002) to that of a dedicated meta-reflexive with an intersubjective consciousness is a useful device within a de-centred late modernity. Here I combine elements of Orne's (2013) and Black's (2010) reconceptualising of Du Bois's (1906) original vision of double consciousness as a negative de-centring concept, to being a useful, and necessary, device in an increasingly liquid modernity (Bauman, 2002).

Secondly I add to Black's (2010) vision of intersubjective consciousness, saying it can only be held collectively, where individuals co-hold each other to account for the balance between stigma resistance and challenge (Orne, 2013). I combine this with Scrambler's (2013) extension of Archer's view of a meta-reflexive (to that of a dedicated meta-reflexive), arguing that in not doing this Archer was departing from her own morphogenetic approach (Archer, 2010) – we need to have patience and dedication

as we unravel structural and interpersonal forces and let them evolve. Her vision of the meta-reflexive, who moves on from all relationships and institutions that no longer concur with one's principles may make that person immune for the seductions from the system (Archer, 2010), but it will also make them isolated. As Brown (2003) warns

*The result is a normative mindset with emphasis on shifting rather than on staying—on provisional in lieu of permanent (or 'solid') commitment—which (the new style) can lead a person astray towards a prison of their own existential creation (Brown, 2003, p. 196 and p. 219)*

Dedicated meta-reflexives, in contrast 'do not just have 'system immunity' but are committed to better futures', and have 'an impulse to solidarity' (Scrambler, 2013 p 14). This is necessary for co-creating intersubjective consciousness's.

On an epistemological level, the pedagogical practitioner represents an extension of the vision of the reflective practitioner. As noted in the introduction, reflective practice features in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for youth work, and the curriculum of every course on youth and community work. Yet, as a model, it has sustained heavy criticism for lack of precision (Eraut, 2004), on the basis that it is unachievable (Moon, 1999), particularly reflection in action (Ekebergh, 2007). It has also been criticised for being individually focused (Solomonn, 1987), ignoring context (Boud and Walker, 1998) and being atheoretical and apolitical (Smyth, 1989). It has also come under criticism in the youth and community work field for becoming technocratic and something people know they have to do, or say they perform (Trelfa, 2003, 2013, 2014), rather than something they incorporate into themselves. It has become, or is in danger of becoming, a defensive practice, and will '*remain at the level of relatively undisruptive changes in techniques or superficial thinking*' (Fook, White and Gardner, 2006, p.9).

Finlay proposes five overlapping variants of reflexivity with critical self-reflection at the core: introspection; intersubjective reflection; mutual collaboration; social critique; and ironic deconstruction. Finlay (2003, 2008) rightly points out that most reflection covers the first level, the probing of personal emotions and meaning, and this is true of youth and community work, as Trelfa (2014) indicates. There is a need for 'intersubjective reflection', which focuses on the 'relational context, on the emergent, negotiated nature of practice encounters' (Finlay, 2008) and also for 'mutual



collaboration', engaging participants, in a 'reflective conversation' (Ghaye & Lillyman, 2014) that takes account of wider political and social contexts, including institutional, student/ tutor and student/ student power relations.

At the end of her chapter, Trelfa (2014) calls for a re-articulation of the reflective practitioner, as something one needs to be, not just do, and this dovetails with our aspiration to go beyond producing practitioners who just know how to '*traverse the shifting landscape and associated demand of modern youth and community work*', (one of the aims of our aforementioned validation) and embrace a dynamic, evolving view of what it is to be a youth and community worker. They need to be able to identify and re-identify themselves in the shifting conceptual terrain of youth and community work in late modernity, '*with a de-centred identity politics, a critical project in crisis and retreat, and a neo-liberal hegemony in the ascendancy*' (Seal & Harris, 2016 p132).

Any canon of knowledge needs to incorporate, or at least take account of, new thinking – many of these trends mentioned have only really emerged, or have shifted fundamentally, in my own lifetime. Concurrently youth and community workers, and their educators, retain a desire to create meaning and authenticity in their lives, and in the young people and communities with which they work, that 'honors the past, questions the present, and looks to the future' (Seal, 2016). Therefore, we need to go beyond the five dimensions of critical reflective practice, as established by Finlay (2002, 2003). We need to work at a sixth level, beyond social critique and ironic deconstruction: a commitment to developing an active dialectical epistemology and pedagogy, with reflection at a philosophical level that contests, seeks out, and is an active contributor to paradigm shifts, being mindful of how this effects our praxis and pedagogic practice. We need to move from critical reflective practitioners to pedagogical one.

I also hope I have made a contribution to outlining a framework for interrupting heteronormativity and educating the pedagogical practitioner who can do this, incorporating both critical and queer pedagogies. Such accounts are remarkably absent in the literature: as Luhmann says '*teachers dedicated to critical pedagogy when speaking about their pedagogy might refer to little else than their teaching style, their classroom conduct, or their preferred teaching methods.*' (Luhmann, 1998 p 120).

There have been calls for pedagogical practice to be student centered (Finlay, 2008), to focus on building autonomy (Morley2003) or give lists of tools, such as analyzing

critical incidents, case studies, peer assessment, small group work and reflective diaries. (Brookfield, 1998, Finlay, 2008, Pollard et al, 2005), but little more than such generalities. There is therefore a need for more accurate modelling on how to develop critical reflectors, or pedagogical practitioners, theoretically, developmentally and pedagogically. Faunce similarly suggests that teaching queer pedagogy ‘for all the work done on queer (or queer-ing) pedagogical practices, very little has been done to consider practice/praxis for it.’ (Faunce, 2013 p30).

### ***Limitations of the research***

As stated in the methodology, this research was a self-study into my experience of teaching youth and community work within three institutions, as an external examiner at another four, and drawing in conversations with colleagues, and ex-colleagues, from these institutions and a number of colleagues from other institutions. In total there is evidence from around ten HEI institutions across the UK out of 50, and I have had conversations with around 20 colleagues, and there are in total over 200 lecturers in youth and community work. My reflections have been upon two years and four cohorts of students in an intense structured way, supplemented by 25 years of memory work, 16 of which have been teaching in HEIs. This is not a positivist study and I do not therefore wish to comment or make claims on its representativeness: It is a study of particular contexts in particular times through the lens of my methodology and articulation of results. As stated, it is intended to invoke reflection of others on their own practice.

Another limitation is my focus. I claimed that the wider institutional heteronormativity had less of an impact on students because of a strong cohort identity, their otherness and the way we structure our course. I know this is not true of other HEIs that teach youth and community work and this will have to be taken into account. I have also focused on the interactions between students and staff, only considering questions of curriculum and course structure as context for this. Other research places a heavier emphasis on curriculum issues (DeCastell & Bryson, 1993, Khyatt, 1999, Morris, 1998, Pinar et al, 1994, Queens et al, 2004) and I would encourage practitioners to also examine, and take account of, these studies.

More broadly, youth and community work, and to an extent critical pedagogy, tend to place an emphasis on self-revelation and use of self as a pedagogic tool that are not found within other traditions. This account is heavily predicated on such an account and those looking in from other traditions should be mindful of this. Finally, I am aware that this study captures a snapshot in time and the context of HEIs, student biographies and youth and community work are ever evolving. Part of the framework's aim, encapsulated in the pedagogical practitioner, is to take account of and work with this, but I am aware that the framework itself will need to evolve and eventually be replaced, such is the nature of a critical realist perspective – I anticipate this evolutionary process.

### ***Other Suggested Research***

As in any study, in the process of its undertaking I became aware of many other areas that need to be researched. Returning to Chang (2008), it is also important to give an account of data and themes I did not pursue. The largest area in need of study is the absent majority, heterosexuality. I have explored what might make for a transgressive and transformational heterosexuality, and the reactions of those who lie between acceptance and outright hostility to become aware of heteronormativity. However, more research is needed on how heteronormativity is lived and contested as a social practice (Herz and Johannsen, 2015) and how heteronormativity is experienced by heterosexuals. Politically, I think the key to getting encouraging people to engage with interrupting heteronormativity is to recognise that heteronormativity is damaging for us all, including the heterosexual majority. Stemming from this, more work is needed on how we teach heterosexuality as a phenomenon. Most striking in the research was the silence that ensues, from both students and staff, when trying to articulate their own sexualities. New languages need to be created to enable this articulation and a requisite pedagogy. Critical heterosexual studies is an area in need of formation. While I have discussed the limitations of sexual identity models, the development of one for heterosexuality, akin to Helm's (1990, 1995) white identity model, would add to the literature, mainly as a heuristic tool.

