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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Education

**Managing the Self: a grounded theory study of the identity
development of 14-19 year old same-sex attracted teenagers in British
Schools and Colleges**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences
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Doctor of Philosophy

Managing the Self: a grounded theory study of the identity development of 14-19 year old same-sex attracted teenagers in British Schools and Colleges

by Roger Philip Jones

The process of Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) identity formation is a complex one. There are many barriers in place which, implicitly or otherwise, seek to control and regulate same-sex attraction. An essential part of LGB identity formation is the process of disclosure to others, which can elicit a variety of reactions, from instant rejection to intense camaraderie. An examination of the ways in which LGB teenagers manage the visibility of their sexual identities, in the face of heterosexual control and regulation, will have profound implications for the work of those professionals who work with these young people.

Using a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz 2005, 2006), this study examines the experiences of 14-19 year old LGB teenagers concerning self-discovery, disclosure to others, coping with negative pressures and school responses to LGB visibility. Students, teachers and school managers were asked about the promotion of heterosexual and LGB-friendly assumptions and values in a school context. Thirty-five LGB young people were asked about how these assumptions had affected their lives. Some participants seemed able to manage anti-LGB pressures much better than others and, in order to determine why, participants were asked to identify the social, verbal and non-verbal strategies they have adopted in order to manage their LGB visibility in the face of these pressures.

The emergent theory is entitled 'A Constructivist model of LGB youth identity development'. By focusing on self-presentation and the management of homonegative pressures, this study highlights the need for a greater awareness of the ways in which LGB teenagers cope with social stigmatisation and manage disclosure in order to gauge the likely reactions from others. By developing an awareness of LGB visibility management, it will be possible for those who work with young LGB teenagers to circumvent some of the adverse interpersonal and psychological effects of homonegative stigmatisation.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Roger Philip Jones, declare that the thesis entitled:

Managing the Self: The identity development of 14-19 year old same-sex attracted teenagers in British schools and colleges

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own and have been generated by as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- no part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other Institution;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- the following parts of this work have been published in a paper co-authored with Dr Gill Clarke entitled "The School experiences of same-sex attracted students in the 14 – to – 19 year old secondary sector in England: within and beyond the safety and tolerance framework" Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services (2007) 19 (3/4), pp. 119-138: tables 4.1 – 4.16; figure 4.1
- other than the tables and figure mentioned above, no other parts of this work have been published before submission

Signed:

Date:

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

This research examines the processes of identity development as experienced by 14-19-year-old teenagers who are attracted to the same sex. The topic for this study arose as a result of my teaching and research experiences. It was also informed by my personal experiences as a gay male who had encountered many difficulties during the formative years of my own identity development. I noticed that some of the young people who I was teaching at the commencement of this research, in 2005, appeared to be experiencing many of the problems which I had encountered as a teenager in the 1970s. I saw evidence of homophobic bullying, peer and family rejection, and moral disapproval, all likely to take its toll on a young person identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT). However, I also saw evidence of some LGB young people inching forwards with a new-found confidence and self-assurance. I have not (to date) encountered any Transgendered young people, in my capacity as a teacher or as a researcher, hence this study is concerned with the experiences of young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

It was not easy to organise data collection for this study. I wanted to ask these young people what it was like to identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual but I felt unable to do so because of the circumstances which had brought about my own invisibility or partial visibility, at various stages of my life. The early years of my own Secondary education, when I was starting to identify as attracted to the same sex, took place in a Comprehensive school in the Midlands, just a few years after the British Government had decriminalised homosexuality (1967). From the age of eleven onwards, I was verbally abused by my peers on a daily basis with words of hate (“pouf”, “queer”) which told me that my differences were in some way strange, unacceptable and unforgivable. I simply did not fit in but for several years did not understand why. I later realised that a boy who played the violin, who loved reading books, who could not play sport but wrote poetry and drama, broke all the unwritten rules of the “gender script” (Levy & Fivush:1993). I was regarded by many of my peers suspiciously, at best, or with total contempt, at worst. None of this was helped by my tendency to mix with a small group of allies and friends, often similar outcasts or females, rather than to socialise with the packs of boys who gathered at break-times.

My father, who died when I was thirteen years of age, was also aware of my differences. In the rather uncompromising and unforgiving world of the Council

housing estate on which we lived, he saw me as a vulnerable, “weak” young man who needed “toughening” up and, as an ex-Army sergeant, he took it upon himself to impose a disastrous regime of character-building activities, such as boxing, scouts, swimming and football. He was a frustrated intellectual, too, and he admired and encouraged my reading of Shakespeare and Dickens at the age of eleven. He had little time for my love of “classical” music, though, and my mother had to fight my corner to enable me to take violin lessons at school.

As I started to become aware of my own attraction to other males, at about the age of eleven, I also became aware of what seemed to be sub-human “beings” that were demonised as abhorrent, deviant and perverse. I remember overhearing my father struggling to describe “homosexuality” to my mother, prompted by male Covent Garden ballet dancers appearing on television in a live relay of the “Royal Command Performance” entertainment. As my mother laughed with incredulity, my father commented “They must be homosexual”. With evidence of real shock, my mother added “You don’t think they are really, do you?” In a grave tone, my father spoke with the authority of a medical expert: “Yes they are. They go with men.” He shuddered with contempt and then added the following words which have been etched on my memory for the remaining forty years of my life: “If ever I had a son who was one of those, I don’t know what I’d do. It must be a great worry for a parent”. Perhaps my father’s realisation about his own son’s sexual identity was dawning, a few weeks later, when I entered the house from the garden and overheard my father asking my mother, in an uncharacteristically troubled tone, “What’s the matter with him?”

At the same time, two years after the decriminalisation of homosexuality (1967), I can remember waiting in a bus queue, in a city centre, with my mother. There was an uncomfortable shuffle, within the queue, accompanied by knowing glances of amusement and nods of disapproval, as two smartly-dressed male adults joined us. In order to demystify this occurrence, my mother whispered in a hushed tone of dread: “Here are the Queers. Watch this. The two of them live together.” Here, once again, were gay men, bravely facing hostile silence. They were socially marginalised as dysfunctional figures of fun, and physically stigmatised as dangerous Others whose very physical presence could be seen as potentially corruptive.

In the early 1970s I looked, in vain, for positive images of same-sex attraction on television or in films. I saw victims, of course, and excessively flamboyant figures of fun such as the limp-wristed Mr Humphries (the BBC situation comedy: ‘Are You Being Served?’) or the camp comedian Larry Grayson. A landmark in my teenage years was the film version of Quentin Crisp’s autobiography ‘The Naked Civil Servant’ produced

by Thames Television, in 1975, for the British Television channel ITV. Crisp's autobiography detailed the journey from childhood to old-age of a man who refused to hide his sexuality, in an age when homosexuality was illegal and punishable by imprisonment. I only glimpsed a few minutes of this ninety minute drama, stolen whilst my mother was preparing a meal in the kitchen, but I felt a strange empathy with the central character, played by John Hurt, whose refusal to be victimised and determination to celebrate difference was so refreshing. It was to put me in good stead for the next few years even though I did not ever feel able or willing to flaunt my differences with subversive flamboyance. Instead, I was to develop a range of strategies that would enable me to gauge likely responses to my differences and to act accordingly.

Fifteen years later, in 1990, I decided to enter teaching in post-compulsory education. For three years, Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act had thwarted the work of well-meaning teachers who had sought to educate students about social constructions of gender and lifestyle choices. Section 28 stated:

- (1) A local authority shall not (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality
 - (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.
 - (2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease.
- (Smith, 1994:183)

The proclaimed intention of Section 28 was to place family values at the heart of British life. Everywhere, heterosexual values were to be reinforced as cultural norms and schools played a central role in 'defining, regulating, and enforcing sexual boundaries so as to establish what Butler (1990) described as "gender border control"' (Clarke, 2006:723). Ellis (2007:14) comments on the "moral panic" surrounding "positive" classroom representations of same-sex attraction, occurring in British society in the late 1980s during a period of considerable change driven by Thatcherite market-driven policies. Well-meaning social liberals who sought to develop a social justice and identity politics agenda around sexuality and gender were singled out as challenging traditional "family" values. In particular, the British media brought to the public attention two incidents. The first of these was the discovery of a picture book, *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* (Bosche & Hansen, 1983) in a teacher resources centre belonging to the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). This book depicted a young girl's happy life with two "fathers" (a biological father and his same-sex partner) whilst

maintaining an equally positive relationship with her birth mother. The second incident concerned a primary school head teacher who taught her students that the love of Romeo and Juliet could be known as heterosexual, thereby suggesting that heterosexuality should not be regarded as “natural” and the only type of love that mattered. In this climate, Section 28 was enacted amidst a good deal of confusion concerning who was actually responsible for sex education in schools: the schools’ governing bodies or the Local Education Authorities. Forrest and Ellis (2006):18) have commented that, in some cases, Section 28 legitimised physical and verbal assaults on LGB young people as well as, in some cases, legitimising teachers’ personal dislike of same-sex attraction. Epstein (200:58) has demonstrated the symbolic effect which this uncertainty had on teachers and their ability to talk about same-sex attraction in the classroom or to be comfortable with their own teacher identities if they identified as LGB themselves:

Although this legislation does not apply to specific teachers or school governors, many teachers are unsure about its limits and have chosen not to mention homosexuality as a result.

Eighteen years later, I now feel able to quietly celebrate my “outness” as a gay, male teacher. There have been many reforms which have raised the public awareness and understanding of issues relating to same-sex attraction, including the repeal of Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act, in 2005, and other recent reforms such as Bill 4 of The Armed Forces Bill of 2000-1, ensuring that same-sex attraction would no longer be a bar to service in Britain’s armed forces and the Civil Partnership Act (2004) enabling same-sex couples to enjoy many of the same legal privileges as a heterosexual married couple. Legislation such as this has enabled gay teachers such as myself to confront the heterosexual world-view which has governed their lives and imposed silence on non-heterosexual values for so long. There are still colleagues who would ask me why it is so important to be “out”. I would say to these people – that there is a need for honesty and integrity, in order to be able to function effectively as a teacher and a role model. I believe it is my responsibility to confront the reservations, the disapproval and the incredulity with celebratory pride so that young staff and students who identify as LGBT, or who have friends, family or relatives who are LGBT, can also feel pride. It has become something of a mission. I have trained staff to challenge homophobia in several Sixth Form Colleges and helped to set up a network of Sixth Form College Gay-Straight Alliances in the South-East of England where I live.

It is the raised visibility of same-sex attraction resulting from the aforementioned legislative changes, which has made a difference to my life as a middle-aged gay male,

but it is the raised Media profile that seems to have made a difference to the young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual people that I have encountered. The start of the twenty-first century, in Britain, seems to herald a new age of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender media visibility. Many Popular television soap operas seem to have frequent appearances from at least one visible gay character, LGB identifying celebrities are represented in newspapers and magazines alongside their same-sex partners and reality television shows such as Channel 4's *Big Brother* feature LGBT contestants as a matter of course. Perhaps these are contributory factors helping to explain why the age at which LGB youth have self-identified as same-sex attracted has been decreasing (Dube, 2000; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993; Boxer, Cook & Herdt, 1991; Stone-Fish & Harvey, 2005). However, negative reactions to same-sex attraction can be found in media representations (Signarille, 2003), popular music lyrics (Stephens, 2005) and sports media coverage (Nyland, 2004). Research such as this indicates that social attitudes towards same-sex attraction, in Britain and America, remain complex and, as a consequence, young LGB identifying people are likely to encounter a variety of responses to their sexual identities. Research of coming-out experiences in British secondary schools (Rivers, 1995, 2000, 2001) indicates that LGB identifying students will continue to be subjected to high levels of verbal, physical, cyber and psychological abuse.

1.1 Rationale

Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act has, of course, made it extremely difficult for British researchers to access young LGB teenagers to discover their experiences. The repeal of Section 28 (2005) has meant that, as a teacher and a teaching practitioner, I am now more easily able to research the experiences of same-sex attracted teenagers, as they are beginning to understand themselves and tell others about their new-found identities. Whilst acknowledging the cultural mores, social values and personal experiences which have formed the backdrop to my own identity formation, as a middle-aged gay male, I wish to give my LGB identifying respondents a voice to speak for themselves about their own experiences of LGB identity development, unencumbered by any historic emotional baggage which I may still carry with me. I have tried to avoid leading these young people into accounts of misery, pain and suffering, as a necessary correlation with LGB identification. I am most interested to discover what identity development is like, in early twenty-first century Britain, for LGB young people, and, in doing so, I have tried to avoid prejudging, with pathological default assumptions. To the LGB young people who took part in my research, I have simply tried to say "tell me how it is" and always sought to let them speak for themselves.

1.1. Overview of thesis

This study examines how British teenagers manage the complex journey of Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) identity formation, often in the face of many barriers and pressures. This research breaks new ground in that, due to difficulties of accessing LGB identifying teenagers, previous British studies have tended to be retrospective studies of older participants (Rivers, 1995) or Internet surveys which present difficulties of validity (Stonewall, 2007). Further, the present study accesses young people, both heterosexual and same-sex attracted, in order to discover what life is like for LGB young people in an area of south-east England, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Chapter Two (Literature Review) places my study of adolescent identity development in a research and cultural context, in order to reveal the complexities of conflicting research traditions. Earlier notions of sexuality which dichotomise homosexuality and heterosexuality as fixed binaries are considered alongside developmental (stage) theories, psychological notions of causality and postmodern presentations of identity development as fluid and unfixed. In this way, I have sought to develop my own “accumulated knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss: 1990), in order to identify gaps of knowledge which my own research may be able to address.

Chapter Three (Investigating Identities) describes the selection of the methodology and methods. It seeks to clarify why grounded theory was deemed to be the most appropriate method to guide the data collection and analysis. In the first place, as a practitioner-researcher, I sought to examine the experiences of LGB youth solely in an educational context. Initial quantitative data was gathered from students in a city sixth form college (Appendix A) and this supplemented by data collection from one city secondary school: interview with senior management (Appendix B), middle management (Appendix C), teacher survey (Appendix D) and focus groups with students (Appendix E). Further data collected from sixth form college focus groups with LGB teenagers (Appendix F) soon demonstrated that I would need to examine interactions with several groups including peers, families, teachers and community members. Focus group questions were refined to collect rich data concerning self-acceptance and disclosure, the management of homonegative pressures and educational experiences, including school responses to LGB visibility (Appendix G).

Chapter Four (Beginning the Journey) analyses the initial quantitative and qualitative data which was intended to provide a contextual backdrop for the study. I wanted young people, teachers and school managers, both heterosexual and same-sex attracted, to tell me what they had experienced and observed concerning homophobic victimisation, school curriculum and experiences of disclosure. One hundred and sixteen sixth form teenagers completed questionnaires and the findings are compared with earlier comparable British studies (Rivers, 1995, 2000, 2001; Stonewall, 2007). The ethos, policies and practices of one secondary school (Palmerston Secondary School), identified by students and the Schools Inspectorate (Ofsted) as “outstanding” in facilitating LGB inclusion, are examined through interviews with senior and middle management and questionnaire surveys with students and teachers.

Chapter Five (Managing the Self) examines the personal processes of LGB identity formation, as experienced by the participants in this study. These include self-realisation, self-denial and self-acceptance, as well as the interpersonal processes which may involve disclosing the new found identity to peers, teachers, family and other members of the community. The verbal, non-verbal and social strategies, used by the participants to manage their LGB visibility will be examined. These will include testing the allegiance of friends, using the body as a message board, breaking rules (implicitly and explicitly) and presenting counter-discourses.

Chapter Six (Visibility Management by Others) investigates homonegative pressures such as abuse, rejection and compulsory heterosexuality, often represented as responsible for fracturing LGB identity development, in order to consider teenagers’ coping mechanisms, in particular the self-management of LGB visibility. Participants’ responses to a variety of situations will be considered including the multiple losses experienced by families when faced with LGB disclosure, peer control of LGB visibility through verbal semantic derogation (abusive vocabulary) and school-imposed isolation. In particular, the concept of Face (Goffman, 1959) is considered as an important means of maintaining positive self-presentation when encountering homonegative barriers.

Chapter Seven presents an overarching Constructivist model of LGB youth identity development based on participants’ experiences. This model acknowledges that many participants see their emerging LGB identities as part of a complex system of multiple identities, identified by Bradley (1996) as “lived relationships”. It also acknowledges a debt to developmental stage models (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1990), whilst seeking to avoid a fixed and linear approach to LGB identity development, in favour of an approach which allows for fluidity and individuality. Finally, this model charts the range of social, verbal and non-verbal strategies which have been employed by some

participants during self-presentation and the management of homonegative pressures, whilst acknowledging that awareness of these strategies has varied amongst participants.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by considering the implications and limitations of this study and finally making recommendations for practice in schools and colleges and further research.

Chapter 2: Troubling Identities

2.1 The process of sexual minority identity formation

During adolescence, a key period of self-discovery in the life-span, young people experience biological, cognitive, emotional, physiological, psychological and social changes. Newly discovered roles, role expectations and identities are accumulated and assimilated into a core sense of self. If part of this process involves identifying with a stigmatised form of sexual identity, the individual concerned is likely to experience identity confusion which could result in a period of denial. Identification necessitates a process of definition. How we define ourselves and how we are defined by others will, of course, vary according to social, cultural and ideological conditions, within particular historical contexts. In recent times, same-sex attraction has been variously seen as the behaviour of a minority group, a form of deviant sexual behaviour, an identity performance and a political movement. Shifting post-modern perspectives have helped to question and fragment earlier accounts of identity, creating new paradigms of thought, which have, in some cases, sought to make a distinction between gender, relating to socially constructed aspects of sexual difference, and sexuality, relating to the biological identity as male or female with which (most) individuals are born. In this context, personal identities are often seen as constantly changing, diverse and fluid, rather than fixed, polarised and stable.