In the study I have stressed the importance of an intersectional approach to heteronormativity, and note how sometimes examining heteronormativity through a topic other than sexuality can widen analysis and illuminate its pervasiveness. More

empirical work is needed on doing this, particularly on issues of race (Taylor, 2009), class (Riggs, 2009) and disability (McRuer & Mollow, 2012) and generations (Seal & Harris, 2016), as they are under researched; and while sexuality and particularly gender are major components of heteronormativity, we underestimate its greater hegemony if we narrow research on its reach to those alone (Allen, 2015). I would like to engage more with Scrambler's (2013) concept of the dedicated meta-reflexivity, expanding its applicability to youth and community work and pedagogical practice. I think research is needed on how pedagogical practitioners, as educators themselves, go on to work with heteronormativity in other educational, particularly informal and community settings. Within this the concept of liminal space is interesting in terms of those who are at the more antagonistic end of Orne's (2013) spectrum, or as with our students and colleagues were, middle, or very good at performing being so. I noted in the literature review that Orne (2013) underestimates the emotional impact of developing stigma resistance and this was my experience. I did not to expand on these reflections because I think it warrants a wider empirical study including the experiences of others

### ***Recommendations***

The research that I have undertaken has developed us as a team, in our role as professional educators, and provides a framework for the development of our pedagogy. This research has already had an impact, as well as improving policy and practice within the context of my workplace. The findings have thus provided a basis on which to make recommendations on the topic of interrupting heteronormativity and developing a queer and critical pedagogy. I therefore recommend that all youth and community work educators and practitioners read and reflect on the work and the subsequent articles and books that will come out of it, and develop the ideas further.

In the introduction I mentioned the various legislative imperatives HEIs and policy makers have developed for creating 'safe', non-homophobic environments for students. The literature review showed how they often fail on this count. This research should therefore serve as a point of reflection for policy makers. Countering heteronormativity needs to happen at all levels and policies and declarative statements can make for places of heterosexual retreat (both from and to) that should be illuminated and engaged with pedagogically.

Programme designers should recognise that one-off sessions on sexuality are often counter-productive, and that trying to interrupt heteronormativity within a single module is limited and limiting. Similarly, to place responsibility on one person, often the non-heterosexual, can simply freeze views of sexuality. A team approach is needed with recognition that sometimes transformative heterosexuals can make the most meaningful interventions over time, sometimes beginning with something as simple as the pronouns we use in everyday speech. Finally, tolerance, liminality and stigma resistance are essential, but clear lines, particularly of responsibility are needed. This has implications for critical pedagogues, particularly in the light of initiatives such as Prevent, where we are meant to spot and report signs of resistance and intolerance, rather than seeing them as in-between positions to be worked with.

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## Appendices

## Appendix One: Definitions of Youth Work

Janet Batsleer, chair of the Higher Education Training Agencies Group for Youth and Community Work, and steeped in the tradition as outlined, recently described youth and community work to a commons select committee in the following way:

*youth work is there to produce opportunities for the personal, social and spiritual development of young people so that they reach their potential (House of Commons 2011:10).*

In a similar vein the National Youth Agency describes thus:

*Youth Work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through informal educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning... Their work seeks to promote young people's personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and societies as a whole (NYA, 2011)*

In a previous piece I made a more overtly political claim that youth and community work is a communitarian project of the left, in that it operates within a framework that believes that there is a prevailing hegemony that needs to be countered, and that the building of community is one of the means of achieving this.

*'It believes that existing economic structures maintain poverty and discrimination, and that the political state uses its apparatus, sometimes bolstered by fellow travellers such as the media, to maintain a delusion about the ethical and non-discriminatory nature of its operation' (Seal:2014 p124).*

There have been two European conventions on youth work that have made two declarations about youth work. The first seeks to unify what remains a 'contested ideological and theoretical space' (Grace and Taylor, 2016) and provides the following definition of youth work as conceived in Europe:

*Youth work is about cultivating the imagination, initiative, integration, involvement and aspiration of young people. Its principles are that it is educative, empowering, participative, expressive and inclusive. It fosters their [young people's] understanding of their place within, and critical engagement with their communities and societies. Youth work helps young people to discover their talents, and develop the capacities and capabilities to navigate an ever more complex and challenging social, cultural and political environment. Youth work supports and encourages young people to explore new experiences and opportunities; it also enables them to recognise and manage the many risks they are likely to encounter. (Council of Europe, 2015, p 4)*

Moving from definitions to outlines of the youth and community work terrain the document that has most relevance to this thesis was the benchmarks for Youth and Community work developed in 2009. It is most relevant for a number of reasons. Firstly it had a wide consultation with the field, in all the countries of the UK, from policy makers to practitioners. Secondly it has analysed and pulled together a number of sources that have been influential on youth and community work. Importantly it looked at sources for both youth and community work, one the tensions within youth work being that it is often defined through youth work, a very English approach, rather than community work, which is more Scottish. Thirdly it was led by PALYCW (Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work) and underpins all the youth and community work courses in the UK and Ireland. Given the terrain of

this study, this is important. As a consequence I think it has most validity within youth and community work as practiced through the academy. It outlines a number of key characteristics of the work:

- ***It is an appreciative enquiry:*** the educational process starts from recognition of the strengths and potential of participants rather than from an appraisal of deficits and pathologies
- ***It is holistic:*** educational practice aims to engage body, mind, heart and spirit
- ***It is democratic and participatory:*** the curriculum of education is drawn from the real world and context of the group of participants, and is developed in discussion with them. Learning is active and experiential
- ***It is associative:*** the educational process values the small group as a resource for development and learning. It also values small group learning as an aspect of citizenship with many potential (and potentially conflicting) contributions to political democracy
- ***It is a critical collaborative enquiry:*** the educational process draws on the strength of group collaboration to enable new questions to be posed and new understandings developed. It is an open-ended process of questioning received ideas and settled social contexts and norms
- ***It is voluntary/free:*** people are engaged in this practice on the basis of informed choice and consent. They take part because they want to and can leave without penalty. This principle underpins the democratic nature of the curriculum
- ***It is reflective:*** professionals and those involved as 'learners' or 'activists' are engaged in systematic reflection on their learning
- ***It is emancipatory:*** the education process is committed to personal, social and political empowerment/change.

## **Appendix ii - Schedules**

### **Sexuality focused interview questions**

- Please talk through the five most significant pedagogic moments with students around issues of sexuality.
- Could you give some examples of how heterosexual (ish) construct their heterosexuality in terms of norms, behaviours, roles etc - both male and female.
- Could you talk through an example of student who has shifted their views around non-heterosexual sexuality. What process have they gone through in doing this and how has your/ our pedagogic approach enabled/ disabled this.
- Could you talk through any examples where students shifting their views on sexuality has led to them questioning other social constructions.
- Could you talk through any examples where students shifting their views on another issues has led to them questioning their views on sexuality.
- What is/ could, a team approach to sexuality look like.

### **Sexuality Focus group questions**

- Is Newman a safe space in terms of sexuality?
- How do we manage self-revelation on the course, and what are its pedagogic uses.
- How we deal with non – heterosexual sexuality on the course, in the curriculum and pedagogic and other spaces
- How we deal with heterosexual sexuality on the course, in terms of curriculum and pedagogic and other spaces
- What has been the impact and knock on of my coming out,
- What could change about our individual and team approaches to sexuality
- How do we approach other issues from a critical pedagogic perspective and what our teaching of sexuality could learn from this
- How, and if, discussions around sexuality lead to and aid a wider critical pedagogy

### Appendix iii – description of procedure

Aim/ name of reflection	Timing	Finlay (2008) dimensions of reflexivity (	method	Principles adopted
<b>Critical incidents:</b> To capture raw feelings, context, behaviours, observations and any facts	triggered by sense of inner discomfort' or 'unfinished business' (Boyd and Fales, 1983) akin to Schon's 'experience of surprise' but also positive versions of this eg elation – conducted as quickly after the event as possible	Introspection Critical self reflection.	Journal and or taped	<p>The description of event:</p> <p>a) a statement of observations</p> <p>b) comment on personal behaviour;</p> <p>c) comment on reaction / feelings; (adopting Krugs(2002) principal of emotional honesty) and Johns principles of <i>Aesthetics</i></p> <p>What was I trying to achieve?</p> <p>Why did I respond as I did?</p> <p>What were the consequences of that for the patient/others/myself?</p> <p>How were others feeling?</p> <p>How did I know this?</p> <p>Ethics</p> <p>Did I act for the best? (ethical mapping)</p> <p>What factors (either embodied within me or embedded within the environment) were influencing me?</p> <p>Empirics</p> <p>What knowledge did or could have informed me?</p> <p>d) comment on context.</p>
<b>End of day journal:</b> to capture what happens on a daily basis with relation to sexuality/ critical pedagogy	End of each day, often verbal on the way home	Introspection Critical self reflection.	Journal and or taped	<p>(Taken From Krug:2002) and adopting his principal of emotional honesty) As I look back on the day, what were the most significant events?</p> <p>In what ways was this day unique, different from other days?</p> <p>Did I have any particularly meaningful conversations?</p> <p>Did I do any reading? What were my reactions to it?</p> <p>How did I feel during the day? What were the emotional highs and lows? Why did I feel as I did? Is God or my spirit trying to tell me anything about these feelings?</p> <p>Did I find myself worrying about anything today?</p>

				<p>What were the chief joys of the day? What did I accomplish? Did I fail at anything? What can I learn from this? What did I learn today? When did I feel most alive?</p>
<b>Critical reflections</b> on feelings and knowledge:	A few days after the initial event/up to a week later.	introspection; intersubjective reflection; social critique.	Journal, reflections on colleague discussions Songwriting	<p>(moon:2004) Additional ideas fed in – eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) further observations;</li> <li>b) relevant other knowledge, experience, feelings, intuitions</li> <li>c) suggestions from others;</li> <li>d) new information;</li> <li>e) formal theory;</li> <li>f) other factors such as ethical, moral, socio-political context.</li> </ul> <p>Reflexivity (johns)</p> <p>Does this situation connect with previous experiences?</p> <p>How could I handle this situation better?</p> <p>What would be the consequences of alternative actions for the others/myself?</p> <p>How do I now feel about this experience?</p> <p>Can I support myself and others better as a consequence?</p> <p>How available am I to work with patients/families and staff to help them meet their needs?</p> <p>Grid for considering the cue: What internal factors were influencing me?</p>
<b>Critical analysis</b> Using literature and theories to illuminate the analysis of the scenario and make thematic links	At periods throughout the process	introspection; intersubjective reflection; social critique.	Journal, formal reflections with colleague Case studies (focus groups) key stakeholder Interviews discussions Songwriting	<p>Reflective thinking occurs– processes of relating , experimenting, exploring, reinterpreting from different points of view, or within different contextual factors,</p> <p>Something is learned or there is a sense of moving on – eg identification of an area for further reflection or a new question is framed.</p>
<b>Critical</b>		mutual	Workshops	Theorizing, linking theory and practice; ‘cognitive housekeeping’, etc.

<b>synthesis</b> brining together ideas, testing and theorising		collaboration; social critique and ironic deconstruction, with critical self- reflection	Songs Case studies	Consideration of broader forces, of issues such as justice, and emancipation and of political factors
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***Appendix iv – informed consent and information form***

***A Self-study into Developing a Queer and Critical Pedagogies on Youth and Community Work Courses.***

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by Newman University College Research Ethics Committee. I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation. I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence. I agree to participate in this study.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Information Form***

***A Self-study into Developing a Queer and Critical Pedagogies on Youth and Community Work Courses Information Sheet.***

***Introduction***

You have been invited to participate in a study into interrupting heteronormativity, as tutors, on youth and community work courses. This is a self-study so the author, Mike Seal, will use the data as a reflection point for himself. Where there are direct quotes these will be anonymised. The only people to have cite of the information will be Mike, his supervisor, the examining panel and those binding the document. Should the material be used for any publication, further consent will be sought. In my research I wish to explore three themes, and several questions within these themes:

1. What are the dynamics of heteronormativity within teaching practices on youth and community work courses in a range of HEI institutions?



- How does heteronormativity manifest in day to day interactions between staff and students, both formal and informal, within teaching practices?
  - How does heteronormativity on a structural level impact on teaching practices including curriculum and curriculum planning, assessment and pedagogic practices on youth and community work courses?
  - How do these experiences intersect with experiences of the wider institution's heteronormativity?
2. How can I, and the team, interrupt heteronormativity in our teaching practice and challenge wider notions of normality and social construction?
- What contribution does the use of self, ie coming out, have to make towards interrupting heteronormativity?
  - What pedagogical strategies can I, and the team develop to challenge heteronormativity, including the use of self as a pedagogic tool?
  - How can queer pedagogy manifest in our teaching practice and how successful is it in challenging heteronormativity on youth and community courses?
3. Can we integrate queer and critical pedagogies within our practices?
- What are the tensions within critical pedagogy that queer approaches can make a contribution to alleviating?
  - What are the tensions between critical and queer pedagogies, theoretically and practically, given their different paradigms and epistemologies?
  - Can a queer pedagogy that challenges heteronormativity also challenge wider notions of normality on youth and community work courses?

Mike Seal – 1.7.14

## **Appendix V - Creating balance between Hiles Reflective Tensions**

*Vulgar* (common, ordinary normal experiences) examples being heteronormative reactions such as avoidance and silence vs *Extraordinary* (uncommon, unusual, unique experiences) such as student Dave who experienced double consciousness with a friend and colleague (see page); (total 12 reflections)

the *Assimilated* (expected, predicted, absorbed into our current perspective) such as the love the sinner and hate the sinner manifestations vs *Transformative* (generating insight and permanent change) such as the no homo, and the conscious non understanding reactions (total 10 reflections)

*Discovered* (experience derived from everyday happenings, events) such as the heterosexual retreats, both in teaching sessions (retreat to) and the toilets (retreat from) (some cross over with Vulgar, but 10 reflections)

vs *Practiced* (induced experiences through rituals, shared practices), such as the ask the LGBT person questioning approach, which directly stems from embodied youth and community work practice. (total 8 reflections)

*Principled experience* (leading to knowledge derived from an imposed order) such as the reactions to my 'set pieces' such as the heterosexuality quiz (total eight reflections)

vs *Discerned experience* (leading to knowledge of a "found" order) such as the 'no homo' dynamic and the minimising reactions. (total 6 reflections)

*Lived experience* (centred in the self) such as my account of my own emerging double consciousness and stigma resistance and my own reactions to comings out. (total 6 reflections)

*Transpersonal experience* (beyond self, "what am I a part of?") particularly looking at the idea of a transgressive and transformative heterosexual and the importance of team. (total 7 reflections)

*Intentional* (focus on the content of thought (whether real or imagined) which included many of my reflections after the fact, particularly the section and example of the one off session with Kate and my later reflections and thoughts on this. (total 12 reflections)

*Transcendent* (the experience of knowing itself, witnessing the act of knowing). This was particularly present in the final example with Habib, examining a very visceral and yet transcendent experience. (total 8 reflections).

There were crossover between these tensions, and while there were more of some, a balance was sought in the analysis and some, such as the transcendent had less but more in-depth accounts.