The process of personal identification is now seen as developing within the contextual interrelationship of several variables, including social class, gender, family values, ethnicity and age. New ways of defining the tensions and conflicts between these competing perspectives are emerging. In an age of changing understanding concerning identity formation processes, educational institutions face new challenges when supporting young people during the identity formation process. After initially examining some of the complexities arising from definitions of identity, the section that follows entitled, *Fragmenting Identities*, will consider some of the developmental models which have evolved to chart and map Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) identity formation. I then turn, in *Schooling Identities*, to consider the nature, meanings and effects of homophobic abuse alongside the development of stigma-management strategies, and protective resilience, in an educational context. Finally, *Constructing Identities* will consider the part played by family, peers and teachers during the process of disclosure (“coming out”), and the implications for educational institutions.

2.2 Defining Identity

In 1975, just eight years after the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality, Plummer articulated what he understood to be the position concerning sexual identity for many same-sex attracted people at that time:

We know what our sexual natures are not: they are not eternally fixed, biologically determined, and unchangeable. We are not so certain what they are. (Plummer, 1975:32).

Although research indicates that many same-sex attracted people would disagree with the notion that their sexualities are not biologically determined (Savin-Williams, 2005:98), what emerges, here, is a sense of the complexity attached to just one aspect of a person's identity: sexuality. Drawing attention to the fact that this identity will also be determined by the interrelationship of other factors, Weeks (1990:88) defines identity as follows:

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others.

Bradley (1996:25) has developed Weeks' ideas further to make a distinction between "personal identity" and "social identity". "Personal identity" is concerned with the construction of the self: how we perceive ourselves as unique individuals and how we think that others see us, resulting from the range of experiences that we have gone through. "Social identity" is concerned with how we locate ourselves in the society that we live in, in terms of "lived relationships", class, gender, ethnicity and so forth, and how we perceive others as locating us, in relation to these variables. Bradley identifies three levels of "social identity", which are of particular relevance to the study of same-sex attracted identity formation: passive, active and politicized. As stated above, "passive identities" derive from "lived relationships", though these are not acted on or acknowledged by the person concerned, possibly because the "passive identities" are not consciously realised: an individual may be aware of some same-sex attraction, or feel attached to a particular social class, but may not appear to think of themselves in terms of same-sex attraction or class, although they do recognise the existence of differences in sexuality and class. "Active identities" are positive elements of an individual's self-identification: the individual is fully aware of them and using these as a base for their actions, even though they are unlikely to think of themselves in terms

of any single identity. "Politicised identities" are formed through political action as the individual consciously uses their identities as the base for action.

Bradley's analysis of identity, like all others, is located within a particular social, cultural, economic, aesthetic and philosophical milieu. Lyotard (1984) describes what he believes to be a new cultural phenomenon, a different way of viewing the world (past, present and future) encapsulated in the title of his key text: *The Postmodern Condition*. Postmodernism is a notoriously difficult concept to define but Marshall (1998:512), nevertheless, attempts to pin it down:

In whatever guise it appears, it implies the disintegration of modernist symbolic orders. It denies the existence of all "universals", including the philosophy of the transcendental self, on the grounds that the discourse and referential categories of modernity (the subject, community, social class and so forth) are no longer appropriate to the description of disorganised capitalism.

For Sarup (1993:183), debates about postmodernism should be seen "in the context of ideological struggles" concerning the status and validity of Marxist values. Hence, certainties of human progress, including the erosion of class divisions and the advancement of scientific knowledge, as represented by legitimizing "grand narratives" of the past such as the works of Marx and Freud, are rejected in favour of a pluralism of cultural traditions, ideologies and world-views.

In this brave new postmodern world, the nature of the human self is now seen in terms of difference, diversity and fragmentation. Moore (1998:170) states:

It is no longer so easy to talk of the individual or the self as an autonomous and coherent unity but instead we have come to understand that we are made up from and live our lives as a mass of contradictory fragments.

Here, fixed notions of Identity which are tied to social bases which seek to constrain and control the individual are replaced by a plurality of relatively free-floating identities, as identified by Weeks (1990:88):

Each of us lives with a variety of potentially contradictory identities which battle within us for allegiance: as men or women, black or white, straight or gay, able-bodied or disabled, "British" or "European". The list is potentially infinite.

Weeks (2003:123) demonstrates that sexual identities “have a special place in the discourses of identity.” At the beginning of the twenty-first century, sexuality is often presented as a continuum or spectrum along which various sexual desires and different identities lie. Historically, however, sexual identities have been organised in fixed hierarchies, based on biological notions of causality (genetic, hormonal or neurological) or psychosexual post-Freudian notions of arrested childhood development in parent-child relations, where heterosexual positions have been clearly naturalised as superior. In their attempts to describe and map same-sex identity formations, many researchers (Remafedi, 1987; Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990; Savin-Williams, 2005) have struggled with imposed categorisations and definitions. By analysing the work of these researchers, it is possible to uncover not only the power relations that enmesh the identities they are investigating but also the oppositions and resistances to these dominant discourses. If identities are constantly being redefined, however, they are also being re-categorised. LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) and “Queer” are currently in constant use, although representing very different viewpoints. LGBTQ suggests a polarized divide between hetero and homosexuality whereas “Queer” has the elasticity and fluidity to encompass a plurality of sexualities. Aware of the constantly changing nature of these categories of identification, (Butler, 1991:14) comments:

I’m permanently troubled by identity categories, consider them to be invariable stumbling-blocks, and understand them, even promote them, as sites of necessary trouble.

These late twentieth century identity conflicts have been partly brought about by what has been referred to as the “essentialism/social constructionism” debate which Kitzinger, (1995:136), also referred to as “the hottest philosophical controversy to hit psychology in years” (Weinrich, 1987). The work of Simon Le Vray illustrates essentialist approaches to sexual identity, rooted in biological causation. In 1991, Vray tested the notion that the development of sexual orientation, at least in men, was closely tied to the prenatal sexual differentiation of the brain. He sought to test the idea that the size of structures such as INAH3 (Interstitial Nuclei of the Anterior Hypothalamus, a tiny region at the base of the brain) might vary with sexual orientation as well as sex, hypothesising that it would be large in heterosexual men and lesbian women and small in heterosexual women and gay men. On conclusion of his research, he felt that he was:

Able to confirm part of the hypothesis that related to men: INAH3 was between two and three times larger, on average, in the heterosexual men than in the gay men whose brains I examined. (Le Vray, 1991:1034-1037; 1993:143)

The social constructionist viewpoint, on the other hand, asserts that people actively construct their identities and perceptions, using their social context, their experiences and their interactions to do so. Identity construction emerges from a continuous interaction between the self and the environment and the belief that narrow definitions of heterosexuality and homosexuality are too often employed in a constraining and generalised way:

The utility of a definition is the direction it gives us for looking at the world. The definition should not be confused with the world itself. (Gagnon, 1977:188).

Social constructionists argued that the assumption that same-sex attraction was a medical condition (like cancer or diabetes) led to inappropriate questions about its etiology and specifically to the nature/nurture debate which dominated pre 1970s research, as McIntosh (1968:183) argued, over forty years ago:

The failure of research to answer the question has not been due to lack of scientific rigour or to any inadequacy of the available evidence; it results rather from the fact that the wrong question has been asked. One might as well try to trace the etiology of “committee chairmanship” or “Seventh Day Adventists” as of homosexuality.

Sedgwick (1990:93) sidesteps this essentialist/social constructionist debate, by suggesting that a better focus for the investigation of sexual identity would be to examine the problematic definitions which have arisen from the homo/heterosexual binary. She identifies a repertoire of opposites around which our understanding of sexuality is organised:

- homosexual/heterosexual
- feminine/masculine
- private/public
- secrecy/disclosure
- ignorance/knowledge
- innocence/initiation

The closet plays an important part in Sedgwick's analysis of binary categories for two reasons. First, the entire heterosexual matrix, from the nineteenth century onwards, has sought to create an invisibility and silence around non-heterosexuality. However, Sedgwick regards the closet as an important epistemology (or version of knowledge relations), in itself, containing such dichotomies as *speaking and silence* and *learning and ignorance*. Epstein and Johnson (1998:92) add that to the above system of opposites should be added *closet and education*, in that the latter should provide the opportunities for open and honest representations of alternative sexualities.

It is not easy to place bisexuality on Sedgwick's bi-polar model of sexual orientation. She juxtaposes the two assumptions which, she believes, have governed Western thought since the late nineteenth century. These are that sexual definition is either "an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority", what she calls "the minoritising view", or that it is "an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities" (Sedgwick, 1990:1), what Sedgwick refers to as "the universalising view". Hegarty (2006), has demonstrated that Sedgwick's distinction between minoritising and universalising theories of sexuality can be usefully employed to chart the gradual shift from minoritising representations of same-sex sexuality, in, for example, psychopathological accounts of causality, to the universalising fluidity of postmodern accounts of performative role-making, whereby concepts such as homosexuality, heterosexuality or bisexuality are seen as self-constructs that influence one's relationship with one's self and with others.

The postmodern interrogation of Identity/identities, places early twenty-first century sexual identity formation in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, it is liberating to be able to identify the various cultural forces that have criminalised, pathologised, stigmatised and victimised LGB people for so long. However, some may be concerned that we have reached a theoretical cul-de-sac which will have little relevance for LGB young people, who are trying to make sense of their lives, and the educational contexts in which they are learning.

2.2.1 Early psychological perspectives: forging a heterosexual matrix

In every normal male or female individual, traces are found of the apparatus of the opposite sex. These either persist without function as rudimentary organs or become modified and take on other functions. These long-familiar facts of anatomy lead us to suppose that an originally bisexual physical disposition has,

in the course of evolution, become modified into a unisexual one, leaving behind only a few traces of the sex that has become atrophied.

(Freud, 1905:8)

Freud's primary belief, as stated here, is that all persons have innate bisexual capacities. However, he also states that patients will cling to claims of bisexuality in order to avoid coming to terms with homosexuality due to the social stigmatisation of same-sex attraction. According to Freud's theory, largely based on clinical observations of patients who were seeking psychotherapy, male and female adult homosexuality is to be regarded as the product of an arrested childhood development, in terms of child-parent relations, and therefore to be seen as deviant behaviour, as opposed to adult heterosexuality, which is to be regarded as normal behaviour (Freud, 1961). Homosexuality was further pathologised by von Kraft-Ebing (1925) as "inversion", due to the presence of what were deemed to be gender-inappropriate traits, in gay men and lesbians, and "a functional sign of degeneration" using degeneration in the evolutionary sense of "falling away from the genus" (Kraft-Ebing, 1925:70-71). In this way, late nineteenth and early twentieth century heterosexual bias established a paradigm of sexual orientation, in which heterosexuality and homosexuality were strictly demarcated, with the latter clearly classified as an illness. This heterosexual matrix was to dominate psychological and psychiatric thought for much of the twentieth century.

Kinsey: Shifting paradigms of sexual orientation

In 1948, Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin sought to describe human sexuality rather than categorise it clinically, in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of a dichotomous concept of sexuality which polarised heterosexuality and homosexuality, stigmatising the latter as an illness, and devaluing bisexuality as denial of homosexuality or a transitional stage to "normal" heterosexuality. Attempting to study male and female sexuality in a purely empirical and scientific manner, which was disassociated from contemporary paradigms of sexual orientation, Kinsey and colleagues attempted to study human beings in the contexts of their own experiences and interactions with their environments. Challenging traditional essentialist notions which assumed that human sexuality was inherently heterosexual, they were keen to counter the prevailing social ideology which privileged heterosexuality as "natural" and "normal" and same-sex attraction as "unnatural" and "perverted":

Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not divided into sheeps and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely

deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behaviour the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex. (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948:639)

Even moving to a model which contained all three forms of sexuality did not, in their view, represent the full continuum of human sexuality as adequately as their seven point heterosexual-homosexual rating scale. This ranged from an exclusive heterosexual with no homosexual attraction rating (1) to exclusively homosexual (7) with (3) rating as equally heterosexual and homosexual. The scale allowed for predominant and incidental sexual experiences to be taken into account. Although using the prevailing sexual identity classifications of the period, Kinsey is clearly signalling his dislike of socially-constructed terms such as “heterosexual” and “homosexual” which present human sexuality as fixed and stable. Indeed, the Kinsey Report’s findings suggested that 46% of the male subjects in this research had “reacted” sexually to persons of both sexes in the course of their adult lives, indicating that sexuality is prone to change over time and that 37% had at least one homosexual experience (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948: 656). The report also gave a rating of 3 (about equal heterosexual and homosexual inclinations) to 11.6% of white males, relating to experiences throughout their adult lives (Kinsey, 1948: 651).

There have been numerous objections to the Kinsey Report’s findings on the grounds of its methodology, and in particular the over-representation of certain groups in the sampling procedures for its statistical analysis: 25% were, or had been, prison inmates and 5% were male prostitutes (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948:651). Kinsey *et al.* had encountered one of the most significant problems facing researchers concerned with human sexuality: accessing respondents prepared to discuss intimate aspects of their sex lives with total (if academically sanctioned) strangers. Similar problems were encountered by the Kinsey Institute in 1953 when they conducted similar research on human female sexuality (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953) and the researchers accepted that, given the nature of sex research, their sample could not be truly random and did not claim that their sample was representative of the overall USA population.

Critics of Kinsey’s findings have included Bancroft (1983), who believes that insufficient emphasis has been placed on the social significance of sexual categorisations, and Cass (1990) who argues that insufficient allowance is made for the degree of sexual preference development in individuals at various points of the continuum: how much one is attracted to the same or opposite sex. However, the

Kinsey Reports have often been associated with heralding a major change in public perceptions of sexuality, providing accounts of male and female homosexuality and heterosexuality which sought to regard both forms of sexuality on an equal footing. In this way, the illness model of homosexuality, which identified same-sex attraction as a congenital anomaly, a major neurosis, a sexual perversion or even a physical illness, was challenged alongside other attitudes and values long entrenched in nineteenth century morals and sexual perspectives.

Human development: moving from causality to identity

The polarised distinction between normal (heterosexual) and abnormal (homosexual) attraction, through which psychology and psychiatry had pathologised same-sex attraction, began to shift in the 1970s. This was partly as a result of the post-Stonewall social climate in America and partly helped by the decision of the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality as a clinical diagnostic category. As a consequence, the research focus, concerning sexual orientation, began to shift away from psychopathological concerns with the causes and aetiology of homosexuality towards more affirmative studies of lesbian and gay identity formation.

By defining sexual identity in terms of the mind as well as the body, and countering the notion that Freud was the first person to discover the sexual origin of neuroses, Foucault (1981) examines the explosion of medical and psychological texts which pathologised homosexuality during the nineteenth century. Foucault questions the Marxist notions of a class struggle between ruling and subordinate classes, resulting in top-down subjugation of sexuality which was not conducive to maintaining the workforce status quo. In his explanation of the “repressive hypothesis”, Foucault (1981:63-65), argues that discourses about sex (*Scientia Sexualis*) have proliferated since the late nineteenth century, leading to a gradual loosening of censorship, taboos and legal imperatives and ever expanding levels of openness about sexuality in the twentieth century.

In this way, societal control, discipline and regulation of same-sex attraction have been maintained by sanctioning the knowledge claims and practices of the human sciences: medicine, psychiatry, psychology, criminology and sociology. Sexuality is not seen, therefore, as a natural reality but is, in fact, the product of power: a system of discourses and practices which work to “constitute the subject” (Butler, 2002:50). “Subject” is a more meaningful word than “individual”, in this context, as it suggests a lack of personal autonomy, even though top-down prohibition, control or censorship is often resisted, from the bottom, through counter discourses. In this way, compliance is

sought through the internalizing of social norms and values rather than the threat of punishment.

Foucault's history of sexuality coincides with the emergence of homosexual identification models, one of the most important of which is Cass' six-stage development model (1979). In this early version of her much-revised model, Cass suggests that sexual identity is a universal developmental process that proceeds in a predetermined temporal sequence of six stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride and identity synthesis. At any stage, identity diffusion or foreclosure can occur, which likely results in defensiveness and denial. The model rests within a framework of interpersonal congruency theory, taking an interactionist perspective to examine the relationship between the individual's perception of their new found sexual identity (a characteristic), the individual's perception of their own behaviour as a result of this characteristic and the individual's perception of how they are perceived by others, thereby bringing together an interplay between interpersonal (self) and intrapersonal (relationships with others) aspects. Cass (1979:222) admits that, given Western attitudes towards same-sex attraction at the time, it was "probably impossible" for the individual to achieve a "homosexual-defining matrix that is totally (cognitively and affectively) congruent".

A number of criticisms were levelled at the 1979 version of Cass' model, the most significant of which are considered here. Firstly, as with most linear developmental models, it was thought to be too fixed and likely to force individuals into metaphorical pigeonholes, although Cass did clearly state that the model should only be used as a guide and could not be used to describe the identity developments for all individuals "since individuals and situations are inherently complex" (Cass, 1979:235). Secondly, it was introduced as equally applicable to males and females suggesting a degree of gender uniformity. Furthermore, stage models such as Cass' were based on retrospective accounts, often from highly troubled individuals whose experiences could not be seen, perhaps, as fully representative of the contemporary gay male and lesbian community. Finally, critics have pointed out that bisexuality was only admitted as a transitional process (identity foreclosure) therefore perpetuating the hetero/homosexual dichotomy. Cass (1990:255) revised this model to recognise that "homosexual identity is developed separately from other sexual preferences". Nevertheless, this model remains the standard-bearer of homosexual identity models, in many researchers' minds, and continues to be widely referenced by researchers. It is pertinent to note Cass's own comment (1979:235) that "over time, changes in societal attitudes and expectations will require changes in the model".