## Appendix vi – full institutional queer group reflection

### **The institutional context: the insularity of youth and community work as other and the consequent containment of institutional heteronormativity.**

A fundamental component of a groups culture is its wider institutional context and the groups identifiers (Brown:1999, Douglas:1995). In order to assess the impact of these factor an account needs to be given of the context for the development of the student cohort's culture in relation to heteronormativity. This was a study of youth and community work students within universities, and being a university student and a youth and community work student were both cultural signifiers for the group, as we shall explore. However, perhaps more interesting was how these two signifiers intersected. Discussions with both students and staff revealed that, in summation, the youth and community work department, and the students within the department, are 'othered' and have a culture of seeing ourselves as 'other' in terms of the institution, both culturally and literally, and while students strongly identified with being university students, they did not strongly identify, or interact, with the wider institution.

To say that our students have a loose affiliation to the university, apart from in a sense of being at 'a' university has important implications for this study. While, as we can see from the literature review, Universities, in broad terms, are heteronormative spaces, and LGBT students do not feel safe within them, I am claiming that youth and community work, both students and lecturers, having an insular culture within the university, means that their experience of the wider institution, and the wider heteronormativity only comes to the fore through particular incidents and exchanges, that I will go on to detail and its wider impact in minimal and minimalisable. As one Lesbian student said

*No I don't think my experience on the course has been a homophobic one overall in terms of the wider Newman... yeah it touches you but it ain't something you're not used to - but then we all kind of come here and do our thing and get off – were here to become youth worker not have the 'university experience', its how you lot, and us, deal with the stuff that happens on the course that matters and gives me heart.*

First though it seems important to state my case for youth and community work's insularity. The cohorts had a slight majority of females, a similar slight majority of black students, and within that a relatively even mix of Black Caribbean, Black African and Asian Muslim (Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin). The cohorts are overwhelmingly working class. (see definition below). These demographics are also broadly concurrent with the demographics of youth and community work students (NYA:2016).

Immediately this places our students as potentially other. Universities are culturally white and middle class (Archer: 2003, Evans:2007). In most universities from working class backgrounds do worse in their results and their retention rates are lower (Archer: 2003, Evans:2007). When combined with factors like gender and race (the majority of our student being women and/ or black) these tendencies increase exponentially (Perry & Francis:2010).

While our students buck this trend in terms of achievement (We have consistently gained the most first class honours degrees for a number of years) student still report feeling 'other' (Seal et al: 2016, Harris et al: 2016) having not acquired the cultural capital of be a university student and feeling like they do not belong. Class based and racialized doubt and feeling that 'you do not fit in' (Archer: 2003, Evans:2007) prevails

on the course to the degree that one of our modules, the interdependent learner, specifically examines this and tries to work it through with students.

I do not wish to comment on the potential impacts of the demographics of the cohort in a generalised way on its heteronormativity. Suffice to say that the impact of race, gender and class on heteronormativity, particularly the perception that men, people who are working class or BME, and their intersections are more homophobic are heavily contested (Blanchard et al: 2015, Hill:2013, Manago:2012, McCormack: 2014, McCormack & Anderson: 2014, Ruddell-Tabcola:2009,) with such debates seen by some as classed (McCormack:2014) and racialised (Hill:2013) in themselves. Suffice to say that issues of race, gender, religion and class were operative, but in a contextualised nuanced way, as we shall see.

The way our courses are structured compounds the sense of otherness and distance from the wider university. Our dissertations are different, our work placements are similarly different (900 hours instead of 100, meaning our, and student's, focus is on their performance in the field as much as their performance in class). To cater for students that need to be day released we have organised teaching such that students are only in one day a week from 9-5 and consequently rarely have time to engage with each other. Let alone in the wider cultural life of the university. We offer single honours only and our students do not really mix across other subjects with shared modules only occurring at level six. And, notwithstanding the inevitable divisions that occur when two formed groups are brought together, (Douglas:1986, Turkie: 1989) when they have there have been big divisions between the groups of students. Students also do not really mix with other services within the university. As opposed to most of the rest of the university we operate a tutor system, meaning that most pastoral issues and access to support services are mediated through us. Similarly, a move to online submission means that these aspects of the university are similarly mediated through us.

We also must take account of the sometimes defensive nature of youth and community work touched on in the literature review and elsewhere (Seal and Frost; 2014, Seal: 2016, Seal & Harris: 2016, Trelfa, 2003, 2004, 2014). In particular I have talked about how youth and community workers can position themselves as, and glorify being, other - not understood or respected by other professionals and claiming unsubstantiated unique privileged access to young people and an understanding of their perspective. Our theoretical framework talks about the dangers of such essentialism.

### **Touchpoints: Toilets, heterosexual retreats and emerging double consciousness.**

While I claim for the minimal impact of the heteronormativity of the wider institution, it was discussed within the staff focus group, a number of interviews with LGBT students and the queer study group, but from quite different perspectives.

student did mention certain touchpoints of the institutions wider heteronormativity. A&B discussed how their interactions with the wider institution largely consisted of getting food, handing in work and using services like the library. While they both described getting, or at least inferring a reaction, of slight uncomfortableness from administrative staff in that they both described themselves as relatively butch and did not present as 'straight women' there was never felt overt homophobia and were treated professionally. However, there were situations where they did feel homophobia, one being about their use of the women's loos

*I have got a few funny reactions when going to the loos, to the point where if I see a group of women going in I would go somewhere else. Because I am*

*relatively butch I often get a reaction that they think I am a man coming in, however when they see that I am not (she points out her breasts) the reaction is probably worse, as they assume I am a Lesbian, which I am, and caught off guard they give off a vibe that I am not welcome, although it may have just been confusion.*

This is an interesting nuance of heteronormativity, and highlights two issues for me. Firstly, that heteronormativity and that it is as much about gender as sexuality. Amongst students in the queer group there was a real politics around the significance of toilets and they discussed it extensively. The trans man in the group felt that all loos should be non-gender specific and that the cubicles should be private. The self-identified feminist in the group saw the point, but struggled with this, seeing that women should be allowed to have a space without men and that otherwise these unisex spaces would be male dominated - again. It illustrated how this space may be a women's one, but it may also be quite heteronormative at the same time. The group discussed having three sets of toilets. male, female and unisex. The trans man felt that this would just be used as a marker, those going into the unisex one being marked, and that it would deny those trans people who heavily identified with their new gender to do so.

The self-identified straight men in the group said that he would go into the men's loos, the unisex one if the men's was occupied, but not the female toilet. He also talked about how he had not really thought about these issues, and while a little bemused at first at why they were so important to people, came to see why. He was also honest enough to admit that he had also been a little irritated about people 'going on about something so small' until it was pointed out the slow attrition of such incidents and when one of the group challenged him to ask whether he had ever felt unsafe to go into a toilet. This then led into a wider discussion as one the Lesbian student talked about her male friends fears of going to gay clubs, and in particular going into the toilets.

The group, including the straight men discussed why this was and while initially the straight men either said that they wouldn't have a problem, or that they would have no reason to go to gay clubs. Some of the women teased the straight guys about they were flattering themselves about getting sexual attention, which they half denied, but also admitted an element of truth to, but also recognised that this was based on some of their own fear of gay men and fed into an image of gay men as predatory and over sexualised. However, one of the men just felt that it would not be their space, rather than one they would not feel necessarily unsafe in but embarrassed through their lack of knowledge of what was normal behaviour in gay men's toilets.

This then led to a wider discussion about gender difference in toilet usage and whether this was a heterosexual phenomenon. The men, both straight and gay described how men do not talk in toilets, one straight guy describing how he was having a conversation with a friend about fairly personal issues, confounding a heteronormative view of male conversation, but on going to the toilet the conversation stopped until they came out again. The gay men described how their toilet usage was freer, and that sexual behaviour did go on in the toilets, but it tended to be the more anonymous sexual acts and that the heteronormative acts of not talking were present, if not so acutely as the men described. Many of the women, who did not consider themselves bound by female constructions, confessed to engaging in more stereotypical female behaviour such as going to the toilet together.

While no conclusion was reached on the issue of the group recognised, and named, the pervasiveness of heteronormativity and that it had as much to do with gender as sexuality. They also concurred that the toilet, as a less university regulated space, had become a place of heterosexual retreat, a concept I will return to shortly. This was a self-described 'butch' woman in the group who confirmed that her experience of the college loos is that they were quite heteronormative, more so than other spaces that were more controlled, such as the canteen and definitely the classrooms. We discussed how such spaces were ones that heterosexuals 'retreat' into. This brings me to my second issue, the student noted that homophobia may have manifested when the student was caught 'off guard' illustrated to me how students had learnt that they had to 'perform' acceptance in more regulated spaces, but that when in a retreat space, and caught off guard, other views were exposed. I will come back to this phenomena of retreat as it was also used by students on the course and of performance – I would not consider their behaviour to be any more of less genuine in places of retreat, it was that they were enacting a different space that was part of their double consciousness, a theme I will return to immanently, but before this we need to look at the course itself, as I claim that this is the major impact and site of any heteronormativity.

The queer groups discussion about toilet politics is an example of the group developing such a multilateral double consciousness. The straight guys were thinking about the perspective of women and trans people in a way that they had not, by their own admission, even thought about before. The group was also revealing and mediating tensions as they became aware of multiple positing and subjectivities, from recognising that heterosexuality is itself a construction, that it is not that stable and is sometimes damaging to heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals alike, to recognising that creating women only spaces impacts adversely on transsexuals and LGBT people and begs the question of what is a woman anyway, to recognising that many LGBTQ spaces are equally subject to, or products of, heteronormativity and homonormativity themselves.

### **The course context: The performance of being a youth and community worker**

Few of our students identify as LGBTQ. Of the 120 students who were part of the student body in the two-year period, only three were openly LGBT, which by any measure is low. Another revealed her sexuality to staff but not students, another was openly curious but did not define herself and another was selective to which staff he talked to about his sexuality and sometimes identified as LGBT and sometimes not and another is in the process of transing, but is very selective about who they talk to about this. So if the course is somewhat insular, the question becomes what impact this has. I wish to consider the cultural context of the course as expressed through aspects of its espoused expectations, curriculum and assessment processes. Both of these will be framed within the context of heteronormativity.

Early on and throughout the course lecturers talk about the set of values for youth work as outlined in the literature review. Within this stated culture clear statements are made about valuing diversity, tolerance of other cultures and identities, and challenges are made by lecturers, and class members, when people challenge these boundaries.

However, as we have already seen, it is far more nuanced than that within the classroom, and outside of it. There is an explicit expectation that students should not just know these values but embody them, and we have made a conscious orientation towards this in the last few years. As stated in our recent validation, and elaborated on in a forthcoming article, in our last validation we reshaped the aim of the course.

(Seal:2016)

*The process entailed an ontological and epistemological shift from privileging what we thought youth and community work practitioners should know, which is never ending, will change and cannot always be anticipated, to what practitioners should be.*

In developing this new programme we employed the framework of 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land: 2005, 2006) which are core concepts that 'open up new, previously inaccessible ways of thinking and can be thought of as a portal to another level'. They are intended to transform not just understanding, but identities and world views (Meyer & Land, 2005). Cousins (2010) describes their characteristics as 'transformative, troublesome, irreversible, integrative bounded, discursive, reconstitutive and liminal.' As importantly we moved away from the idea of concepts, with their traditional etymology as cognitive symbols, or mental phenomena, and use the term threshold praxes, 'where conceptualisation and abstraction needs to be embodied, enacted and realised, and then re-conceptualised' (Seal:2016). Hence there was an expectation that students embody youth and community work values, and that this might entail a transformation of their identities and world views.

I outline the praxes in appendix (????), and do not intend to examine them all here. However, four seem to have a potential impact on this study and the nature of heteronormativity. The first threshold *Deconstructing the nature of youth and community work, informal education and social pedagogy*, has an epistemological base in that we expect them to understand the contested nature of knowledge, learning, education and pedagogy, albeit within the framework of the principles and values of community work. The certainties they come in with are expected to be shook up and deconstructed, and this may include sexuality. In *Constructing the social, psychological and the political* we expect students to apply a range of sociological, psychological and political ideas to themselves and the young people and communities they work with, identifying, tensions and gaps and actively exploring, challenging and working with the complexity of their own and others interpersonal relations and identities. They therefore have to deconstruct themselves, their identities and subject them to analysis.

This is re-enforced in the threshold *Understanding and working with self and others* we expect student to be able to analyse their own and others values, appreciating their contested nature. We also expect them to put this into practice and engage groups and individuals for collective action and social change, creating inclusive environments which identify generative and transformative themes countering oppressive attitudes, behaviours and situations including those around sexuality. Finally, in *Applied reflective practice: towards praxis* we expect them to be able to become critical pedagogues and understand the interaction of practice and theory and understand their wider context and implications for their future practice, bringing in multiple perspectives and understanding their own impact on practice. This reflection is expected both in and on action and on the impact of self and others, seeing the significance of the moment, the situation and making wider connections.

This expectation of personal examination of self and transformation is common across youth and community work courses as we noted in the literature review. One focus group participant described how their flyer for the course had the word 'Change' as its header, with an explanation that the course would and should change you, and that this is necessary if you want or expect to be able to change others. Structurally our modules map across these thresholds and the assessments reflect them. Student are assessed for attendance and participation and part of the participation criteria is the degree to which they espouse and enact youth work values and these thresholds. Assessment also



applies to the field work modules, which at level five and six are double modules. Student have to produce a piece and undertake a viva where they map their practice across the thresholds and then defend that practice. At level four this is with their tutor and a practice supervisor, at level six it is the tutor and supervisor and two independent practitioners. Tutors also write a collective report on them regarding their professional conduct and readiness to be a youth and community work practitioner. They have to pass this element to professionally qualify.

Module content also reflects these concerns and is pertinent to heteronormativity. At level four students gain a grounding in sociology including issues of class, conflict and functional models of society, labeling and stigma, humanistic values and political notions of citizenship, equality, discrimination, democracy and fairness, reinforced in the module on the practices and principles of youth work. In the latter this will be concurrently applied to their understanding of their own identities and others and how to work with this – they do a presentation of their understanding of their own identity and sense of self. This is then further applied in practice in the module on working with communities which takes a pluralistic, diverse view of community. At level five there is a specific module on intersectionality, covering issues around sexuality, disability, race, gender, faith, etc. and their interconnections. This module has practice hours attached so students have to undertake a project with young people on an aspect they are unfamiliar with. Within the social, psychological and political construction of youth module we look at issues of faith and spirituality, race, cultural development, power and discrimination and how it impacts on young people's development cognitively, morally and in terms of identity. This is then applied within different contexts in the context model and then in practice through the applied reflective practice module. At level six, students have to look at how these issues practically inform their work in terms of management and policy (management and safeguarding) and their on the spot interactions (applied reflective practice). These structural expectations undoubtedly impact upon the culture of the group, at least as an expected youth and community workers that students are expected to perform within the classroom and in practice.

## Appendix vii

### HETEROSEXUALITY QUESTIONNAIRE

*Undertake this questionnaire and then think about the questions underneath*

1. When & how did you first decide you were, and you what do you think caused you to become, a heterosexual?
  2. Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
  3. Do you think that your heterosexuality possibly stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
  4. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, is it possible that all you need is a good Gay lover?
  5. Why do think it is that heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into their lifestyle?
  6. Have you ever flaunted your heterosexuality by doing any of the following:
    - Holding your partners hand in public
    - Constantly referring to your partner and their gender when in conversation
    - Keeping a picture of them or your 'family' on your desk
  7. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?
  8. A disproportionate majority of child sex offender are heterosexuals. Do you consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?
  9. With all the social support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiralling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals? Do you think it is because heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
  10. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear (s)he might be inclined to influence you in the direction of her/his own leanings?
- 
- ***Did you think the questions were balanced***
  - ***What were they implying***
  - ***How did they make you feel***