Troiden's (1979; 1990) "ideal typical" model of gay identity formation charted identity development over four key stages. This model sought to demonstrate how sexual feelings are identified and labelled through experiences gained with gender roles and sexual scripts. Two key concepts were identified: Firstly, self-concept, the wider of the two categories, referring to how people perceive themselves psychologically, and identity, referring to perceptions of the self in specific social settings (the "teacher" identity at work, the "spouse" identity at home). Troiden acknowledged that ideal types, verging on stereotypes, were mere abstractions based on observations. These observations, however, were based empirically, on a sample of 150 men, between the ages of 20 and 40 (mean age 21.3 years), with a range of educational and occupational backgrounds, from rural and urban settings. Similarly to the model of Cass, gay identities are described as developing over a protracted period of time involving a number of personal changes that are ordered into a series of stages. Unlike Cass, however, this framework is to be seen as spiral rather than linear, as progress through the stages occurs in back and forth, upwards and downwards rather than as a step by step process in which one stage develops from another, with fluctuations, such as denial, resulting from social stigmatisation, explained by Cass as developmental regression. Troiden's model goes further and examines the stigma management strategies employed by the individual during the process of disclosing gay identity to oneself, to other gay/lesbian/bisexual friends, to non LGB friends, to families and to co-workers ("coming out").

The first of Troiden's stages, usually occurring pre-puberty, is referred to as *sensitisation*. During this stage, experiences are gained, which will later serve as sources for interpreting feelings as same-sex attracted. Cass omitted this childhood stage from her model preferring to commence with *identity confusion*, generally experienced in adolescence, which is the second stage, of Troiden's 1990 version of his model. Troiden identifies several factors which are responsible for this identity confusion, including altered perceptions of self, recognition of the differences between homosexual and heterosexual behaviour, growing awareness of the social stigma surrounding homosexuality and the individual's often inaccurate information about same-sex attraction, arising from the perceptions of others. Individuals tend to respond by adopting one or more of several strategies: *denial* of same-sex attraction, repair involving wholesale attempts to eradicate LGB feelings and behaviour, *avoidance*, which can take various forms including assuming antihomosexual postures and heterosexual immersion, *redefining* behaviour, feelings or context along more conventional lines and finally *acceptance* of LGB behaviour, feelings or fantasies, albeit probably begrudgingly. The third stage of Troiden's model, *identity assumption*,

corresponds with Cass' hypothesized stages of identity tolerance and identity assumption. With a greater commitment to assuming a sexual minority status, the individual begins to focus on the social, emotional and sexual needs that remain. During this stage, LGB people feel an overwhelming need to disclose their new-found sexual identity to others. They will inevitably need to address social stigma, as they do so, most likely by adopting one or more of the following stigma-evasion strategies: *capitulation* to heterosexist pressures, because they have internalised a stigmatised view of same-sex attraction, *minstrelisation*, when the individual behaves in highly stereotypical ways, as the wider culture expects them to (i.e. male effeminacy), *passing* as heterosexual, which involves men and women concealing their homosexual identities from others and *group alignment* with the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual community. As the stage develops, Troiden argues, further stigma-management strategies are fostered including *covering* and *blending*. Those who *cover* "manage their homosexuality in ways meant to demonstrate that although they may be homosexual, they are nonetheless respectable." Those who *blend* "act in gender-appropriate ways and neither announce nor deny their homosexual identities to non-homosexual others" (Troiden, 1990). For these individuals, their sexual orientations are irrelevant to other areas of their lives outside the LGB community and, therefore, kept silent. The final stage of Troiden's developmental model is *commitment*, during which the LGB person adopts a perspective which destigmatises same-sex attraction and *converts* it to an asset or strength, often coinciding with the taking of a lover. One of the main tenants of Troiden's (1979:372) argument is that: "identity is never fully acquired, but is always somewhat incomplete, forever subject to modification".

Each stage is viewed as making the acquisition of a gay identity more likely but not inevitable. There is no sense, here, of gay identities being posited as acquired in an "absolute, fixed or final sense" (Troiden, 1979:372). There is a sense, however, that the process of disclosing one's new-found sexual identity to others is more likely to be a life-long process which involves continuous negotiation and decision-making, by the individual concerned, regarding the above-mentioned stigma evasion strategies. Savin-Williams (2005) claimed that developmental models like those of Cass and Troiden were, largely responsible for bringing the often painful process of non-heterosexual identity formation to the attention of mainstream scholars. However, as Savin-Williams (2005) also points out, critics such as Eliason, (1996); Garnets and Kimmel (1993); Horowitz and Newcomb, (2001); Savin-Williams, (1998, 2001) have not held back from identifying the significant shortcomings of these models. Troiden's model, for example, was a retrospective study, hardly surprising when considering the nature of the hidden population of potential respondents and the average age of disclosure, identified by Troiden, in 1990, as 21.3 years. Secondly, Troiden's model was based

entirely on the experiences of gay males and, as will be shown, studies have emerged to demonstrate that the coming out experience is very different for females. Finally, little mention is made of bisexuality, in Troiden's analysis, reflecting a cultural ambivalence towards bisexuality.

Perhaps because of the persistence of the bi-polar heterosexual/homosexual perspective, few developmental models exist which are specifically concerned with bisexual identity formation. Zinik (1985) has identified two opposing models which shape thoughts about bisexual functioning. In the first of these, the "conflict" model, bisexuality is regarded as problematic and transitional between heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality, stemming from identity conflict and confusion. In the second, the "adaptive flexibility" model, bisexuality is viewed as flexible and fluid allowing the successful integration of heterosexual and same-sex attracted identities in a dual sexual orientation. Weinberg's model (1984) has four stages: *initial confusion* (similar to the identity confusion in homosexual identity models), *finding and applying the label*, *settling into the identity* and *continued uncertainty*. Troiden (1990) states that the first stage (initial confusion), is usually protracted, as the bisexual person struggles with the afore-mentioned binary concepts of homo-heterosexuality. Weinberg hypothesizes that the last stage of *continued uncertainty* might be due to the lack of social support for a bisexual lifestyle and the pressure from the gay, lesbian and heterosexual communities to choose a monosexual orientation. Consequently, Weinberg suggests, the man or woman who is struggling to develop a bisexual identity is likely to experience considerable social isolation over a lengthier developmental trajectory than a gay male or lesbian who is able to find a supportive network within the lesbi/gay community. In its guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual clients, the American Psychological Association (APA, 1990: 756) reminds psychologists that bisexuality is invalidated by the polarization of sexual orientation into heterosexual and homosexual categories and, as a result, bisexual adults and young people are likely to experience a variety of stressors in addition to the social stigmatisation resulting from same-sex attraction.

Boxer and Herdt (1995) have identified four "dimensions" of bisexuality which capture different cultural perspectives and which have been presented, by research literature, as "core" areas: biological bisexuality, which represents sexual attraction to both sexes as innate drives; psychological bisexuality, which often pathologises sexual relations with both sexes as a function of the self, usually arising from Freudian notions of arrested childhood development; behavioural bisexuality, describing relations with both sexes as arising from interpersonal behaviour, situations and contexts and cultural bisexuality, in which sexual relations are discussed as cultural ideas. Earlier

approaches have tended to be characterised by essentialist biological and psychological perspectives, though, as will be demonstrated, residual traces are still to be found in research literature. Postmodern behavioural and cultural approaches, which examine bisexuality as fluid and plastic, outside dichotomous or even trichotomous frameworks, have fewer difficulties in describing this particular sexual identity. Indeed, Storr (2003:154) states that the emergence of bisexuality as a concept of “self-conscious bisexual identity rather than simply of Bisexual behaviour” (in primarily Britain and North America) can only be regarded as a “phenomenon of postmodernity”.

The major paradigm shift, in 1973, which followed the APA’s declassification of homosexuality as an illness, enabled social science researchers to shift the focus from the biological, pathological and psychological causes of same-sex attraction to the processes of sexual minority identity formations. As Fox (1993) demonstrates, however, the psychopathological classification of bisexuality, as a psychological maladjustment, continued to dominate much of the sexuality research, arising from earlier perceptions that exclusive heterosexuality was the only normal outcome of the developmental process and that sexual orientation was best represented according to a heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy. Fox (1993) has sought to present bisexuality from an affirmative perspective, as a type of sexual orientation worthy to be regarded as a separate entity in its own right. He has demonstrated the need to challenge the many assumptions of this dichotomous view of sexual orientation including the notions that heterosexuality and homosexuality are mutually exclusive, that gender is a primary criterion for the selection of a sexual partner (choosing the person rather than the gender) and that an individual’s sexual orientation is immutable. According to Boxer and Herdt (1995:83), the problem for researchers has been that bisexuality cannot easily be explained by essentialist or social constructionist accounts, creating a “black box”. Recent paradigms, which seek to examine bisexual desire and identity, they argue, have failed to regard the cultural influences which have continued to shape social attitudes towards bisexuality. In the particular case of bisexuality, Boxer and Herdt (1995:74) argue, it is necessary to regard bisexual identity as a mediation of sex development and cultural identity:

For this purpose, we may rethink bisexuality not as a “lone child” in nature, but rather as one of a series of categories of identity (heterosexual/homosexual/gay/straight), conceptualised as a cultural system.

The complex nature of bisexuality, which cannot easily be categorised by either heterosexual or homosexual identity development models, is highlighted by Klein

(1993). He distinguishes four kinds of bisexuality: transitional, historical, sequential and concurrent. Bisexuality may, for some, represent an early stage in the process of coming out as gay or lesbian whereas an early gay or lesbian identity might be the first step in coming out as bisexual (transitional). Many people who are now in an exclusive heterosexual or homosexual relationship will have experienced same sex relations in the past (historical). Some will experience relations with both men and women, but with only one gender at any particular time (sequential) whereas others will have relations with both men and women during the same period (concurrent). Ross and Paul (1992) foreground the conflicts (incongruence) that can occur between bisexual identity and behaviour, due to societal stigmatisation. These include: hiding same-sex attraction or exploring bisexuality as a transitional phase to a lesbian or gay identity (defense bisexuality); bisexuality in heterosexual marriages, where heterosexual marriage is promoted as the social norm (married bisexuality); non-heterosexual behaviour which only takes place once or a few times (experimental bisexuality) or where there are no heterosexual outlets, such as prisons or same-sex boarding schools (secondary bisexuality). Both Klein and Ross agree that bisexual identity formation is complex and open-ended and cannot be conceptualised as a linear process with a final outcome, as it had been depicted in developmental models of lesbian and gay identity formation. Neither did the latter account for the differences between male and female non-heterosexual attraction.

There is increasing consensus that gay male and lesbian identity development differs in a number of ways representing a considerable shift from older paradigms of sexual orientation which either refused to acknowledge lesbian existence or assumed that male-male and female-female sexuality were to be regarded as “two sides of the same coin” (Diamond, 2007:144). Suggesting that, for females, the coming out stage of identity development is more likely to be ambiguous and fluid, occurring over a protracted period of time, Schipper (1995:437) states:

The psychological discourse on lesbian sexuality differs from the one about gay male sexuality ... it is of a more exploratory nature.

Gonsiorek (1995:26) has indicated that the coming out process for males appears to be abrupt and is often accompanied by psychological turmoil and other psychiatric symptoms. He suggests that this phenomenon may be explained by an examination of sexual socialisation: in childhood, girls are generally allowed a broader range of behavioural and emotional interactions with other females whereas the gender scripts which boys are encouraged to develop are narrower, generally proscribing prolonged male-male emotional and physical contact as clearly gay and therefore unacceptable.

Diamond (2007) reports that several large-scale studies of adolescent and adult women (Baumeister, 2000; Russell & Consolacion, 2003; Russell & Seif, 2002) have documented that women are more likely to report bisexual attractions than to report exclusive same-sex attractions, whereas for men the opposite seems to apply.

By examining the sexual identities, attractions and behaviours of young sexual minority women, Diamond (2000) has sought to demonstrate that, for women, affectional bonding (romantic love) and sexual desires often coalesce. For this reason, she claims, a woman is more likely, than a man, to say that she has fallen in love with a person rather than a gender.

Brown (1995:4) has demonstrated that a diversity of paradigms arises from definitional questions concerning what a lesbian actually is and who provides the definition. Her own definition (1999:9) is as follows:

a woman whose primary sexual and affectional attractions are to other women and who has a sexual minority identity, that is, recognises through the use of language or symbolic expressions, that her sexual orientation places her apart from the sexual mainstream.

Brown recognises that a woman might not use the term “lesbian”, perhaps preferring the term “gay”, a term sometimes used to refer to same-sex men and women collectively, or “queer”, a contemporary inclusive term arising from postmodern concepts of sexual orientation. By self-identifying, in this way, it can be seen that women are seeking to regain control over who defines what a lesbian is and, at the same time, seeking to over-ride dominant cultural definitions which convey direct or indirect inferences of deficiency and deviance. To demonstrate that overt sexual behaviour is only one of several possible aspects of female-female attraction, Rich (1986:15) prefers the use of the term “lesbian existence” or “lesbian continuum”. Here, female-female affection, bonding and the valuing of other women are all included as factors which constitute what it is to be a lesbian. Rich demonstrates that all women are subject to a patriarchal ideology of “compulsory heterosexuality”, which argues that heterosexuality not only describes sexual desires, orientations and practices but functions as a “political organisation” to assure “male right of physical, economic and emotional access” (Rich, 1986:23). By assuming that most women are innately heterosexual, and marginalising lesbian existence as less “natural”, Rich argues that women are subjected to a form of enslavement. She outlines the characteristics of male power which include denying women of their own sexuality, forcing male sexuality upon women, using women as objects in male transactions and stifling female

creativity. Rich also disputes the conventional linking of male and female same-sex attraction, maintaining that, as female experience is completely different to male experience, it may be that lesbian women have more in common with heterosexual women than with gay men.

Gonsoriek (1995:28) writes about the dichotomous “tyranny” of biological, psychodynamic and “stage” developmental models which insist that sexual orientation should be interpreted as one or the other for life but not allowing for variation at different points of the life cycle, therefore woefully failing to represent lesbian identity development adequately. The heterosexual experiences of women who come to identify as lesbian later in life, for example, have been traditionally defined, by such models, as denial or repression of same-sex attraction. Brown (1995) argues for the need for new biopsychosocial models which enable a better understanding of female sexual identity development as the products of interactions between humans and both physical and emotional environmental contexts. Using dynamical systems theory, taken from mathematics and physics, Diamond (2007) seeks to represent female same-sex sexuality, in a non-linear way. Dynamical systems theory seeks to explain how complex patterns emerge, stabilize, change and restabilize over time and Diamond applies this by looking at her respondents’ “self-organisation” and the “phase shifts” which occur during their life trajectories over a ten year period of study in an American context. The developmental pathways that emerge are shaped and reshaped by diverse interactions between individuals and their changing environments rather than the uniform trajectories with predictable outcomes, which might be expected from more conventional developmental approaches. The need to look at individual trajectories, rather than trying to extrapolate generalisations from clinical observations, is highlighted by Diamond’s usage of the two technical concepts of equifinality, where two individuals reach the same outcome via different routes, and multifinality, where the two individuals have the same starting point but follow different developmental trajectories reaching different outcomes (heterosexual/homosexual). By moving beyond limitations imposed by dominant cultural norms and developing a paradigm which is based on the diversity and variability of lesbian experiences, across time and culture, Diamond is employing a multi-dimensional way of examining female sexuality.

Towards Multi-Dimensionality: Trajectories and Milestones

To depict sexuality as fixed, bifurcated states of sexual orientation, and to ignore the fact that erotic preference is labile and interpenetrated by elements of physicality, emotion and fantasy is to impede and even to misdirect research. (De Cecco, 1981:5).

Recognising that theory and research concerning sexual orientation had been limited in its scope, particularly relating to bisexuality, due to definitional problems and bias arising from deriving norms from clinical populations, Klein (1985) developed the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) to better demarcate the complexities of human sexuality and to demonstrate that sexual orientation needed to be described within a dynamic and multi-variate framework. The KSOG depicted in Figure 2.1 was composed of seven variable dimensions of sexual orientation: sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference and Hetero/Gay lifestyle. Respondents were asked to rate these according to past, present or ideal using a scale (1-7) which extended the Kinsey Heterosexual Homosexual Scale (KHHS, Kinsey et al. 1948):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other sex only	Other sex mostly	Other sex somewhat more	Both sexes equally	Same sex somewhat more	Same sex mostly	Same sex only

Figure 2-1: Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) Source: Klein, Sepekoff & Wolf (1985)

By focussing on specific life situations Klein *et al.* (1985) sought to recognise the unique nature of bisexual experiences rather than grouping these as homosexual, as Johnson and Masters (1979) had done when employing the Kinsey scale. In this way, Klein *et al.* (1984) sought to collect the “master narratives” of identity development, constructed by lesbians and bisexuals, as well as gay men, rather than disregarding these as unwanted “noise” in the data of normative sexual identity development. The model enabled Klein *et al.* to study relationships among the independent variables of gender, age and self-label, related to the three scales of past, present and ideal. A variety of statistical tools were used, thereby enabling the identity development patterns to be analysed systematically. Above all this study demonstrated the transitional nature of bisexuality as there was a significant trend of bisexuals moving towards a more exclusively same-sex orientation over a period of time and, in some cases, lesbian/gay identifying people moving away from exclusive same-sex attraction. The importance of the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid cannot be underestimated, in terms of encouraging researchers to consider multidimensional approaches to the study of sexuality.

I tend to agree with Savin-Williams (2005) who makes the important point that, as little is known about same-sex attracted identity formation, it is “irresponsible to propose a

comprehensive theory". Instead, he formulates what he refers to as a "differential developmental trajectories" framework, which I adopt in my own analysis. These terms are defined as follows:

Differential refers to the variability inherent within and across individuals.

Development signifies the milestones and processes that occur across the life course.

Trajectories indicate the probabilistic individual pathways that occur through time and space. (Savin-Williams, 2005:83).