## Appendix viii - Sample reflections

### Sample Reflection 1

N decided to have, as the subject for his improvisation, gay parenting (surrogate). I was slightly surprised by this as he had previously discussed, years ago how being gay was not something that featured in 'his world'. Nevertheless the reactions from people was interesting. Most thought it was fine and ok although discussion did happen around having a family presence, or rather what would happen about the absence of a mother. People thought the idea that the eldest daughter was starting to apethe mother rile slightly disturbing even when the couple involved realised this. Some clarified that the couple saw this happening and felt they needed to intervene. Na intervened and there was a lot of debate about the children did not have a choice in the matter, they did not choose to have gay parents and what effect would this have. Some clarified that children rarely have any Choice in the parenting situation, but this seemed to be brushed over. There was also a large amount of discussion about the absence of father or mothers and that adopted or surroagate children should have the right to know the other parent with a lot of discussion about this being natural. Afterwards had an argument with Pauline, nothing really significant but she thought I might have been disturbed by what some people were saying – P also expressed similar concerns – i was surprised by this as I did not feel this at the time, more being heartened that such diverse and difficult ideas were being brought out into the open – I wondered what they thought they were protecting me from. I am getting affirmed in my ideas that there need s to be an open space to discuss and hold such contradictory opinions

### Sample Reflection 2

M did a session around transexuality – we discussed the day before whether he should come in wearing a dress – he said that Pauline had said that this would be a bit much, although this was denied by Pauline later – I wonder if he was using this as an excuse – he used a film showing a boy of seven in a merica who was being brought up as a girl. M – good opening, is there any reactions of people to the video, sharp intake of breath at age of 7. L thought shed feel disturbed but did not. A mentioned hermaphrobidte. L wondered if she wants to be a girl or just likes the girly elements of things. H talked about someone she has worked with. There is stigma for the idea. Wondering about what effect it has on the other son. Matt then highlighted the fathers reaction, whos going to love my child, good further stimulation. He interpreted this as do I love my child but this is not how the group interpreted it. D talked about training she had been on – there was some confusion between. P brought up the idea of social constructionism in relation to gender, given this would he have to change his sex – the group did not pick up on it and matt also did not develop the theme. Is it acceptable for a youth worker to be working mid sex change. Unfortunately I ad to go halfway though the session.

### Sample Reflection 3

Reflecting back on the groups I taught on the full time course at the ymca. Most of the group were black and predominantly African Caribbean. The men could be particularly homophobic and talk about anal sex a derogatory way. However, on questioning they often said that it was ok, often followed up by a 'as long as they do not impose it one me' comment. I think it is a performance that people feel they have to play. Another dimension of it is where students deflect or minimise their responsibility, particularly women students. I remember in the session around religion, S was generally anti-

religious, but always qualified it by saying it was because of her own personal experience of it - she related how she had suffered badly because of her sexuality with Christians in particular, this included rejections and being prayed for or made to feel guilty because of the shame she had brought on the family. T, a black Christian student, questioned her saying how her church would be accepted and it was unfair of S to reject religion on that basis. She said that the onus was on Sarah to be tolerant and seek out those versions of Christianity that were more accepting. I did an intervention at this point on responsibility. I revealed that I was a communist and had a frustration with some on the left, mainly trotskyites, who did not take responsibility for some of the horrors that have been done in the name of communism, saying it was not their, or the proper, version of socialism, and nothing to do with them. Not that it was all their responsibility, but that we have a responsibility to challenge the things that have been done in our name, even if we disassociate from them. This led to a discussion about who has responsibility in these situations. The next week I gave them two pieces regarding Islam and sexuality and Christianity and sexuality, the later illustrating that only one of the 20 main Christian denominations would undertake a gay marriage and only a third would perform civil ceremonies – making the question of who needs to take responsibility a moot point.

I remember one incident where a student brought in an article from the Jamaican times saying that homophobia in Jamaica was a colonial legacy and a result of slave owners using sodomy to punish, humiliate and break black slaves. He went on to say that before this there was no homosexuality in Africa and that this was a colonial imposition. I remember this as the first time I had felt confidence to challenge someone about his own culture, not denying that sodomy had been used in this way but questioning that it had not existed in Africa beforehand and also how this experience led to a position now held.

An incident I have many memories about if when I compared the cross and cass model of identity development. I used it to compare how different oppressed groups developed and negotiated their identities. The group was very mixed, those whom it did not affect directly were in different seeing it as another theory to learn. The two gay student in the group found it very empowering, although both of them were gay rather than b or t. two of the black male students reacted against it. One in particular, a Rastafarian, had previously had a strong relationship with me but distinctly rejected me afterwards. Apparently, although it was never said in the lessons or made official, they were insulted that I had compared black oppression with gay oppression. Talk about this later in the ‘nothing can compare song’.

Also incident P relates of being an external examiner where somebody put a homophobic comment in their assignment and is rightly failed because of it. When they resubmit they simply remove this comment and this is accepted. Reflect on discussion with H about Mary being in the closet as the principal of the college and the message that this gave out. She was very much of that it does not matter, and it is private, school of thinking, although at the same time the college placed great emphasis on self for the student, but also that the tutor was to hold the boundaries and not interfere. I remember being a part of the xxx group she set up as part of a piece of research looking at diversity issues in xxxx. I was a member of the reference group which was again all gays and lesbians. Once memorable moment from it was when I revealed that I declared my sexuality on my application forms. The group consensus was that this was going too far and that it would have put some of them off employing me.

#### Sample reflection 4

After the session N came in and was discussing her possible research topic, around family values and muslim issues – what was interesting is that she felt compounded to talk about sexuality at times, which made me wonder why she did this with me - she is a person who conflates issues and cannot hel leaking from one subject to another without making the links obvious, even so it was something she constantly did. I think this might be relating to her contribution last week in nicks session, where she felt a little defensive. She was saying that while she cannot ‘condone’ the issue as a muslim, but that it is a muslims primary issue to look after people and not to judge – so she felt it is something she can hold.

Later one I was speaking to A who again feels quite happy in her situation. Her manager has renaged a little on his position about her research and kept trying to ‘guide her to do something else – he stopped short of saying she could not but she feels that this could be difficult. She talked about her mothers denial, but not rejection –she kept putting it down to a chemical imbalance ie that it is a disease that can be cured. A was very adamant that she wants to hold both her religion and her sexuality. Talked again about her ex-partners and her understanding, but sadness, that she feels she cannot hold see or talk to her – she really wants to talk to her mother but she has been labelled as the older seducer, so as not to blame her own daughter. We talked about books we can read but also that Islam historically was very tolerant of homosexuality, far more so than in the west. A said that it was ironic that many fundamentalists talk about the corrupting influence of the west, yet with homsexuality this intolerance is a product of western tinkering, rather than the other way round.

Later H was talking about the discussion being about sexuality in the Christian group, and that this is a common, if not obsession with them. Their discussion was along the lines of love the sinner but hate the sin, although Y was feeling surprised and a little angry and the tolerance of some member of the group, feeling that the bible is very clear on the subject. After some discussion H asked how they would feel if they had the same conversation but had substituted gender for sexuality, this made some of the group think. She then asked how they would feel if they had substituted race for sexuality and the group, who are predominantly black went very quiet.

Afterwards H felt angry about the assumption of collusion that people have with her christianity, particularly being catholic. We discussed the merits of her allowing this to happen, so as not to buy opinions, but not to the point of collusion, but that this is a hard balance to achieve. We discussed how the pathways can allow people to feel that they can hide, but that we should bring out the ideas into the open and try and work with them. I talked about the muslim one in particular and the reputation is has , or should have – if it is seen as too radical, some will not come, but it also does not want to achieve a reputation of collusion. I asked Helen on her own position towards it, and she said that she sees it as part of the catholic way, in that it is not wrong, as any expression of love cannot be, but that Catholicism tends to outlaw something until there is over whelming dissent, but that Catholicism tolerates this dissent and sees it as part of the process.

#### Sample reflection 5

Interesting was of coming out in that someone recognized and clocked my rainbow ring because of their sexuality. They came and discussed with me after the session which led

to a mutual discussion about the significance of ring and how heterosexual people tend to wear wedding rings and we identify this as a signifier, although many of them do not recognize it as such. We talked about the upcoming gay marriage and civil partnership which may confuse the issues and an interesting discussion ensued about whether these coded message which can signify to other LGBTQ people your sexuality are a good or bad thing. We agreed that they grew from a time when you only wanted those in the know to know for fear of judgement – but even now, and where it is safer , it can be a useful signifier as the default it still heterosexual and we have to use other aspects of the ‘gadar’ to recognise things.

## Appendix ix - Queer Songs

### **1 Holding sand**

Taken from incident where students questioned the research ie things are ok now, what's the problem, until I asked how it would be if I was open in their communities , they balked, especially when I asked how they manage this tension, ok in college/ work evasive or complicit at home/ some work setting – its about how they manage this dual existence and the tension points - image of holding sand ie duplicity with a parallel between the double lives many lgbt have/ do lead – ie hetronormativity negatively effects us all

### **2 Never coming back into the light**

Torch song about the freedom and repression in the Weimar republic and parallels with the toleration of Islam historically and relative intolerance now. Using images from lavender song, and from Islamic poetry and the qu'ran.

### **3 Loving you**

Using image of A talking to me about her lesbian lover, who rejected her through family pressure – image of a boat sailing and joyfulness of that but that ultimately it sails past her and disappears chorus being almost childlike will she come back, building to anger in second half of the song about her being denied the emotional vocabulary to think this through repression and denial of her culture. Its where cultural tolerance breaks down because it has real lived painful consequences for people

### **4 World to win**

Series of images about the LGBT battles we fought but wondering if that way has been lost ie image of having a washing machine or voting, where gay guy said a washing machine, justifying it as his appearance being important to him because of what he has been through. Finish on a positive note, but not quite sure what yet.

### **5 Can you let me know**

Written about reactions to bi-sexuality.

### **6 Never thought it would be you**

Song about an encounter with a student where I had to help him out and it confused him because of our previous relationship and his homophobia- ended up being a moment of realisation and trust building for him.

### **7 Can't compare**

Student getting angry and confused about my coming out, seeing it as deceptive and manipulative and annoyed at comparing it to the process of black identify and awareness. Chorus, or all the people who'd abuse, or all the people who'd deceive, of all the people id not believe, I never thought it would be you.

### **8 Heterosexual junction**

Song about class exercise where I got student to examine their own constructions of heterosexuality

### **9 There for you**

responses of the team approach to sexuality, and how they talk about sexuality.

### **10 Old stories of love**

Song refusing to be defined in terms of sexuality – critiquing the idea of homonormativity as much as heteronormativity

### **11 Open minded heart**

Can for more open minded attitudes towards sexuality being of benefit for us all ie pro sexual.

### **12 now you know how it feels**

based on an exercise we did in class around how an alien would react if he came down and looked at how we ran society views sexuality as a complete outsider.

**13      come one in**

Song inverting the idea of coming out and inviting heterosexual people to come on it is an image of a party they are missing out on

**14      You're not welcome here**

Country rock song examining tolerance that it only surface deep and cracks show when heterosexuals are shown the privilege they get from heteronormativity.

**15      What about me**

Song about gender constructions within heteronormativity, particularly the invisibility of women who define themselves and are defined through their partner and their children.

**16      were the last to show**

Song of resentment about having to always take the lead, or show stigma resistance or be tolerant of intolerance

**17      every day wisdom**

Examining every day racisms, sexism and homophobia and how you are expected to collude – also deconstructing ideas around hegemony

**18      once again on my own**

Song written from the perspective of a heterosexual who has an ideal of the romantic ideal, making each other whole etc, which actually means you are half a person and inevitably end up along suffocating the other person

**19      Love you so**

Stalking song about a man who will not accept his own abuse and that the woman has left him, full of male blame constructions

**20      who made those rules anyway**

Song questioning all conventions about love, sexuality, fidelity etc

**21      forever young**

Song about B, who died of AIDS and was a guinea pig for both attitudes and cures of HIV

**12      bernie hates**

**Can't compare**

Who are you to give me a name  
Who are you to say we're the same

I don't want to see your face  
You no nothings of race  
You cannot compare the sufferings we share

You are part of the whole game  
You're the one who should feel shame

I don't want to see your race  
You no nothings of race  
You cannot compare the sufferings we share



Well get far, get a sense of who we are,  
on our own, challenging what we've known

yes I agree, you need to be aggrieved  
(but) history has shown, can't make it on your own

We have the same face  
In a time and a place  
You can compare the sufferings we share

unity through difference,

difference within unity,

### **holding sand**

why are, you making a fuss  
you are, ok with us  
it's not, an issue any more  
(but) what if, i come to your door

must be like holding sand  
with what we understand  
the dual lives that we live  
something, something is going to give

you would, send them away  
to others, to act in your stay  
you say, they should not ask  
i see, a brothers face in the class

(your) best mate, told you yesterday  
yet you, feel you cannot say  
cruel words, unchallenged in the hall  
a duplicity, that effects us all

the twist and turns, the lies that burn, that hate that grows, worlds unshown  
it falls apart, or never starts, we can't sustain, all that pain.

allah says, its not for us to judge

### **Have we forgotten?**

Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten  
Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten

We fought for this, it's something we have earned  
But it is just four walls, have we really learnt

Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten

A place that is safe, to be and to roam  
Ill look you in the face, but would you take me home

Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten  
Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten

We talk as though our job here is done  
can we not see there still a smoking gun

Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten

While it dissipates, it's our fate, cultures still collide, tangled up in pride  
It's still only play, it won't go away, but we can only try

Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten  
Oh, oh, oh, have we forgotten

Our double lives will tear us apart  
Perhaps this is where we can start

### **You're not welcome here**

Vrs1 We can say it's fine  
And have a good time  
You should live life without strife  
And be who you wanna be  
Yes I'm cool to know  
What you wanna show  
Ill even learn to discern  
and see what you wanna see

Chrs/ cos you're all welcome here  
You're all welcome here  
You can scream and shout  
You can even go and come out  
Cos you're all welcome here

Vrs 2/  
Don't push too much  
Or be in a rush  
There's some fear about you queers  
And we wanna keep you apart  
But leave me alone  
Some things should be unknown  
Don't wanna see and look at me  
Just wanna look at you from afar

Chrs/ that not welcome here

that not welcome here  
You can scream and shout  
You can even go and come out  
But that not welcome here

Midd 8/ That getting a bit close  
That's what a hate the most  
This meant to be about you  
Don't look at what we do.

Vrs 3/  
Religion says its wrong  
but we can be strong  
it's your fate, so we tolerate  
but don't make us like you  
We don't like new ways  
Making our kids gay  
I just see lust and disgust  
When I think of what you do

Why all the fuss  
Ain't it up to us  
With your church and such  
You protest too much  
We won't go away  
were here to stay

## Appendix x – Expanded Examples

### *Mohammed*

One interesting case study concerns a young man M, on the course. He was with us for two years, Muslim and in Heasley terminology, was in the shadow of masculinity in that he was not hegonomically masculine. He also made number of different statements about his sexuality at different points. I remember him being in the group we discussed in the chapter on heteronormativity when a Muslim Lesbian student was challenging another Muslim student who said that he would not work with someone gay. M did not speak in this conversation and looked very uncomfortable. Later on in his tutor groups he talked about his sexuality, as I reflect

*XXX later came in and said that M from xxx's tutor group had just come out to him. He also had not told any one else apart from one student but did not mind the staff knowing. I wondered how this related to the previous Monday where he had been silent when other said that he could not be a muslim – M had said that he felt silenced in the group. He has also been subdued in the group and at times absent. Felt heartened that xxx reported that my discussion had brought him to confront such issues.*

A simple reading of this would be that the man was starting to find his voice. However, on later occasions the student denied that he had said he was gay and was getting married. He then talked about some of the homophobia he had suffered at work and that he could not talk about his sexuality. I also noted that he did not want to engage with me directly, opting in sessions whether the group split into groups not to come into one with me. One he came to the office I shared with another tutor looking for them and seemed very uncomfortable when it was only me. I chose to tell him and asked if he would be interested in talking to me about his experience of homophobia, he looked very uncomfortable and made excuses and left as soon as he could.

Eventually he drifted from the course and did not finish his final year, although he had professionally qualified at the DipHE stage and many students left at this point. In many ways this student's tale is like many trying to find his sexuality.