In this framework, Savin-Williams seeks to cast away three primary assumptions, remaining from earlier essentialist models: (1) life progresses along an orderly series of sequential stages, (2) complex and diverse elements of human development should be disregarded or rendered "idiosyncratic" by normative notions of identity formation, and (3) generalised trends can be extrapolated from research data based on a population of highly selective, and possibly unrepresentative LGB adolescents (i.e. those who self-identify as gay/lesbian/bisexual). Savin-Williams (2005) notes that in some biological, psychological and social aspects of their developmental trajectories LGB adolescents are similar to all other adolescents but in other ways, perhaps due to biological/constitutional influences as well as cultural heterocentrism, LGB young people's psychological development could be distinctive. It is most important, therefore, Savin-Williams argues, to look at similarities and differences between the differential, developmental trajectories of LGB teenagers alongside those of others teenagers. It is also important, he adds, to realise that LGB young people, themselves, are heterogeneous and that more attention needs to be paid to the diversity amongst LGB young people as well as the uniqueness of individual developmental trajectories.

2.2.2 Psychological adjustment and maladjustment

A further focus for more recent studies of LGB identity formations has been psychological well-being. Kahn (1991) suggests that for LGB people to successfully achieve a synthesis between self-acceptance and sexual behaviour, they must first deal with their internal negative feelings and self-concepts, which mirror perceptions of how others will react to their same-sex sexuality. The internal conflict which often results has been classified as internalised homophobia and is said to be characterised by poor self-esteem, a sense of shame, increased depression, poor ego strength and increased anxiety. The findings of Rowen and Malcolm (2002) demonstrated a correlation between higher levels of internalised homophobia and the lower stages of homosexual identity formation. This internalised homophobia, often characterised by self-loathing,

was significantly related to low levels of self-esteem, low levels of self-concepts of physical appearance and emotional stability and to higher levels of sex guilt, the latter defined by Rowen and Malcolm (2002:80) as “an avoidance motivation that defends an individual’s self-esteem from behaviours that transgress internalised standards”.

As the effects of internalised homophobia can be profound, it is not surprising that there have been a number of studies that have sought to investigate the relationship between internalised homophobia, homosexual identity formation and dimensions of self-concept, including self-esteem. Halpin and Allen (2004) sought to examine a range of social, psychological and emotional factors associated with the coming-out processes of 425 males, aged 12 to 64 years (mean 29.2 years). In conjunction with Cass’s model of homosexual identity formation, a range of measures were used to determine correlations between stages of gay identity development and psychosocial well-being, including the Happiness-Sadness Scale (McGreal & Joseph, 1993), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffiths, 1985), the Index of Self-Esteem (Hudson, 1982) and the Gay Identity Questionnaire (Brady & Busse, 1994). The findings of Rowen and Malcolm (2002), establishing a direct correlation between higher levels of internalised homophobia and the lower stages of homosexual identity formation were not confirmed by Halpin and Allen. Instead, the six sequential stages of homosexual identity formation were associated with a U-shaped function for the psychosocial variables; there were fairly high levels of self-comfort established at the beginning of the process, during the Identity Confusion and Comparison stages but this was followed by far less degrees of self-comfort during the Identity Tolerance and Acceptance stages. Unsurprisingly, the highest levels of self-comfort were experienced during the final stages of Identity Pride and Synthesis.

Recent studies have demonstrated that internalised homophobia is a substantial part of a larger process of psychological cognitive dissonance which emerges from conflicts between self-identity and stigmatised societal images of same-sex attracted people during the process of identity formation. Wright and Perry (2006) have labelled this inner turmoil as *sexual identity distress* and have sought to examine the ways in which this psychological upheaval can also affect a person’s physical health status. Their study of 156 LGB young men and women, from a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, sought to examine sexual identity distress, in the early phases of “coming out” and its relationship to drug and alcohol use, psychological distress and risky patterns of sexual behaviour. Many developmental studies have demonstrated that, during the early and middle stages of the coming out process, the developmental challenges for the majority of LGB youth are two-fold: (1) to define, clarify and adapt emotionally to their self-identity as LGB and (2) to establish and develop a social

network which includes individuals – both gay and non-gay – who are supportive of their sexual identity (Cass, 1979, 1990; Hetrick & Martin, 1987; Troiden, 1979, 1990).

Wright and Perry (2006) demonstrated a correlation between the amount of sexual identity distress experienced by the individual (the negative identity-related feelings associated with being LGB) and the nature of her/his social support network. The results indicate that sexual identity distress is often associated with psychological turmoil, during identity confusion and comparison, and during this period there is less frequent use of alcohol and drug-taking. Sexual identity distress diminishes as the LGB person's youth support network develops and connections to the LGB community increases. However, the development of this support network will inevitably provide more opportunities for romantic and sexual relationships and this will often mean visiting popular LGB pubs and clubs. Therefore, Wright and Perry's study demonstrates that the reduction of sexual identity distress, as the LGB person enters the identity tolerance and acceptance stages, is often associated with increased use of alcohol and illegal drugs as well as more sexual risk-taking. In demonstrating the interplay between the social and psychological dimensions of the coming out process, Wright and Perry demonstrate that it is not enough to consider the effects of internalised homophobia, when devising risk behaviour prevention strategies. Recent studies such as that of Wright and Perry, demonstrate the urgent need to research the development of LGB identity formation within contemporary cultural contexts which take into consideration both social and psychological factors.

Researchers and clinicians interested in human sexual identity development have long recognised the impact of social stigma on the psychological adjustment of LGB people. Goffman's classic study (1963) analyses the effects of stigma on the interactions occurring between social actors and their various audiences. Goffman (1963:57) divides those affected by social stigma into two categories: the *discredited*, whose "spoiled identity" is known and recognised by others, and the *discreditable*, whose identity is recognised by the stigmatised individual but not by others. For those who have a "discreditable stigma" there is a gap between an individual's front-stage persona and back stage identity – between one's *virtual social identity*, which is governed by normative societal expectations (what we are *expected* to be like) and one's *actual social identity*. By adolescence, many LGB young people will be socialised into a *discredited* position before they have fully learnt and incorporated the normative heterosexual standards against which they "fall short" (Goffman 1963:46). The awareness of stigma which emerges ranges from "self-stigma", associated with personal feelings of guilt and shame, to "courtesy stigma", in which social stigma can spread from those immediately affected to those connected with the stigmatised, such

as family and friends. To avoid the dramaturgical shift from being *discreditable* to becoming *discredited*, according to Goffman, the stigmatised individual will adopt a variety of stigma-management strategies in order to present him or herself as an “ordinary” person though this will not necessarily mean misrepresentation through a performance of concealment strategies: making a secret of what they perceive to be their “failings”. The visibility management of a personal stigma could include disguising one’s social identity (*passing*), dissociating with stigma (*denying*), minimising stigma (*normalising*) and managing stigma (*coping*) (Goffman, 1963:125). Whilst employing these strategies, the skilful performer is sensitive to hints from the audience that his or her performance may be unacceptable or unbelievable and modify his performance accordingly.

Frost and Bastone (2007) provide a review of researcher responses to the concept of stigma concealment and its consequences. They prefer the term “concealable stigma” to “concealed stigma” because it implies that, although some LGB individuals can choose whether to make their sexual identities visible, through disclosure, “not all GLB individuals choose, are able or want, to conceal their stigmas” (Frost & Bastone, 2007:29). Smart and Wegner (2000) demonstrate that when individuals from stigmatised groups, such as LGB youth, are able to conceal their stigmas and choose to do so, the negative effects are often long-term and include impaired relations with others, a preoccupation with the stigmatised identity and damaged self-esteem. Further, Frable, Platt and Hoey (1998) earlier demonstrated that students with concealable stigmas (LGB identities, eating disorders, victims of sexual assault, an annual household income under \$25,000) reported significantly higher incidents of anxiety, depression and low self-esteem than students with visible stigmas (members of racial/ethnic groups, obese and physical deformities). In addition, Savin-Williams (1994) has demonstrated that there is a correlation between those LGB students who chose not to conceal their identities, or were unable to, and school-related problems such as bullying, high rates of absenteeism and corresponding mental health problems.

2.2.3 Self-Presentation

Goffman (1969:203) has demonstrated how the effects of stigma can be mitigated through careful management of the impressions which are conveyed to others entailing the skilful use of *verbal* aspects of language such as words and phrases and *non-verbal* aspects such as gestures, voice and facial expressions to maintain coherent individual and group identity representations. In this way, Goffman has developed a dramaturgical framework which examines social life using an extended metaphor of

the theatre, analysing human interaction in terms of acting roles and scripts, acts and scenes, front stage impressions and back stage realities. According to Goffman (1969:45), performances of a routine during group interaction are often *idealised*: “socialised, moulded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented”. A stigmatised group of individuals may seek to exemplify the officially accredited values of a society, through their interactional performances, in this way. On the other hand, they may seek to assert, reaffirm or rejuvenate their own reverse values as a means of developing high in-group solidarity through “collective frontal representation” (Goffman 1969:37). For group impression management to be successful, Goffman (1969:39) maintains, there must be consistency between three parts of the social front: *setting* (sensitivity to environment and audience), *appearance* (physical stimuli indicating formal or informal “ritual state”) and *manner* (stimuli indicating the interactional role the performer expects to play). Any contradictions of these elements, such as inopportune intrusions or unmeant gestures, are potential sources of dissonance, embarrassment, and possible rejection. Individuals and groups, therefore, need to act with “dramaturgical discipline” (Goffman 1969:210) involving “self-control”, “presence of mind” and considerable circumspection.

The management of impressions, which positively influence an audience’s response to an “actor” is, therefore, key to a desired “presentation of the self” (Goffman: 1969). Schlenker (2003: 492) has defined *Impression Management* as: “The goal directed activity of controlling information in order to influence the impressions formed by an audience”. He differentiates between *self-expression*, which is authentic, spontaneous and originates internally and *self-presentation*, which is inauthentic and influenced by social pressures from outside the actor. In this sense, the pressures of “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich: 1986) might seem so overwhelming that an LGB young person might feel compelled to “hide” his or her same-sex attraction and “pass” as heterosexual which could be seen as intentionally deceitful. Schlenker (2003:507) comments: “The ability to deceive may be an important component of social power and social acceptance”.

Schlenker (2003:498) represents self-presentation as “a transaction between self and audience in a particular social context”. Self-presentation can be seen as *automatic*, occurring outside conscious awareness with little cognitive effort needed, or *controlled*, where the actor adopts particular verbal and non-verbal strategies in order to construct and protect the desired identity. In answer to the question “How do people want others to see them?”, Schlenker (2003:498) identifies two approaches: firstly “self-consistency” (others will see you as you see yourself) and secondly “self-glorification”

(others will recognise your qualities as socially desirable). People who identify with a “spoiled identity” (Goffman 1963:57) will need to give very careful consideration to their self-presentations, especially if that identity is stigmatised as none gender-normative.

Butler (1990:174) has demonstrated how gender normativity is policed by a gender hierarchy (a “heterosexual matrix”) which naturalises the categories of biological sex (male/female), gender (masculinity and femininity) and sexuality (sexual attraction and behaviour). For heterosexuality to remain intact, as a distinct social form, Butler (1997:248) argues that it needs taboos such as same-sex attraction which it can prohibit:

Heterosexuality is cultivated through prohibitions, and these prohibitions take as one of their objects homosexual attachments

Becoming a “man” or a “woman” and repudiating the qualities of the opposite sex is seen here as a cultural “heterosexualisation of sexual desire” rather than the product of biological essence. Butler (1990:xv) examines the repetition of verbal and non-verbal stylized acts which maintain the cultural coherence of these gendered categories (sex, gender and sexuality), practices which she refers to as “gender performativity”:

Performativity is not a single act but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalisation in the context of a body, understood in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.

Following Foucault’s study of discipline and punishment (1979), Butler does not believe that these constructions are a voluntary choice: they are determined by “regulative discourses”, acting as disciplinary mechanisms which coerce subjects to perform stylised actions, determining what is socially permissible and what appears as coherent or “natural”. Instead of being the “doer behind the deed”, Butler (1990:178) claims that the performative actor is constituted through the repetition of these stylised acts:

This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation.

Distinguishing between sex and gender, Butler (1990:164) identifies a generalisation of the human “body” which seems to pre-exist the acquisition of a sexed significance, and which “often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as “external” to that body”. The “body”, according to Butler (1990:13), is a construction, just like the gendered terms “man” and “woman” which she prefers to see as verbs (naturalised gendered processes) rather than nouns. Polarised philosophical debates about whether this identity construction is determined or a product of free will are, in themselves, products of a hegemonic cultural discourse which sets limits:

These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on discourse structures that appear as the language of universal rationality.

Paradoxically, according to Butler (1990:187), identity politics such as feminism and LGB activism, which seek to empower and liberate, have actually reinforced the naturalised binary gender classifications (man/woman; heterosexual/homosexual) which have constituted gender inequalities in the first place. In this sense, heterosexual signifying practices have constituted LGB identities. Employing Foucault’s repressive hypothesis, she points to the ability of dominant hegemonic discourses to appropriate and contain subversion. The way forward, Butler (1990:187) claims, is to “trouble” (disrupt) the signifying practises which naturalise the sex/gender distinction by facilitating a “radical proliferation” of gender configurations:

The loss of gender norms would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilising substantive identity, and depriving the naturalising narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: “man” and “woman”.

Butler (1990:174) demonstrates how this disruption can take place through the cultural practices of drag, the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities and cross-dressing. Such practices as drag and cross-dressing need not be seen as degrading to women, Butler argues. She demonstrates (1990:175) that drag, in particular, represents a “dissonance” between the anatomy of the actor and the gender being represented by the performance: “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.”

Butler suggests that heterosexualised identities can only be disrupted through gender parody or an uncritical heterosexual appreciation of sex role stereotyping

(Butch/Femme). Lasser and Wicker (2007:103) , however, seek to demonstrate that LGB youth can control the visibility of their identities in a wide variety of situations and not all of these young people will present identity performances which will collude with heterosexist expectations. They examine how Texan LGB identifying adolescents choose to conceal or make visible their sexual identities through verbal and non-verbal means. Lasser and Tharinger (2003: 233) define Visibility Management (VM) as:

The dynamic, ongoing process by which GLB youth make careful, planned decisions about whether they will disclose their sexual orientation and, if they decide to disclose, to whom and how they disclose and how they continue to monitor the presentation of their sexual orientation in different environments.

It is about “the regulation of an invisible orientation in a potentially hostile social environment” (Lasser & Wicker 2007:105) and, as such, represents a subset of Impression Management: the management of pro-social impressions. In the case of LGB youth, it is concerned with minimising harm, rejection and possible stigmatisation. Lasser and Wicker (2007:105) recognise that VM is a non-linear, dynamic process which is situation-specific but have found utility in some aspects of developmental stage models such as those of Cass (1979), Coleman (1990) and Troiden (1990). They recognise that the degree to which one allows a stigmatised sexual orientation to be visible can have a profound impact on many aspects of a person’s physical and emotional well-being and can have a significant effect on interpersonal relationships and general quality of life.

In this study, LGB youth are seen as leading two parallel lives: one in which they explore their own internal feelings and sexual identity and another in which they operate inside the confines of societal norms. VM is concerned with bringing about an integrative consistency between the inner (private) and the outer (public) selves thereby conceptualizing the relationship between LGB students and their social environment. Lasser and Wicker identify several multiple VM strategies on a continuum ranging from least restrictive use of strategies (high visibility) through to the most restrictive acts such as “acting straight” or passing (pretending to be heterosexual). Medium level VM strategies include selective verbal disclosure (telling some whilst withholding LGB identity from others) and solicitation of social information (“testing the water” before making visible).

Lasser and Wicker’s study is primarily concerned with non-verbal VM strategies, however, including using the “body as a message board” (dressing in ways that are perceived to be “gender-typical”, or deliberately choosing not to) and using silence,

especially when feeling that one is being managed by others (for example, when others are trying to manage your sexual identity – referred to as “VM by proxy”). This study demonstrated that the use of VM strategies increases the likelihood of victimisation, especially in schools, but participants generally felt that the benefits of high visibility (greater congruity between private and public selves) far outweighed the disadvantages. Lasser and Wicker recognise that VM strategies are skills which need to be learned, with all the educational implications which that entails.

Lasser (2005:44) identifies some of the way that an understanding of VM can assist the work of school psychologists and counsellors who can help LGB youth to navigate social worlds by working through a cost-benefits analysis of the risks involved in various types of disclosure. There is, however, only an implicit recognition that not all GLB adolescents will become quickly adept at VM management. Some students will be able to “hide” their LGB status more easily than others, if they appear to conform to gender expectations; some LGB youth will quickly become “high self-monitoring individuals” (Synder 1974:526), who are able to easily identify appropriate opportunities for disclosure, whereas others will be “low self-monitoring individuals” who will find this much more difficult. By working together, however, teachers, counsellors and students can address visibility issues at individual, family, school and community levels.

Lasser, Ryser and Price (2010) have sought to develop a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Visibility Management Scale (LGB-VMS) using a web-based questionnaire survey with 28 items, including some items from an Ability to Modify Self-Presentation scale (Lennox & Wolfe: 1984), based on a revision of Synder’s (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale. These seek to examine how participants use active behaviours (facilitating disclosure) and inhibiting behaviours (limiting disclosure) and the different social settings in which these behaviours are used. The pilot has elicited responses from 86 females and 38 males with a wide age-range (18-65 years) identifying as Bisexual (15%), Gay (32%) and Lesbian (53%). Psychometric analysis, using a range of statistical techniques has been used to demonstrate correlations and differences between the active and inhibiting behaviours used by participants. When developed further, it will be of particular interest to future researchers and psychologists and may provide counsellors with a starting point when they are working with LGB youth who wish to disclose. The LGB-VMS scale does not take much account of the ways in which other people, such as family members, peers and teachers can control the visibility of LGB youth, however.

I believe that an understanding of Visibility Management could have profound implications for all who are involved with the education of LGB youth. In particular,

teacher-training in Visibility Management could have a fundamental role in two main ways. It could enable schools to erode heterosexist assumptions through a re-examination of policies, procedures and practices and help the bridging of family and school life, when teachers, counsellors and other professionals are helping families to meet the needs of their LGB sons and daughters.

Much, if not all, of the research which I have reviewed in this chapter has assumed that experiences for young people who are developing a self-awareness of same-sex attraction are likely to be negative but this is not necessarily the case. Savin-Williams (2005) suggests that many LGB young people are now able to achieve academically and lead happy, fulfilling lives whilst maintaining a publicly visible LGB persona with many of the people with whom they interact despite running the risk of a variety of negative reactions including hostility, rejection and revulsion. The concept of resilience is defined by Masten (2003:4) as “patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity”. Kaplan (2006:39) recognises the “complexities, contradictions and ambiguities” between such a deceptively simple term but recognises that a general consensus exists that:

Resilience rests upon the idea of achievement of positively (or the avoidance of negatively) valued outcomes in circumstances where adverse outcomes would normally be expected (Kaplan 2005:39).

Originating in the field of psychiatric risk research, notions of resilience enable a deeper understanding of personal identity formation by examining the proportion of risk, vulnerability and protective factors which exist in a young person’s life. In the study of adaptation to life stresses, therefore, resilience defines the ability to withstand and recover from hardship due to the protection of an armoury of protective factors which an individual is able to employ. Masten and Garmezy (1985:49) have described three major categories of protective factors which are often developed during adolescence: *individual attributes* such as good intellectual skills, positive temperament and high levels of self-esteem; *family qualities* such as high levels of cohesion, expectations and positive involvement in the young person’s development; *supportive systems outside the family* such as strong social networks and school systems. Rutter (1987:317) reminds us that resilience is a process which emerges during the negotiation of risk situations and that resilient qualities are variable depending on the individual and the particular risks being faced: a particular individual might appear to be very resilient when faced with an academic challenge (risk variable) but lacking resilience, the next day, when faced with an interpersonal challenge, such as meeting new people.

Masten (2003:6) identifies some of the “psychosocial competencies” which can result from high levels of personal resilience, including: academic achievement, effective peer relationships and rule-abiding, compliant behaviour. Philips (1968:3) states that these competencies are, in effect, societal measures of adolescent effectiveness which are underpinned by ideological expectations:

The key to the prediction of future effectiveness in society lies in asking “How well has the person met, and how well does he now meet, the expectations implicitly set by society for individuals of his age and sex groups?”

In addition to the academic, social and rule-abiding competencies outlined above, Masten (2003:5) also adds two key criteria of adult competence, romantic and work competencies, which are just beginning to become important to adolescents as they make the transition into adulthood. Seeking once again to challenge deficit models of children developing “under the threat of disadvantage and adversity”, Masten (2001:227) concludes that resilience often arises from *ordinary magic*. This idea suggests that many individuals who are only equipped with the “normative functions of human adaptational systems” are able to demonstrate high levels of resistance, recovery and coping strategies when faced with risk challenges. She proposes a resilience framework for policy and practice which seeks to achieve positive outcomes by promoting competencies, assets and protective factors rather than focussing on risk factors, vulnerabilities and other negative indicators (Masten, 2003:17).

2.3 Schooling Identities

Throughout much of the twentieth century, same-sex attraction has been widely regarded as an adult phenomenon. Adolescents have often been regarded as uniformly heterosexual, therefore, and youthful same-sex attraction has been regarded as “part of the transient experimentation typical of early adolescence” (Moore & Rosenthal, 1993:103). Savin-Williams comments on the heterosexual presumption which assumes that all young men and women will have a heterosexual orientation. Social institutions such as families and schools are grounded in this notion, often enforcing the invisibility of LGB young people and these normative values will be reinforced through interpersonal relationships with peers:

Most youth are raised in heterosexual families, associate in heterosexual peer groups, and are educated in heterosexual institutions. Youth who are not heterosexual often feel they have little option except to pass as “heterosexual normal”. The fact that they must hide their sexual orientation makes it assume a global significance to them considerably beyond necessary proportions. (Savin-Williams, 1990:1)

Plummer (1989:202) has identified four mechanisms which organise the lives of young people around heterosexual assumptions: (a) a “hidden curriculum”, which communicates a message about clearly defined gender roles and the centrality of normalised heterosexual values, including family life, (b) the absence of visible LGB role models, (c) the organisation of peer relations according to a heterosexual matrix, and (d) the homophobic coercion, control and punishment of those who “step over the line”. Hay (1997) examines the ways in which girls, in a British secondary school context, construct heterosexual identities through all female social networks and, in particular, through relationships with a female “best friend”. Hay (1997:114) maintains that often girls do experience their “best friend” relationships as a passion and the term “lesbian” is used as a control mechanism. In this way, a “best friend” female relationship is equated to a marriage (and messy divorce when things go wrong).

Coward (1997:65) comments:

The central premises of girls’ friendship are: reliability, reciprocity, commitment, confidentiality, trust and sharing. The repertoire of emotions that are provoked if these rules are broken are as powerfully felt and as dramatic as those that have characteristically been claimed as the sole prerogative of sexualised relations.

Duncan (2004) has demonstrated how heterosexuality and popularity are constructed as vital factors in the school-based relationships of young women. He charts a shift from the dyadic same-sex relationships described above to a more fluid and strategic network of relationships located within the context of heteronormativity. For the “popular” girls, this shift from a homosocial “best friend” relationship to a network of female heterosocial friendships occurs as these girls move from primary to secondary school and the reward is social power and a high status within the social life of the school. The girls in Duncan’s study comment on how their social world is characterised by sexual competition, sometimes linked to physical violence, and the agreed points of conflict in their interactions are centred around the ownership or desire of boys. The “unpopular” girls who are excluded from this heteronormative world often continue

with close, dyadic “best friend” relationships which are seen by other girls as a barrier to social mobility. In these highly competitive gendered school communities, there is an intolerance of diversity leading to bullying and the oppression of minorities and in this way, heteronormativity is linked to social oppression. The students in Duncan’s (2004:145) study acknowledge that the power of these “popular” girls is such that, if they wish, they are able to “ostracize, traduce or even have beaten up, girls who challenge them”, often resulting in the “unpopular” girls refusing to attend school or a request to transfer schools.

Building on Rich’s concept of “compulsory heterosexuality”, Pascoe (2007:86) examines the “constellation of sexualised practices, discourses and interactions” which construct, control and regulate gender identities in an American high school. She demonstrates how school competition rituals are used to posit heterosexuality as central to adolescent notions of masculinity. Male same-sex attraction, on the other hand, is paraded as grotesque, weak and entirely undesirable. In this way, Pascoe demonstrates, male dominance and female submission are maintained. Kimmel and Mahler (2003) argue that homophobia amongst adolescents is far less about an irrational fear or hatred of gay people or the fear that one might actually be gay or have gay tendencies, and more about the fear that heterosexuals have that they might be perceived as gay or lesbian (e.g. a failed man or woman). Herek (1990) maintains that homophobia and anti-gay violence is a logical extension of heterosexism, which is an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatises any non-heterosexual forms of behaviour or identity. As researchers seek to deconstruct this concept of heterosexist homonegativity, however, Connell (1995:76) warns about the dangers of producing over-simplistic character typologies of masculinity.

To avoid this over-simplification, Connell (1995:76) has provided the concept of multiple masculinities which recognises the dynamic interplay between gender, race and class. Connell examines one particular form of masculinity (“hegemonic masculinity”) referring to the cultural dynamic by which a particular group asserts the right to take a leading position socially. Hegemony, Connell demonstrates, is culturally acceptable and linked to a gendered hierarchical matrix which positions heterosexual masculinity and gay male sexuality as opposite poles of social acceptability. There are gradations of hegemony, as different styles of masculinity become ascendant or dominant in different situations, and Connell (1995:81) identifies two main types of heterosexual-gay hegemonic relationships: in the first type, the domination and subordination of gay males is mediated and in the second, heterosexual males are complicit in the marginalization of gay males due to social authorization. In this way,

hegemonic masculinity produces definitions of “normal” and “ordinary” male behaviour.

Connell (1995:85) examines the ways in which notions of masculinity are now shifting, because of “crisis tendencies” such as changing attitudes towards sexual freedom, inequality and men’s rights in marriage. He examines three types of hegemonic “disruption”: *Power relations*, representing a collapse of the legitimacy of male-female patriarchal power, *Production relations*, in which the patriarchal control of wealth is disrupted by women and gay males benefiting from employment changes, and *Relations of cathexis*, in which the patriarchal prohibition of emotional attachment is disrupted by the growing acceptability and stability of lesbian and gay sexuality as a viable alternative to heterosexuality. Hayward and Mac an Ghail (1996:59) seek to critically examine the ways in which schools exist as “masculinity-making devices” and argue that it is time to “destabilize the assumed naturalness and inevitability of sex/gender schooling regimes”.

Sexuality Education

By an examination of policies, procedures and practises, it is possible to deconstruct the ways in which heteronormative sexuality is schooled. Since 2000, primary and secondary schools in the UK have been required to have an up-to-date policy for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) which is made available for Ofsted Inspectors and parents. This policy must outline the school’s sex and relationship education programme, describe how SRE is provided, nominate who is responsible for providing it and explain how it is monitored and evaluated. The definition of SRE provided in the Sex and Relationship Education Guidance document from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE 2000:5) clearly illustrates the value-driven organizing principles which must underpin the teaching of SRE:

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

This policy, which was clearly driven by the central Government agenda of its time, demonstrates the ways in which schools as social microcosms are expected to play an active part in exerting strong pressures which require conformity to normative practices. In this way, a particular form of relationship is privileged which is

heterosexual, monogamous and reproductive. As well as marginalising LGB students, these assumptions also privilege heterosexual teachers who are afforded a socially sanctioned status. As Epstein and Johnson (1998: 122) have identified, Personal Social Health Education teachers are cast as “moral guardians, setting an example and regulating youthful sexualities”. Non-normative sexual identity is labeled as “sexual orientation” which is equated with “sexual activity”, with no sense of LGB identity encompassing wider lifestyle aspects including attitudes, feelings and perspectives. Indeed, LGB identity issues are rendered invisible and silent by a heterosexual imperative proscribing against the “promotion” of these non-normative values, echoing the sentiments of Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act which was to remain in force until July 2003.

The DfEE (2000) guidance recommends that Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) should complement National Curriculum Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching on the human reproductive system, contraception, fertility and hormones. It also recommends that SRE should be incorporated in a wider programme of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). PSHE is a framework linked to the National Healthy School Standard programme, which is designed to promote pupils’ good health and well-being in British schools. Alongside SRE, this programme includes information on alcohol, drugs and tobacco, citizenship, emotional health and well-being, nutrition and personal finance. The National Curriculum PSHE Programme of Study issued by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2007:245), revises the earlier SRE guidance stating that students should learn to “accommodate diversity in all its forms”, and “recognize that there are similarities as well as differences between people of different race, religion, culture, ability or disability, gender, age or **sexual orientation**” (2007: 245) (my emphasis). At the time of data-collection, however, the aforementioned (2000) SRE guidance mentioned above was still in place. Epstein and Johnson (1998:93) comment on the consequent “closeting” of sexuality in school culture partly founded on the belief that sexuality is an “adult” affair which young people should be protected from, especially if the sexualities in question are non-normative:

The closet is based in part on ignorance and especially on the presumption, active in a million ways, that sexual desire is or ought to be heterosexual.

According to the Department for Education and Employment guidance document (2000:5), SRE is intended to enable students to learn how to “manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively” whilst “developing self-respect and empathy for others”. However, the curriculum contained in this guidance conveys clear messages about delaying sexual activity and practising safe sex, reflecting wider

government concerns about worryingly high levels of teenage pregnancy and HIV infection. Epstein (2003:35) has demonstrated how this predominantly scientific agenda governs teacher-student interaction during sex education classes. She demonstrates the tensions which emerge when education and sexuality come together on a “collision course” (2003:71). The result is a mind-body split which privileges an “ultra-rationalist” approach and fragments emotional aspects:

Marginalised identities, such as those of gay or ethnic minority students, represent the body and desire on the one hand, while dominant identity groups, especially those that are white, male and middle class, represent the mind and reason (Epstein, 2003:71)

In this way, students are presented with a “techno-rational world-view” (Sears, 1992:7) in which the main curriculum focus is on rational decision making and where there is a failure to explore “the eroticism associated with sexuality” (Sears, 1992:18). Fine (1988:49) has identified four main discourses of sexuality which inform debates about sexuality education: sexuality as violence; sexuality as victimisation; sexuality as individual morality and, finally, sexuality as desire which is rarely anything more than “a whisper”. The absence of this “discourse of desire” and the emphasis on biological aspects such as teenage pregnancy and contraception, means that abused and stigmatised young people are unable to engage with emotional and mental health issues. Thus, heterosexuality is further endorsed and LGB students are denied access to basic sex education relevant to their needs. Moreover, the emphasis on HIV and AIDS means that non-heterosexual sexualities are equated with disease creating a culture of anxiety and reinforcing anti-LGB messages.

There are many challenges which face teachers of sexuality education. Allred (2003:80) identifies a conflict between PSHE and the government-led “achievement agenda”, manifested in a relentless regime of exams, tests and league tables; this results in a tension in which sexuality education is seen as vitally important but politically sensitive by many teachers. However, it is afforded very low status, in terms of funding by central government, with obvious consequences for planning and resources. Consequently PSHE often receives little curriculum time, sometimes only afforded a few “timetable collapse” days a year, with limited resources such as videos and external “experts” such as health workers or speakers providing input. In this context, LGB identities will often be rendered marginal within a discourse of “staying safe” (HIV/AIDS awareness). Ellis (2007:17) demonstrates how same-sex attraction is often represented, in secondary school contexts, as following a sequential narrative process:

A familiar narrative pattern of problem (“being gay”) and resolution (“coming out”) with emphasis placed (the obvious pedagogic work is here, of course) on the constraints within which this is acceptable (only in specific spaces such as clubs and bars; only having reached a certain age; only subject to the mirroring of heterosexual norms such as monogamous partnerships; only subject to the “being careful” discourses of sexual health).

Here, Ellis demonstrates how same-sex attraction becomes just another topic in an “issues-driven” curriculum alongside “themes” such as alcohol, drugs, euthanasia and abortion. Often well-meaning attempts to present “positive images” of non-heterosexuality are over-shadowed by discourses of safety which pathologise LGB youth as Others in a heterosexist norm-enforcing process referred to by Ellis (2007:19) as “strategic essentialism”. A pedagogy is needed, Ellis argues, which develops an understanding of how we construct and represent various sexualities, culturally and socially.

Ellis and High (2004) replicated Trenchard and Warren’s 1984 study *Something to tell you* in an attempt to discover whether LGB identifying young people’s perceptions of secondary curriculum and their school experiences had changed since 1984. In particular, respondents were asked whether they felt that sexuality and sexual identity were dealt with in the secondary curriculum, if they found such “mentions” to be helpful and how LGB identifying young people reported their experiences of secondary school, particularly relating to any problems they might have experienced. Trenchard and Warren’s (1984) original study was aimed at LGB identifying young people under the age of 21 years. It summarised the findings of a questionnaire study in which 279 males and 136 females answered questions concerning three key dimensions of their lives: education, employment and social aspects. Ellis and High used a mixed mode of questionnaire distribution (paper and World Wide Web) to replicate this study with 268 males and 115 females. The researchers recognised that, due to the inevitable difficulties posed by accessing a stigmatised group, the “catch-all” nature of this research meant that it was not possible to calculate a response rate and to claim that the findings were, therefore, representative of same-sex attracted youth (nationally or locally in Brighton where the paper-based survey was conducted) or generalisable to that population, a problem which researchers in this area have always encountered.

The comparison of Ellis and High’s findings with those of Trenchard and Warren demonstrates that same-sex attraction was talked about more in 2001 – 58% said that it was not mentioned in any subjects in 1984 compared with only 24% in 2001.

Although there was an increase in the number who found this to be helpful (8% to 17%) there was a significant increase in the number who did not find these “mentions” to be helpful. On comparing 1984 and 2001 responses to the “types of problem encountered in school”, Ellis and High discovered that all of the problems encountered in schools had increased. Participants were asked about feelings of isolation, verbal abuse, physical assault, teasing, being ostracized, feeling pressure to conform and other problems with increased experiences of isolation, verbal and physical abuse being particularly disturbing. Some young people in Ellis and High’s study reported teachers’ comments on the “sinfulness” of same-sex attraction and refusal to mark work which discussed representations of sexuality in any form. Ellis and High concluded that Section 28’s legacy seemed to authorise the opinions of those morally conservative teachers who were less committed to the ideals of LGB social equality.

There has been a considerable body of research to demonstrate the effects of “compulsory heterosexuality” relating to LGB youth who suffer greater victimisation at school than their heterosexual peers (Remafedi, 1987; Olweus, 1992, 1993; Rivers, 1995, 2000, 2001). The effects of this victimisation, along with other factors such as family rejection, problems with self-acceptance during identity formation and rejection from peers and adults, can lead to high levels of risk-taking behaviour, such as drug-taking, promiscuity and prostitution. These often have long-lasting effects on mental health and sometimes result in suicidal attempts or thoughts (suicidal ideation). Educationally, these students are often rejected by their peers and subjected to high levels of verbal and physical abuse resulting in lower than average academic achievements, high rates of absenteeism and truancy and low stay-on rates in post-compulsory education.

One of the consequences of Section 28’s fifteen year legacy was that British researchers needed to build into their data-collection methodology innovative ways of accessing LGB-identifying young people. In the few British studies of LGB victimisation that were carried out in the 1990s, data tends to be adult-based and retrospective. Rivers’ (1995) study focusing on the experiences of lesbians and gay men who were bullied or victimised in school was designed to form part of a larger study which examined the long-term effects of bullying in school upon heterosexual and homosexual men and women. Rivers recruited participants by placing advertisements in the gay press; 44 questionnaires were returned by 37 men and 7 women (average age 31 years, range 19-53). When asked “can you tell me how you were bullied at school?” respondents reported: name-calling (80%), open ridicule by pupils and occasionally teachers (69%), being hit or kicked (59%), having rumours and stories spread about them (55%), being teased (49%) and being ignored/excluded (45%).