### *Shale*

My relationship with Shale is a telling one and indicative of the kind of journey we have gone on with students. When he initially came to the college he was a recently reaffirmed Muslim, Previous to that he had been involved in a number of criminal activities, some gang related, and had issues with gambling and drinking. It was his re-discovery of Islam that made a real difference to his life and when he wanted to give back to the community from which he had taken. This had led to him becoming a youth worker, meeting one of our ex-student who had mentored him and then eventually coming onto the course. He, by his own description, had a strict interpretation of Koran and a political one. He saw such things as drinking, women dressing immodestly and homosexuality as theological 'haram', but also believed that they led to the corruption of society and were a western imperial imposition and legacy. At the same time, he sometimes struggled with his 'new' life, particularly with the gambling and there was both 'pull' and 'push' legacies from his old life, with a combination of resentment and admiration from his old associates, in the form of enticement and pressure to do certain things, and resentment that he would have got away with it from the police in various forms of harassment.

There seemed to be three pivotal moments in his journey with me and our understandings of each other. The first was a challenge from another student about his view of homosexuality as a western imposition and construction. She said that he did not know his own history, that Islam had been one of the most tolerant religions towards homosexuality, and that it is intolerance that is the colonial legacy. She also cited a number of sources to back this up. While he disagreed with her at the time, saying her response had been disrespectful, he stopped using this as an argument.

A second pivotal point was with another student challenge, again from another muslim. He had been saying that he could not support a young person who approached him about issues of sexuality, as he was not an expert in this and he would have to do this with another worker. The challenge was that while this was not an explicit rejection, it was an implicit one, and also meaningless, as where was this 'expert' worker to talk to. The challenge was also done in religious terms, saying that it was not for him to judge this young person, but Allah, and to do otherwise was not Islamic. The Koran is also explicit about seeing sex and sexuality as a normal everyday thing and a subject that was not for shame, but that it was the duty of a good Muslim to explore and understand it (not sexually satisfying one's wife being a grounds for divorce is Islam). Within this context he should work with the young person to help him explore his sexuality and understanding of himself, to do otherwise was to be a bad youth worker and a bad muslim.

Our relationship had always been cordial, but not close. He had made several comments over the years about not approving of my lifestyle and along the lines of the 'love the sinner but not the sin' argument. I had been present with the previous two challenges, but had not spoken. I had also challenged, in the group rather than individually with him, the love the sinner not the sinner argument saying that if the sin was a fundamental (though not always defining) aspect of a person's identity and, for them, person hood, then the love the sinner not the sin argument may work for the protagonist, but not for the LGBT person themselves, as it was a denial of their self. I mention this because he came back to it in our later exchanges, as an intervention of mine that he had wrestled with. The third pivotal moment came with myself.

He came to me in my role as a programme leader. It was at the end of the first semester of the third year. A number of pieces of work were due in, and if they were late it would have significant implications for him and his degree classifications if he were late. When he came in he was expressing a lot of resentment for having to apply for mitigating circumstances, complaining about the Eurocentricism of the university system. Eventually, once I told and discussed with him that while this might be true, it was not going to make a difference in this moment, he told me of the whole of his circumstances. Essentially the police had raided his home and seized his computer, saying that it might contain data about his previous illegal activities, or those of his associates, that could be helpful to them. He had explained that this computer had been bought long after his activities had ceased. They said he could not have his computer back until after due dates. He believed that this was deliberate sabotage of his university work. I believed him, but said that the university system would not accept this without a lot of proof that, of course was going to prove impossible to obtain. However, I said that we might be able to get it for a number of other reasons that this situation had put pressure on him. The crux point is that I would need to say that I had been aware of these issues on an ongoing basis and that this could substitute for evidence. I said I would do this, even though it was not strictly true, although I had

been aware of other things he had said to other tutors. He seemed happy with this, although still conflicted.

However, an hour or so later he came to me and seemed agitated. He wanted to know why I had done this, because I had not had to, and indeed had potentially put myself in a vulnerable position by doing so. His reactions were part resentful, part puzzlement, part guilt. He wondered aloud why I had given some of the shit he had given him, was it that I wanted something over on him (which he then rejected realising that he also had one over on me), was it that I fancied him, he genuinely felt conflicted. He also resented that I was in a position to do this and it represented a dependant position of a white lecturer over a black student, re-enforcing all his previous views about the nature of the university the course and colonialism etc. My response though garbled was that, not I did not fancy him, but that I believed he would have come and discussed these issues with me, had not the sexuality issue been in the way, but that I did not resent him for this, seeing it all as part of the processes of us working each other out and how to find a way to work together. I also agreed that I was doing this because I could, I had that privilege as a white lecturer in a position of power, firstly to do it, but also that I may be criticised, the consequences were less for me

He later said that this was the moment of connection for him. I had recognised my own privilege in the situation which in that moment was powerful. His homophobia towards me was there but not dominating at that point. It made him reflect on when he had moments of power, such as when a young person approached him about their sexuality. It was also a moment of human connection that he said made sense of his unease about the 'love the sinner not the sin' challenge I had given him.

After that our relationship changed. He was still a 'strict muslim' by his definitions, but was trying to find a way to recognise his faith with the job and the people in his, and other, communities. We had many discussions on a variety of topics, including faith and sexuality, but also politics

Appendix xi: Transgressive sexualities  
Transgressive heterosexualities

- *Heterosexuals should continually challenge and interrogate their own privilege*
- *It is about examining and changing gender and sexual roles within a heterosexual relationship, and being overt about it, not just behind closed doors, from who cooks, to who child rears, to who emotionally supports to who undertakes physical tasks.*
- *Is it about examining what kind of intimacy you have, or could have, with your own and the opposite sex. – does one simply have to be open to one's sexuality changing or is it enough to want to have others embrace this as a potential.*
- *It involves facing and challenging some of the ways we act out gendered stereotypes, such as.*
  - *That women have to be coaxed into sex, by men that want it more.*
  - *Men are more into the physical act, while women want emotional intimacy.*
  - *Its natural and inevitable for men to cheat, but if women do they are a slag.*
  - *That these are all exaggerated within black communities.*
- *This may entail researching and unearthing how heterosexual relationships are constructed and critiquing them, including looking at how 'happy' heterosexuals are within them. Immediate concerns were about constructions such as:*
  - *That it is desirable to have sexual and emotional monogamy,*
  - *At the same time, it is accepted that both sides, and particularly men, will cheat, but that one should not be honest about this.*
  - *The 'soul mate myth', that there is someone out there that would complete you, if only you found them, which re-enforces the above two constructions, you cheat till you find 'the one.'*

- *That 'jealousy' is a good thing, rather than pathological, and demonstrates love, rather than deep insecurity and controlling behaviour.*
- *One should always look at the way relationships are constructed in terms of re-inscribing dominant hegemonies. At present they are atomised, commercialised and commodified*

#### Transgressive homo-sexualities

- *Gay and lesbian relationships should equally interrogate their own constructions, particularly those about the commercialisation, atomisation and commodification of their lifestyles. While many of these were stereotypes perpetuated by the straight world, interrogation is needed when constructions become internalising, such as male promiscuity, lesbian bed death, etc.*
- *To not deny, but to interrogate, negative aspects of any relationships that lesbian and gay relationships are still subject to, but are sometimes ascribed to heterosexual relationships alone, such as domestic violence and controlling behaviour.*
- *It should also examine whether, and when, such phenomena as 'camp' are a celebration, defiance, or a defensive reaction to heterosexual oppression that, ultimately, re-inscribes safe stereotypes that maintain LGBTQ as 'other'.*
- *Within this Lesbians and gay people should take seriously the idea of homonormativity and examine when they are privileged by it, particularly when this privilege is predicated on the oppression of other sexual minorities.*
- *Goals such as gay marriage should be seen in this light, not as bad things but whether they are the best markers of having achieved equality.*
- *It should continually examine how it understands and constructs other sexual minorities, such as seeing Bisexuals as 'greedy' or 'not having decided', or transsexuals as re-enforcing social constructions of gender.*