Rivers used a modified version of a bullying questionnaire developed by Olweus, a Norwegian authority on the extent, impact and tackling of school bullying, whose work is discussed later in this chapter. Although a retrospective adult study, with a gender imbalance, raising some methodological concerns about memory recall, it was frequently referenced for more mainstream academic and educational audiences in the 1990s (e.g. Douglas, Warwick, Kemp and Whitty, 2001) and played an important role in introducing the work of Olweus to a wider audience. Rivers also points out that recent changes in the law (1998) now permitted sexual relations between two men at 18 years of age (lesbian women had never been legislated against) and newspaper reports were foregrounding the eventual reduction of the gay age of consent to 16 years (with the heterosexual age of consent) which finally occurred in 2000. Given this context, he emphasises the urgent need for schools and further education colleges to instill tolerance in students and provide opportunities for sexuality to be discussed more openly in the curriculum.

In 1996, Mason and Palmer were sponsored by Stonewall, a British professional LGBT lobbying group, to conduct a national crime survey amongst lesbian and gay men in the UK; 4,200 participants completed questionnaires though less than two per cent were under 18 years of age (80 respondents.) They found that lesbian women and gay males under 18 were more vulnerable to homophobic crime than older lesbians and gay males, with 48% reporting physical violence and 90% reporting verbal abuse because of their sexuality. However, both Douglas *et al.* (1997) and Stonewall (1999) report that as few as six per cent of British secondary schools had any policy to deal specifically with homophobic bullying.

Having identified that name-calling was at the top of the list of homophobic victimisation reported by LGB adolescents, studies in the 1990s began to move on from the prevalence of homophobic physical and verbal abuse to consider the meanings attached to this kind of abusive language. In doing so, these studies focused on the main way in which homophobic victimisation constructs school as a frightening and dangerous place to be for LGB students. Thurlow (2001) surveyed the language used by 377 year 9 pupils (aged fourteen to fifteen years) drawn from a convenience sample of five co-educational secondary schools. At the end of a questionnaire, students were asked the following question: "what words do people at school use for slagging someone off? Write down as many words as you can." Respondents were then asked to identify which words were the "worst" ones. In this way, the students were not just reporting the pejoratives but their attitudes toward them. The words were then put into nine semantic categories of nouns and adjectives and software was used to

analyse the findings. From a total of 6,000 pejorative items, ten per cent (590) were regarded as homophobic which was very much smaller than the number of sexist items (28%) but more than the racist items (7%). The homophobic words were found to contain many of the top five taboo words. However, only 28% of the homophobic items were rated as “worst” by the students. This compared interestingly with the racist items where 55% were rated as “worst.” Thurlow was thus able to demonstrate that the homophobic items were, proportionately speaking, not regarded as being nearly as serious. The students reasoned that these were not “bad” words - not like racist words.” Thurlow also observes that most of the homophobic items were male, rather than female (only 14%). In Thurlow’s study, the girls did not rate the homophobic items as seriously as the boys. Further, his study is important in that it shifts the primary focus from the abused to the attitudes and reactions of the abusers.

Athanases and Connor (2008) examined the attitudes of 133 Californian twelve to thirteen-year-olds towards the use of the pejorative expressions “that’s so gay” and “fag”. They found that students disagreed about the meanings and significance of these expressions and placed these student responses on a continuum regarding the expressions as either innocuous banter, generic insult, policing of non-conforming gender identity, speech which may be harmful towards LGB people, whether or not present and, finally, language which is a direct slur against LGB people who are present. Athanases and Connor draw the disturbing conclusions that a lack of educational interventions concerning language and power and the ways in which language can harm has led to student indifference. Overall, students do not appear to understand or care about the implications of saying “that’s so gay!” and “fag” as linked to identity development, pressures of gender conformity, and the developing esteem of LGBT people (Athanases & Connor, 2008:24)

The research of Olweus (1993) added a new dimension to the study of LGB victimisation, within the more general context of sexual bullying: gender conflict governed by power and resistance. Olweus found that boys, in particular, become victims if they are perceived to be physically weaker than their peers (often this is related to sport). The victims are often anxious, insecure, unhappy and distressed people who have low self-esteem. Unwittingly, they are signalling to others that they are to be regarded as inadequate and worthless individuals. Olweus revealed how they become “easy targets” as it is unlikely that they will retaliate if they are attacked or insulted. The bullies, on the other hand, tend to have an aggressive reaction pattern combined (especially in the case of boys) with physical strength. Olweus (1993:32-35) regards bullying as a “component of a more generally anti-social and rule-breaking (“conduct disordered”) behaviour pattern”. The wielding of power, which is so

characteristic of bullying, therefore, represents, in the identity development of these young males, part of the process of becoming a heterosexual male adult. Olweus (1992) demonstrated that the bullies themselves were often highly over-represented in police criminal files, once they had entered adulthood, and that there was a correlation between high levels of bullying and long-term problems, experienced by the victims, resulting in poor self-confidence and depressive tendencies. However, Savin-Williams (2005: 69) reminds researchers that there are confident and resilient young LGB men and women who refuse to be victimised by the bullies. Cockburn (1987:44) states that:

The social construction of gender is riddled with resistance and the resistance is complex. While some boys refuse the macho mode of masculinity and pay the price of being scorned a “wimp” or a “poofter”, others resist the class domination by means of masculine codes.

Duncan (1999) collected data on the sexual bullying of males and females over a seven year period. Data were initially collected from four British co-educational local authority comprehensive schools, all of which were urban, multi-ethnic populations in varying populations and had similar numbers of pupils on roll (between 850 and 1,100 excluding sixth forms). Once exploratory data had been collected from these schools, Duncan collected further data in his workplace school, as a participant observer in Personal Social Health Education lessons and through in-depth individual interviews. To facilitate data collection, Duncan used a series of Q-sort cards. Each card contained a type of behaviour, related to bullying. The items for these Q-sort cards had been generated during the pilot session, when Duncan had asked PSHE students what sorts of behaviour they disliked in the opposite sex.

Duncan was interested in all aspects of sexual bullying: sexist, racist and homophobic. His main focus was on the interface between adolescence, gender, social organisation and educational institutions. He found that sexual abuse was used, particularly by boys, to control and subordinate girls (“slut”, “slag”) but also to oppress “weaker” and subordinate males (“poofter”, “queer”, “gay-boy”). As identified by Olweus, above, the traits of the boys that were singled out for victimisation were often characterised by an artistic temperament, a lack of sporting aptitudes and perhaps an excessive interest in school-work (“teacher’s pet”). In Duncan’s research, where girls were victimised by other girls, it was usually due to gender conflicts over other boys or an attempt to marginalise particular female individuals by breaking up close pair friendships. Where girls became victims of homophobic verbal abuse from boys, it was often, once again, an attempt to split up a relationship between two females, which was not overtly sexual but which became labelled as such, by the perpetrators, as, once again, they

sought to subjugate and control. As Duncan (1990:110) summarises:

The sexual bullying and oppression of young women and weaker males was an attempt to destroy the qualities on offer in alternative socio-sexual arrangements and retain the freedom and power position which the tougher boys had fought for and enjoyed throughout their schooldays.

Bontempo and D'Augelli (2002) refined the correspondence between LGB identity and harassment using data from the 1995 Massachusetts and Vermont Youth Risk Behaviour Survey with 315 of these students, under the age of 21, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Two levels of homophobic victimisation were identified: high and low victimisation. The LGB students who were subjected to high levels of victimisation exhibited behaviour that was seen as more gender atypical, especially boys (e.g. behaviour that was stereotypically seen as more characteristic of the opposite sex) and often these students had "come out" as gay or lesbian at a younger age. The high levels of harassment experienced by these students were greater predictors, according to the report, of future mental health problems, suicidality, substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour in adolescence and beyond, than the lower levels of victimisation experienced by other LGB students who did not exhibit gender atypical behaviour and who had preferred not to disclose their sexual identity.

The 1993 *Report from the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth* recognised that very few schools had specific policies to protect LGB students from anti-gay harassment and that few teachers disciplined students for name-calling and harassment of gay and lesbian staff. In the Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide, released by the US Department of Health and Human Services, the author observed: "Schools do not adequately protect gay youth, with teachers often reluctant to stop harassment or rebut homophobic remarks" (Gibson, 1989:53).

In a British study during which school policies were audited, Douglas, Warwick, Kemp and Whitty (1997) found only six per cent of the schools audited had specific policies to protect LGB students from homophobic victimisation. Gay and lesbian students are required by law, like their peers, to attend state secondary schools or to be educated at home. Those who do go to school are often likely to find themselves in dangerous, unsafe environments. Despite the evidence that was being made available to schools, policies were not in place to protect non-heterosexual students. This research indicated that teacher-training had not been undertaken to enable teachers to ensure their safety. The effects of such victimisation were illustrated in Rivers (2000): a British

study which reported that 72% of victims of homophobic bullying had a history of absenteeism and that four out of five LGB students had left school at the age of sixteen despite having at least five GCSE grades A-C.

As social conditions change, this provides new opportunities for researchers in LGB adolescence to discover how much change is really occurring, in terms of social values, and whether conditions really are much better for young LGBT teenagers in schools and colleges. One research trend in recent years has been to combine educational research with recommendations concerning whole school policy, teacher training and curriculum. Two studies from London University Institute of Education have sought to demonstrate that high levels of LGB victimisation persist: Douglas *et al.* (2001) and Warwick *et al.* (2004). The first of these, Douglas *et al.* (2001), completed whilst Section 28 was still in force, surveyed the responses of 307 head teachers of secondary schools in England and Wales by questionnaire, with a small number of follow-up interviews. Ninety-seven per cent of respondents were aware of instances of general verbal or physical bullying, 82 % were aware of instances of homophobic verbal bullying and 26% were aware of incidents of homophobic physical bullying. Respondents were asked what would hinder their school if they wished to target resources to tackle homophobic bullying. The findings were: parental disapproval (18%) a lack of experienced staff (17%) and a lack of school policy (16%). A number of recommendations resulted which included increasing staff awareness of homophobic language and terms; setting up LGB support groups within schools; providing realistic information about same-sex feelings; providing a referral system for lesbian and gay pupils with problems; re-orienting teacher training and providing training on issues relating to same-sex issues related to same-sex sexuality for practising teachers. As only six per cent of the schools represented in this survey had specific policies concerning LGB students, this was clearly also an area of focus for the report.

Warwick *et al.* (2004) sought to discover the extent and impact of homophobic bullying on pupils, also considering how homophobia and sexual orientation were addressed within the curriculum of the schools and to what extent issues of equity and diversity, in relation to sexual orientation, were addressed within the school workforce and the implications this had for recruitment, retention and promotion. The respondents from this study were key informants from a range of 28 organisations including educational trade unions, the Qualifications and Curriculum Association, Ofsted, DfES and the Health Development Agency, together with organisations concerned with promoting the rights and inclusion of same-sex attracted young people and adults. Interview findings concerning verbal and physical victimisation were very similar to the findings of earlier research indicating that little has changed.

Warwick *et al.* (2004) make a number of recommendations regarding the need for collaboration between key agencies and organisations that work with LGB young people, identifying common principles of effective practice when addressing homophobia in schools, promoting future research, communicating the findings of this research and reviewing and feeding back progress about the new dialogue. In particular, relating to the promotion of future research, the authors recommended that research needs to generate new and reliable knowledge about the extent and impact of homophobic incidents in (and around) schools, to identify what approaches and activities address homophobia most effectively in educational settings (“best practice”) and to identify the extent of homophobic bullying and harassment towards the school workforce and to determine how best this might be tackled in and out of school. Ellis (2007) argues that well-meaning pedagogical and research approaches which solely focus on the need to *protect*, inadvertently continue to pathologise LGB youth, representing them as suffering victims. Instead, he argues for approaches which combine *protecting* with *understanding* LGB youth stating that teachers and researchers need:

to develop and to systematically study interventions that are successful both in terms of tackling bullying and understanding what we mean by sexualities, how we construct sexual identities, socially and culturally, and how we represent them. (Ellis, 2007: 27)

Studies such as *The School Report* (Stonewall, 2007) and *The Prevalence of Homophobia*, (National Union of Teachers, 2009) demonstrate that, as the first decade of the twenty-first century draws to a close, little progress has been achieved. *The School Report* received 1145 responses from young people at secondary school with females representing just under half the respondents. The key findings regarding bullying and the consequences of bullying for LGB students are very similar to the findings identified in the research of Rivers (2001). In addition to the records of verbal, physical and psychological records quantified by Rivers, the Stonewall study adds cyberbullying: bullying that takes place remotely over the Internet using messageboards or Internet social sites such as Bebo, Facebook and Myspace and blog websites. According to *The School Report*, two in five young gay people have experienced cyberbullying and one in five experiences bullying via text messaging, which means that a young person can be bullied even if they are alone at home. Alarmingly, Stonewall reports 58% of LGB young people who experience bullying in post Section 28 Britain still fail to report it. Telling a teacher does not improve matters 62% of the time. Of the teachers surveyed in the National Union of Teachers (NUT)

survey of teachers in Liverpool and Lancashire, 88% (Liverpool) and 39% (Lancashire) believe that Homophobia is a serious issue demanding action whilst only 42% (Liverpool) and 39% (Lancashire) believe that their school is vigorously addressing homophobia. The abovementioned reports signal, more than anything else, the need for contemporary educational research, concerning the experiences of LGB teenagers and teachers in schools and further education colleges which combines classroom-based research, involving the students themselves as respondents, with recommendations for practice.

Writing about the increased visibility of LGBT issues in the public consciousness Uribe (1995:203) asserts that:

As one of the major institutions in society, the education system is facing one of its biggest challenges – the acknowledgement of gay and lesbian youth as a significant part of the school population.

The revision of the Single Equality Duty 2010 requires schools and further education colleges to monitor LGB victimisation in school, in the same way as the first version of the Single Equality Duty (2007) required them to monitor and alleviate the impact of sexism, racism and disablism. I agree with Mitchell *et al.* (2008:13) that an absence of LGB school data has meant that LGB invisibility and victimisation has been perpetuated. Reminding us that heterosexuality has always been in the public domain, Mitchell *et al.* (2008:14) demonstrate how reliable statistical data needs to enable LGB people to move from invisibility to privacy and ultimately full visibility

2.4 Constructing Identities

2.4.1 Defining disclosure

New understandings about identity are shifting social values and ideologies, resulting in same-sex attraction being regarded variously as a legal or moral offence, a psychiatric disorder and a normal variant within the range of human sexual responses. These changes have resulted in the emergence of new developmental norms and diagnostic categories. Even in a period where there is little or no empirical support for either the psychiatric classification or social opprobrium of LGB people, the historic vilification of same-sex attraction will often result in social marginalisation and an absence or denial of accurate information to counter homophobic stereotypes. In this way social development is encumbered, hindering the integration of an LGB person's

totality of the self. Jackson and Sullivan (1994:95) point out that this is particularly the case for LGB adolescents:

Adolescence should be understood as a transitional stage like other transitional stages. It should be a period in which crisis is avoided by allowing for the gradual adjustment to biological, cognitive, psychological and social changes within a context of familial stability.

As the experience of heterosexual assumptions, homophobic derision of non-gender conformity, social isolation and degradation increases, the prospect of positive role identification decreases. Aspects of cognitive development, such as intellectual, athletic and artistic proclivities, can become latent if the exploration of these possible identities is thwarted by devaluation. During adolescence, too, social development often entails a movement away from the egocentrism of childhood towards a new sense of oneself which may well involve rejecting others' views and definitions of oneself. For LGB adolescents, this could mean that there do not appear to be any apparent future possibilities for their sexual identity or that any existing possibilities are devalued due to social stigmatisation. The initial process of lesbian, gay and bisexual self-identification known as disclosure or "coming out" has a particular significance in a young LGB person's life, especially concerning reactions from peers and family.

The process of self-identification as same-sex attracted, and coming out to others, has been referred to by Plummer (1989:210) as "the most momentous act in the life of any lesbian or gay person". Interestingly, at the time of first developing his model (1979), it was by no means clear to Troiden what was meant by "coming out". For Troiden, the first stages of coming out involve defining the self as same-sex attracted and presenting oneself to other sexual minority people as same-sex attracted. Troiden (1990:59) suggested that gay males tend to arrive at the self-definition stage of this process on average between the ages of 19 and 21. It is, of course, necessary to consider the time when Troiden and others were reaching conclusions about the average age of coming out: a period characterised by the growing fears of HIV and AIDS. However, in common with many contemporary same-sex attracted men and women, the respondents in Troiden's study also had persistent social stigmatisation to contend with, which, as Hammersmith (1987:176) points out: "threatens both self-esteem and one's sense of identity by denying the social and emotional validation upon which those constructs are built".

Rather than looking at a young person's development within the context of a single setting, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues, it is vital to look at the interconnections between settings to gain a full knowledge and understanding of identity development. He emphasises the need to examine the ways in which human development is influenced by human interactions within specific environmental settings. Using the analogy of a set of nested ecological structures, each placed inside the other like a series of Russian dolls, Bronfenbrenner sought to examine the relationship between those settings and the larger context in which those settings are situated. In this framework of eco-systems, the core settings which are likely to influence the development of LGB identity, during adolescence, are peer social networks, the school and the family. These interactional intersections can then be seen in a wider context which encompasses the range of formal and informal social systems which are thought, by LGB young people themselves, to have an effect on their identity formation, including other aspects of the community such as role models and the church.

The increased visibility of LGB representations, in the American and British media, has created a coming-out dilemma for contemporary LGB youth, growing up in the UK. There have been many recent milestone developments for LGBT equality, mentioned earlier in this chapter, such as the lowering of the age of consent for same-sex attracted men and women to 16 years in 2000. Such apparently liberal legislative changes have created what on closer inspections is in fact a social façade of LGB acceptance which, in some cases, deny the truth, as a closer examination of popular culture reveals that homophobic attitudes are clearly still very prevalent. In the autumn of 2003, the Football Association launched a campaign to eradicate homophobia in football, following a similar campaign against racism which had seen a reduction in racist chants and heckles during matches. However, homophobic chants are still frequently heard and the absence of any "out" gay football role models helps to maintain heterosexual hegemonic masculinity, with its consequent homophobia, to persist within football. Czynszelska (2003) cites several rap lyrics that certainly appear to be homophobic, despite claims from musicians and producers to the contrary. Eminem's song "Killing" features the following words:

You faggots keep egging me on till I have you at knifepoint, then beg me to stop... Answer me or I'm a kill you" and "My words are a dagger with a jagged edge that'll stab you in the head whether you're a fag or a lez.

In such a confusing social climate, many LGB young people will still feel the need to remain invisible and "pass" as heterosexual rather than face possible rejection from

family and/or peers. Others may feel confident that the reactions to their disclosure are likely to be favourable but will benefit from the support they can get from other LGB youth during this difficult process.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that there are many challenges which are faced by researchers of human sexuality, especially if the sexuality in question is socially stigmatised, potentially concealable and the subjects of this research are adolescent. Nonetheless, over the last 25-30 years, there has been an increase in the amount of research concerning the experiences of young LGB identifying people, particularly in America and the United Kingdom. Given, the difficulties in accessing LGB young people, the research has often been retrospective (Rivers, 1995; 2000), unrepresentative, because centred on self-selected troubled youngsters (Remafedi, 1987) or unreliable, when completed electronically using software on a webpage (Stonewall, 2007). Moreover, biological, developmental and stage theories of identity development are often limited to normative, binary constructions of homosexuality and heterosexuality and do not allow for variation between individuals as well as between men and women. More recently, research has recognised that often young people do not develop their identities in an orderly, sequential manner (Savin-Williams, 2005). A qualitative study which affords LGB young people the opportunity to speak about their experiences, good or bad, is necessary in order to address the deficit in knowledge which results from these limitations.

In recent years, because of changes in legislation and social attitudes, it has become possible for teachers to research the identity development of young people who identify as same-sex attracted. Indeed, this is now becoming officially recognised as there is a growing recognition that the emotional and physical needs of **all** children must be safeguarded (Every Child Matters, 2003). Schools and colleges are now expected to monitor and alleviate homonegative discrimination in their schools. There is an opportunity for LGB young people to work with teachers and researchers to provide effective information on adolescent same-sex attraction which will enable practitioners to implement effective preventive measures, in schools and further education colleges. A study which takes account of the impact (or otherwise) of recent legislative and social changes is needed if effective interventions are to ensure the emotional and physical well-being of young LGB men and women.

As a teacher and tutor over a twenty year period, I am aware that some LGB identifying young people are more comfortable when coping with LGB identity development, and

more resilient when faced with adverse reactions, than others. This could be due to the influence of protective factors (Rutter, 1987; Mastern, 2001), including micro-systems such as family, school and social networks. It could also be due to the skilful development of effective interactive self-presentational skills. An understanding of the non-verbal stigma-management strategies employed by Texan LGB young people has been developed by the work of Lasser *et al.* (2003; 2005; 2007; 2010). A study is needed which widens this understanding, in a contemporary British context, to include verbal and social, as well as non-verbal skills.

It is clear from the literature that one of the biggest challenges facing a researcher of same-sex attraction is gaining access to potential participants who may prefer to remain hidden or invisible, especially if peers, teachers or family members do not know. Researchers of same-sex attraction need to gain the trust of these young people, maintain their anonymity and find innovative ways of collecting data which these young people are comfortable with. In the following chapter, details of the methodological decisions will be given.

Chapter 3: Investigating Identity: Issues of Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, I begin by outlining the focus for my own research of LGB youth. Following this, I examine the method of data collection and analysis which I believe is particularly well-suited to social justice practitioner-research. I then consider the definitional, ethical and practical implications for contemporary LGB research design. In doing so, I necessarily examine the educational context in which the data were collected. Finally, the two main data-collection methods which I have employed are considered: questionnaire survey design and focus group methodology.

3.1 Establishing a focus

My aim has been to find new ways of adding to the existing knowledge about British LGB youth, in a contemporary context, by hearing from these young people about the responses of peers, teachers and families to their sexual orientation identity formation. Here a shift has taken place. My study originally commenced as a qualitative study of the experiences of LGB youth, solely in an educational context, focussing in particular on homophobic victimisation, curriculum mentions of LGB lifestyle and responses by teachers and peers to disclosure of LGB identity. I soon realised that, in order to test Savin-Williams' conception of the "new gay teenager" (2005), inching forwards with ever-increasing levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, in a contemporary British context, it would be necessary to widen my scope beyond the immediate context of school or sixth form college.

As I collected data, it became apparent that, for LGB young people, family responses to their disclosure were often of equal importance to the responses of peers and teachers. I became increasingly interested in the process of sexual orientation identity formation: how LGB young people manage their developing identities, often in the face of negative and positive responses from peers, teachers and families. Because of social stigmatisation, there are many gaps in earlier research and significantly, much of this research does not relate specifically to a British context. I felt that a new methodology was needed to get a wider picture of sexual orientation identity formation for young British people today: one that combined a quantitative sample survey approach with the qualitative capturing of attitudes, beliefs and perceptions.

3.2 Finding a method

Practitioner research, such as mine, challenges traditional notions of deductive research in a number of ways. Conventionally, the process begins with proficient understanding of a corpus of academic literature which will help to formulate questions and generate hypothetical assumptions as well as inform the research design. Winter (1998:1) has commented that the conventional researcher is a “spectator” who is often external to the research context. As a teacher-researcher, working very much on the inside of the practice, I was very aware that I was treading new research ground. In 2005, when I commenced this study, British research on LGB youth was sparse and the few studies that were published (Rivers, 1995; 2001) were mainly retrospective studies of adults. The findings of these contradicted the celebratory conclusions of some contemporary American research, such as the findings of Savin-Williams (2005), which suggested that life for LGB youth need no longer be associated with dissonance.

In an attempt to resolve some of these contradictions, I adopted a mainly inductive method of data collection which enabled me to progress sequentially, each stage enabling me to simultaneously collect and analyse data, generating new concepts to inform the next stage of data collection. New concepts should naturally emerge, as an ongoing product of this dynamic process, which has been referred to by Whitehead (1989:41) as “living theory.” I began the progress with some assumptions based on teaching experience and early training but I endeavoured to ensure that extant ideas were not imposed on the data, in order to extrapolate generalizations; rather, they should earn their way into the analysis. In this model, theory and practice no longer needed to be regarded as separate unities. Schon (1983:1) has commented on the process of theorising in practice-based research:

When someone reflects in action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case.

Accordingly, the model used for this practice-based research needed to be flexible enough to allow the researcher to change focus, if the workplace situation changes, lending an improvisatory nature to the research. I, for example, experienced difficulty accessing PSHE students, in secondary schools, and needed to discover alternative

methods for data collection: a questionnaire survey and focus group methodology with older (sixth form) students. This method of data collection and analysis needed to combine systematic rigour with qualitative interpretation. Much of my data was obtained through focus groups, as the method preferred by the participants themselves, necessitating a dual model of analysis which would enable me to examine how individual and group action comes together with social settings (the home, the school, the workplace, the church) to construct identities.

There were tensions, at the beginning of the research, driven by a realisation that approaches to research in education and the social sciences were often dominated by positivistic discourses. On the one hand, there was an academic drive to adopt a deductive research approach, necessitating the accumulation of a body of knowledge to generate a testable hypothesis before commencing data collection. On the other hand, I felt that my own practically acquired knowledge and experience, as a teacher and a Gay man, would enable me to find initial ways of overcoming the barriers to data-collection without the need for a detailed literature review to be completed before data-collection commenced. In order to facilitate the process of data collection, I did recognise the importance of developing my understanding of focus group methodology and survey design practices early on. The key precept that informed my initial data-collection was the need for open-mindedness. I did not begin with an initial hypothesis, although I did have questions regarding diverging American and British LGB research traditions identified by Savin-Williams (2005:49): studies of bullying, school regulation mental health problems and victimisation (Remafedi 1987(a) (b); Rivers, 1995, 2000, 2001) contrasting with more recent accounts of resilience (Savin-Williams, 2005). I believed that, once data collection had commenced, it would be possible to use this data to establish a direction for subsequent data collection and that this would then be enhanced by a detailed literature review some way into the research process. I agree with Dey (1993:63) that there is an important distinction between “an open mind” and “an empty head”:

To analyse data, researchers draw upon accumulated knowledge. They don't dispense with it. The issue is not whether to use accumulated knowledge but how.

There was, therefore, a continuous interplay, during the initial data-collection process, between existing practitioner knowledge (“accumulated knowledge”) informed by some knowledge and understanding of LGB research concerning the experiences of LGB youth in British and American schools. During the summer of 2006, the analysis of data from four focus groups refined my research focus: I became interested in the

ways that LGB participants were constructing their identities when faced with cultural, familial and institutional barriers and pressures. The literature review for this study was completed during the summer of 2006 and the main focus was now on LGB identity development in a variety of contexts (family, school, community) including psychological and sociological aspects such as constructivist/essentialist debates, self-presentation and disclosure. On completion of the first draft of this literature review, I became aware of the fact that my approach to data-collection, dictated by circumstances and initial difficulties in gaining access to willing participants, was in fact following the procedures of Grounded Theory Method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded Theory has come a long way since its original development by two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss, in the 1960s. As a reaction to the predominance of quantitative sociological research, at the time, grounded theory may at first appear to eschew traditional research methods. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) initial assumptions resulting from extant scholarship are avoided, and theory is systematically generated from practice, as the researcher progresses through four stages of analytical scaffolding: **codes**, (key identifying anchors which inform the next stage of data collection), **concepts** (collections of codes enabling data groupings), **categories** (groups of similar concepts enabling theory generation) and **theory** (the collection of explanations that explain the subject of the research). Data is firstly coded on the first line of abstraction, through line by line analysis (*open or substantive coding*). This will result in the establishing of core variables. In the case of my data, this related to individual and group responses to homonegative victimisation, disclosure of sexual identity and management of stigma. Having found this tentative core, more *selective coding* takes place, to delimit the study, which generates *theoretical sampling* – a deductive part of the grounded theory process. Finally, *theoretical coding* weaves the fractured concepts into hypotheses that work together in a theory explaining the main concerns of the participants. All of the codes are generated through the constant comparison of data sets, memos and field notes.

Charmaz (2005:509) has demonstrated how grounded theory “provided a template for doing qualitative research stamped with positivist approval”. Glaser’s own training in quantitative analysis led to his belief that the world could be described objectively by an unbiased qualitative observer. The roots of Strauss’ work, however, were in the Chicago school of symbolic interactionism emphasising meaning, action and process and the relationships between individuals and their social settings. Of particular interest to the social justice researcher, is what Charmaz (2005:506) refers to as the concept of *emergence* which recognises that the reality of the present is likely to be

very different to the past from which it has emerged. Charmaz comments on how the approaches of Glaser and Strauss later diverged as the two sociologists became more concerned with different methodological approaches. Charmaz argues for developing a twenty first century grounded theory approach to social justice research which returns to some of the original tenets of the Chicago school: a focus on meanings and actions, a close study of the social context in which action occurs and paying attention to the language which shapes meanings and influences action. Thus, Charmaz (2005:508) hopes that grounded theory will “build upon its constructionist elements rather than objectivist leanings”. In particular, she challenges earlier assumptions about viewing the world as an external reality demonstrating that no analysis is neutral: the world-views expressed by the participants, framed by the researcher’s own perspectives, should all be regarded as constructions.

The model of grounded theory which I have developed draws, in particular, on Charmaz’s conceptualisation, therefore: research participants and researcher come together viz a viz in a commitment to change practice. My research did not just analyse behaviour but sought to identify problems and anchor agendas for future action, practice and policies. My approach was interpretive: not just concerned with causes, conditions, categories and consequences. My examination of how the participants represent their world needed to begin with an explicit recognition of my own core values as well as an evaluation of the values of my respondents. By analysing the ways in which individuals, groups and social structures come together, the intention was to analyse the interrelationship between power in micro settings (family, school, church, workplace) and the broader (macro) factors that seek to limit power, perhaps creating modes of resistance. Key concepts such as domination and hegemony were regarded as sensitizing concepts to be explored but not imposed on the data. Likewise, status variables such as age, social class, race and disability needed to earn their way into the analysis of my data. I began the data analysis by considering three social justice emphases identified by Charmaz (2005:513): the *resources* available to the respondents, the *social hierarchies* and the *social policies and practices* which have an impact on the lives of my participants, individually and collectively. The first of these (*resources*) is examined through the personal strategies developed by my respondents when managing their LGB visibility, disclosing these identities to peers, teachers, family members and other members of the community and when responding to homophobic pressures. The second and third of these (*social hierarchies and social policies and practices*) are examined by considering the controlling attitudes and values of micro-systems such as family, peer and school networks, which have a profound effect on the identity development of these young people.

3.3 Examining Difference

First and foremost, I am privileged, as teacher and researcher in early twenty-first century Britain, to be able to access young people who identify as same-sex attracted, in an educational context. However, as I later show in this chapter (*Accessing a hidden population*), social stigmatisation persists and it has been necessary to develop a range of age-appropriate and ethical ways of collecting data. Morgan (1997), in an on-line review of databases concerning the use of focus groups in academic research, has identified three main uses of the focus group: (a) the self-contained method, in which the focus group is the principal source of data; (b) the focus group as a supplementary source of data, perhaps adopting a preliminary, exploratory role preparing the way for a larger survey and (c) the multi-method approach, in which two or more data collection methods are adopted and no single primary method determines the use of the others. I have adopted a self-contained method of data collection, in which focus groups are the primary source of data primarily because the volunteer participants overwhelmingly preferred this method, as will be explained later in this chapter.

I opted to use a questionnaire survey as a secondary source to create the context for a contemporary picture of LGB youth experiences thus facilitating some comparison between contemporary findings with earlier research findings. This approach allows for fairly detailed descriptive accounts of LGB victimisation, experiences of disclosure and stigma-management strategies from male and female LGB-identifying students in seven focus groups, enabling a fairly equal representation of the different orientations. However, the addition of the questionnaire survey seeks to amplify my understanding of the findings, by including the experiences of heterosexual identifying students, concerning homophobic bullying and disclosure. Furthermore, although it does not seek to add much in the way of statistical “evidence”, and does not, therefore, allow wide generalisation, I hope that it will permit some generalisations about the experiences of LGB young people. Rather than seeking to combine a qualitative method with one that will add a greater empirical, scientific perspective, I was merely wishing to improve my research efforts through a judicious combination of methods. My study is, first and foremost, a qualitative account of the personal identity constructions of these LGB young people, alongside the positive or negative factors which have aided or hindered integrated LGB identity development.

It was crucial to adopt a methodological approach, which moves away from narrow definitions of LGB youth, according to homo/heterosexual minoritising binaries, to encompass a more fluid sense of identity. Rather than treat these young people as a monolithic population, I endeavoured to escape from the classic research stereotypes which emphasise the unity and the uniqueness of the LGB population, as distinct from the heterosexual population. My research model sought to allow the young LGB participants to demonstrate their within-group variations, too: their similarities and differences to each other. I believe that it is vitally important to move away from a well-meaning deficit approach which assumes difficulties, instead allowing students to envisage and represent their own potential for health, resilience and strength.

During the course of my research, I have been asked, several times, by students and teachers, “Where is the T?” (Transgendered students). The answer is simple. When I first started my research, my intention was to be fully inclusive and so my chosen remit was to examine “The educational experiences of 14-19 year old LGBT student in England”. However, having collected qualitative data from 35 students, who identify as LGB, as well as quantitative data from 116 students, 19% of whom identify as same-sex attracted, I quickly realised that my particular cohort of responses did not include any students who wished to be identified as transgendered, at this particular point of their lives. Two female students did, however, express a desire to change gender at a later stage of their lives. For this reason, I decided to restrict the scope of my research to LGB young people.

One of the first problems encountered in my research design was that of categorization. Plummer (1981) has identified some of the main definitional problems concerning sexual orientation categorisation. Religious, medical and abusive homonegative minoritising discourses persist in representing same-sex attraction as an act of *doing* or *experiencing* sexuality, in early twenty-first century Britain. Self-delineated categorisations developed in the 1960s and 70s, such as Gay and Lesbian, have sought to bring about a change in perspective from *doing* to *being*, further developed in the identity politics of LGBTQ, which seeks to present a coherent, unified and stable identity on the basis of which individuals should not be discriminated against. In some ways, these labels continue to promote essentialist notions of same-sex attraction as fixed categories with genetic, neurological or hormonal causes, however, which can be seen as reinforcing same-sex attraction as “deficient” requiring pity, at best. Some social scientific categorisations, such as “sexual minority youth” have been regarded as problematic for similar reasons. The postmodern notion of “Queer”, as in Queer Theory, stems from LGBT politics and is often associated with the work of Butler (1990), Teresa de Laurentis (1990) and Sedgwick (1990). It seeks to

side-step essentialism by encompassing a non-normative sexuality which transcends the dichotomous homo/hetero binary, including all who feel disempowered or disenfranchised by dominant sexual norms. Located in postmodern feminist understandings of gender and sexuality, “Queer” represents the notion that “gender and sexual categories are not given realities but are “regulatory fictions, products of discourse” (Jackson & Scott, 1996 :15).

The academic debates surrounding identity politics and Queer theory were not seen as very relevant to the lives of the young same-sex attracted people who participated in my research, unless they had an interest in Sociology or Media Studies. They recognised “Queer” as a reclaimed amelioration used by the American and British Media in popular television programmes such as “Queer as Folk” and “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy”. However, they were still very aware of the homonegative connotations of the word and, for many, the word revived unwanted memories of school bullying. For others, the word was too political. They understood and related to the LGB categorisation, though some of these young people preferred to emphasise the fluidity, individuality and temporality of their sexual identities. When discussing how these students liked to be referred to, one student exclaimed: “I’m ME! I’m Emily!” (name changed). Like two other students in the group, Emily objected to the LGBT labels as limited and impersonal, homogenising people in terms of sexuality whilst not recognising the individual characteristics which constitute a human identity. On the other hand, the majority of the students were happy to be referred to as LGB and everybody agreed that the College *Gay-Straight Alliance* should remain named as such, because it was easily understood by the general student population, even though there were some reservations about the use of “gay” to refer to males and females. I have used *LGB*, and *same-sex attracted*, frequently, to refer to sexual orientation, in this thesis, because these young people were in common agreement that these were references that they were comfortable with.

Given the definitional minefield outlined above, I was very concerned to ensure that the terms used in my initial questionnaire survey about bullying, disclosure and mentions in the curriculum were acceptable and easily understood by the respondents who chose to participate. The survey respondents comprised the cohort of students from two curriculum areas at Millais College, my workplace college: psychology and sociology. These subjects were popular and provided a fairly representative sample of the college population, in terms of student numbers. I believed that, because of the social science nature of this research, students would be more inclined to respond to such a survey request. I introduced the survey to each participating class with a discussion about the nature of homophobic bullying, as this was the main focus, but I

also explained that it was important for the respondents to define how they saw themselves at that particular moment in their lives, concerning sexuality and romantic attractions. The actual question was as follows:

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation:

- I am attracted to the opposite sex
- I am attracted to the same sex
- I am attracted to the opposite sex and the same sex
- I am not sure
- None of the above (please explain)

As the questionnaire form was returned in a sealed white envelope and placed in a box held by the teacher of the relevant class, it was felt that the anonymity of the participants was maintained: an essential consideration for all researchers of LGB youth.

Kirkamn (2001), in her discussion of research ethics with lesbian participants, emphasises the importance of confidentiality which is always difficult when working with young people who are under eighteen years of age. It is likely that some of the students who participated in my questionnaire survey, identifying either as LGB or in the process of working out their sexual identities and possibly coming to terms with same-sex attraction, had not disclosed their identity to their peers or family. Similarly, many of the students who participated in my focus groups were very happy to sign consent forms but were concerned that their families should discover that they had participated in the research. These young people were either members of a Gay Straight Alliance at my workplace college, a Gay-Straight Alliance at another local city sixth form college or a city LGB youth group and in many cases this group membership was not known to one or both parents. I share the concern of D'Augelli and Grossman (2006:35) that, in some situations, a young person may enjoy the support of one parent whilst the other parent may be hostile. D'Augelli and Grossman (2006:35) identify two options for the researcher of LGB youth, in this case:

not to do a study that has the potential for helping future generations of youth or conducting the study without parental consent. Under these conditions, parental consent has been described as not being a reasonable requirement.

It is common practice for schools and colleges to seek parental consent for most extra-curricular activities which take place under the auspices of the school. However, for the above reasons, it was not deemed appropriate to notify or involve parents by seeking

consent. In the United Kingdom, the case of Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority (1985) is used in medical law to decide whether a young person (16 or younger) is able to consent to his or her own medical treatment, without the need for parental consent. The concept of Gillick competence, resulting from a ruling in the House of Lords made by Lord Scarman, is binding in England and Wales and is broader in scope than merely medical consent. It states that parental authority to make a decision for a son or daughter is not absolute but diminishes with the child's developing maturity. Unless regulated by statutes, the right to make a decision on a matter such as participating in research shifts from the parent to the young person if he or she has reached sufficient maturity to be capable of making up his or her mind on the matter requiring decision. For the reasons given above, I did not seek parental consent but I took great pains to ensure that, in all cases, students should be protected from the possibility of possible negative consequences. I introduced a mechanism in my research methodology to ensure that participants had the right to refuse permission to participate or withdraw consent. Participants were asked to grant their consent, by signing an introductory letter of consent which clearly outlined the research procedures and provided a copy of the interview question scheme (Appendix H). Once the focus group discussion had taken place, participants were sent another letter, together with a copy of the focus group transcription (Appendix I). They were invited to comment on their contributions to the discussion and make suggestions for additions and/or deletions if they so wished. It was made clear to participants that anonymity would be preserved by using pseudonyms and changing place names. In this way, I tried to ensure that ethical considerations became an on-going process throughout the data collection period. The College Senior Management Team and the University of Southampton School of Education Ethics Committee were informed of the research protocol and granted their approval to proceed.

The lack of parental consent forms brought with it another ethical issue which needed to be addressed in my research methodology: a mechanism to ensure that young people were not put under undue stress, in recounting unhappy memories, which could further exacerbate physical or mental health problems. As teacher, researcher, and facilitator of the Gay-Straight Alliance from which most focus group participants were drawn, and moderator of the focus groups from which data was collected, I was very aware of the power imbalance which existed. Like Foucault (1976:98), I recognise, however, that power is often circulatory and moves between the participants:

individuals are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are

always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.

In the focus groups, I saw my focus group moderator role as solely facilitative. I shared the question schedule with participants, beforehand, presented the questions for discussion and promoted discussion. In this way, I was able to shape the focus of the discussion but participants were able to explore their own individual experiences as well as have some of their assumptions challenged by other group members. These group members knew each other and were comfortable with the focus group as a mechanism for facilitating discussion, and, as a result, were able to concentrate on each other, becoming co-researchers during the process, rather than concentrating on the facilitator. On each occasion a College counsellor/advisor was present, as a youth advocate, to ensure that all participants were comfortable with how the focus group was operating. This person was also able to provide participants with information about the local LGBT youth project which was available for 14 to 25-year-old people in the City. In fact, LGB young people from this youth service participated in the one non-College based focus group in my research and, on this occasion, an academic from the local University was present.

Sears (1992:149) has noted that: “methodological integrity in conducting qualitative research ultimately rests upon the personal integrity of the researcher”. In all of the various roles outlined above, I was both an outsider and an insider. There was one further ethical consideration which emerged from my status as a gay male. Krieger (1982:108), identifying as a lesbian researcher, identifies some of the difficulties:

As an insider, the lesbian has an important sensibility to offer, she is also more vulnerable than the non-lesbian researcher, both to pressure from the heterosexual world – that her studies conform to previous works and describe the lesbian reality in terms of its relationship with the outside – and to pressure from the inside, from the lesbian community itself – that her studies mirror not the reality of the community but its self-protective ideology.

On hearing about my data collection from LGB identifying youth, one member of staff expressed her concerns about the possibilities that some participants might be undecided and in the process of working out their identities. Their current sexual identities could be very different next year. This person’s implicit concerns seemed to be that I could be intervening during an “experimental” phase of sexual orientation identity formation with worrying implications for the personal well-being of the young people themselves, as well as the ethics and the validity of my research. In response, I

expressed my belief that, as a gay man, I had considerable understanding of the lived experiences of LGB youth. Quinlivan and Town (1999) likewise comment on the benefits of being a gay man when working with gay youth. Town felt that he could serve as a role model for participants because of his gay status, enabling the legitimisation of their experiences of sexuality because they were shared. Throughout the research period, I commenced all focus groups with a statement of my personal belief that sexual orientation was to be regarded as fluid and changeable rather than fixed and stable. In this way, I hoped that students were able to make sense of their own identities in ways that were appropriate for them.

There were many ethical, definitional, conceptual and practical issues to be considered in my research design, therefore. It was a small-scale study, limited to 116 questionnaire LGB and heterosexual respondents, and 35 LGB identifying focus group respondents. Participants for the focus groups were all aged 16-19 years of age, 18 young men and 17 young women; one young woman participant was of Asian origin and the remainder were white. All were resident in southern England at the time of research and able to reflect on their experiences during years 10 and 11 (14-15 years of age) at secondary school and at sixth form college. Although findings might not be generalisable in a statistical sense, I agree with Stake (1995:3) that it is possible to reach conclusions which have been arrived at through the qualitative study of multiple case studies which represent a variety of perspectives. By adopting a “collective case study” or “Instrumental” approach (as described by Stake, 2005:445), I am seeking to achieve a balance between explicit “propositional generalisations” (assertions) and “naturalised generalisations”: conclusions which have been arrived at through personal engagement with life engagement or by vicarious experiences which have been constructed so convincingly that the person feels as if it is happening to themselves. (Stake, 2005:448). By considering the effects of the interplay of family, peers and teachers, on sexual orientation formation, and the young people’s responses to those influences, I hope that the contributions of my research will have some significance in developing a more nuanced picture of the experiences of LGB youth in Britain, today.

3.4 Accessing a hidden population

To date, many LGB population studies appear to seriously under-represent sexual orientation. In a population report based on a sample of nearly 35,000 Minnesota high school students, Remafedi, Resnick, Blum and Harris (1992) found that 1.1% of adolescent participants identified as LGB and another 11% said they were uncertain of their sexual orientation, although 4.5% of respondents did acknowledge same-sex

attractions (4.5%) and same-sex sexual fantasies (2.6%). The Add Health data, used by Russell and Joyner (2001) and Udry and Chantala (2002), contained responses from nearly 21,000 American adolescents. Of these, only 57 males reported having same-sex partners and 87 had both male and female sexual partners; of the females, 100 reported same-sex partners only, and 123 had sexual experiences with both sexes. Generally, in studies such as these, less than 2% of respondents identify as LGB, whereas the actual percentage is more likely to be between six and ten per cent (Gangstead, Bailey & Martin, 2000; Garafolo, Wolf, Wissow, Woods & Goodman, 1999; Sell, Wells & Wypjii, 1995).

Turner *et al.* (1998) have demonstrated that, alongside other activities perceived as socially undesirable, such as drug use and violence, adolescents are less likely to disclose same-sex attraction and activity than adult survey respondents. There are various possible reasons why this should be. LGB youth may still be coming to terms with their same-sex attracted identity and avoiding disclosure to family and peers, for fear of negative responses leading to isolation and rejection. They may regard Gay-Straight Alliances, LGBT youth groups and LGBT youth research as linked to the minoritising domains of psychiatry, “therapy” and “support” and not wish to be regarded as “weak victims”. LGB youth may just want to put unhappy school memories behind them and concentrate on the present and the future. Whatever the reasons, I realised that, in order to access these young people, gain their trust and motivate them to participate in my research, I would need a great deal of invention, patience, humour and determination.

I also believed that, in order to access a potentially hidden population, I would need to try a variety of data-collection methods, including questionnaire surveys. A map of the complete process of data collection for this study is provided in Figure 3.1

Date	March 2006	May 2006	May 2006	June 2006	June 2006	June 2006	Sept 2006	Feb 2007	June 2007
Setting	Millais College (MC)	Austen College	MC	MC	MC	MC	Palm Sec School	LGBT Youth group	MC
Method	Focus Group (A)	Focus Group (B)	Focus Group (C)	Survey	Focus Group (D)	Focus Group (E)	Interviews Survey Class discussions	Focus Group (F)	Focus Group (G)
Participant	LGB youth	LGB youth	LGB youth	Social Science students	LGB youth	LGB youth	Managers Teachers Students	LGB youth	LGB youth

Figure 3.1: Data-collection Timeline

Coincidentally, in November 2005 I started a Gay-Straight Alliance at Millais College where I worked and this provided me with a golden opportunity to access 16-19 year old LGB students who might be prepared to participate in research. The main catalyst for starting this group was the high level of homonegative abuse which could frequently be heard in the corridors of the College. The primary purpose of the group was to provide a social meeting opportunity, as part of the College's extra-curricular enrichment programme, for students to meet like-minded peers. However, I was very aware, as a member of the College's Equal Opportunities Committee that, although the College included sexual orientation in its equal opportunities policy, as an unacceptable form of discrimination, there were no means of monitoring, and therefore alleviating, forms of homonegative harassment in the College.

With the permission of the College Senior Management Team, I introduced my research to student members of the Gay-Straight Alliance in February 2006 and asked for volunteer participants. I explained that the data would be used to improve the lives of LGB students in the College and to contribute to a wider research project. I asked the students which methods of data collection they would prefer and they overwhelmingly

stated a preference for focus groups, a mechanism frequently used for course evaluation and with which they were very familiar. Morgan (1993:18) has referred to the focus group as: “a friendly research method that is respectful and not condescending to its target audience”.

As the emphasis, in this qualitative part of the data-collection, was to be on generating explanations of how LGB youth are managing their identity developments, the collaborative, interactive nature of focus groups seemed an ideal alternative to individual interviews which these young people found potentially intimidating. The first focus group (Appendix F), concerned with homophobic abuse, disclosure and school responses to LGB visibility took place with three students, in March 2006, followed by two further focus groups, with volunteer participants from the same Gay-Straight Alliance, two months later. In May 2006, I also collected focus group data from another Gay-Straight Alliance, at a neighbouring College. The early focus groups were conducted during the lunch-hour, as students preferred not to meet after College, which made the sessions rather short (average 30-40 minutes each). As I refined the methodology for these focus groups, I realised that these groups needed to be time-tabled during lesson time, whenever possible, to allow for longer periods of discussion (1-2 hours) and the last four College based focus groups were accordingly timetabled during lessons and teachers were asked to release students so that they could participate.

During the first year of its operation, the average number of students attending the College Gay-Straight Alliance was ten, representing one per cent of the College student population. Once again, an LGB population was considerably under-represented, as few LGB College students were choosing to identify as same-sex attracted. I was concerned that this may have implications for the representative nature of my focus group sampling, as participants came directly from the Gay-Straight Alliance. Many of the students who participated in the early focus groups were troubled young people who had disclosed to peers and/or family members and whose educational achievements at school had suffered as a consequence of school-based homonegative victimisation. Nevertheless, I was pleased to see that these young people now appeared to be developing protective strategies. It appeared to me that LGB identifying students who might prefer not to participate in focus group discussions may be prepared to complete an anonymous questionnaire survey.

At the time of commencing my initial focus group data collection (in March 2006) from LGB identifying young men and women, I also sought to complement these descriptive accounts of LGB youth experiences with some empirical quantitative data, concerning

homonegative victimisation. My focus group participants were mainly recalling experiences from one or two years previously at schools so I decided to try and access secondary school students from years 10 and 11 (14-15 years of age) to build up an even wider, immediately contemporary, picture. I approached the head-teachers of eight city secondary schools and one rural secondary school, explaining that I would like to investigate student perceptions of homophobic bullying, in their school.

My letter explained that I was particularly interested in the frequency, location and types of bullying, whether physical, verbal, psychological, cyber or any other types. In my initial letter to the head-teacher, I indicated that, in addition, I would like to examine student perceptions of mentions related to LGBT issues in any curriculum areas, including Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and further to ask the students if they knew of any who had disclosed same-sex attraction and how that disclosure had been received. I stated that all questioning would be in an anonymous questionnaire survey, which students could complete outside the lesson and then return, in a sealed envelope, to a box which the teacher for each class kept in the classroom. The survey would be introduced through the medium of PSHE and I, as teacher and researcher, would visit the school and introduce the questionnaire to the students in the context of their lessons.

Two head-teachers initially contacted me, expressing interest in participating in this research. In both cases, I arranged to contact the head-teachers concerned, again, in September 2006 to finalise data-collection. Unfortunately, one of these schools felt unable to participate in this research, when I contacted them again. Whilst it was disappointing that schools seemed to feel unable to help, given the fact that Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act had only been repealed three years before, the nervousness which had been generated by this legislation and the fact that very little or no training was available to teachers to facilitate the transition into a post Section 28 school culture, it was no great surprise. Nonetheless, I asked the head-teacher of the second secondary school if I could work with some PSHE students to develop a survey for facilitating data collection and I was provided with the opportunity to interview middle and senior management and to work with a group of twenty fifteen-year-old PSHE students in a classroom setting. The latter provided me with the opportunity to pilot a method of data collection using types of homophobic bullying on Q Cards (Appendix E).

Because I was experiencing difficulties in accessing secondary school students, I decided to administer the above-mentioned questionnaire on homonegative victimisation by sampling sixth form college students from my workplace college, in

June-July 2006 (Appendix F). This questionnaire was designed to complement and contextualise the focus group data already collected from LGB identifying students at Millais College. It asked students about what they had seen, heard or experienced, regardless of their own personal sexual orientations. My main purpose was to try to access LGB identifying students who may prefer not to participate in a focus group but who may be prepared to participate in an anonymous questionnaire survey. However, this survey also enabled me to capture the experiences and perceptions of students who identified as heterosexual, thereby providing a wider context for my focus group data. The questionnaire was firstly piloted with members of the College Gay-Straight Alliance, in order to ensure clarity and general comprehension. To gain a representative sample of the college student population, irrespective of sexual orientation, I chose two curriculum areas for the main survey: Sociology and Psychology. The total cohort of students, for these two disciplines, represented 14% of the total student population (159 students).

I also chose these two subject areas because I believed that they would attract a larger than average percentage of students who were in the process of LGB identity formation, given that both social sciences were largely concerned with developing a deep understanding of the self in relation to others in a variety of contexts. This proved to be the case, as 20% of the respondents in this survey identified as attracted to the same sex or as attracted to both the same sex and other sex equally. One limitation of this survey was the unusually high percentage of females in the cohort (85%). Traditionally, these two subjects do attract a high percentage of female students. However, as a means of accessing a hidden population and enabling students to participate in research, who would otherwise not participate because of stigmatisation, I felt that this method of data collection was justified.

Students often feel that they are being besieged by questionnaires and I felt that it was very important to actively involve the students in the survey process to engage their interest and ensure a good response. I introduced my research to these students in September - October at a time when they were designing research plans for their own Sociology or Psychology coursework investigations. I arranged a convenient lesson time, with each class teacher, and presented to each group on the process of research design for my own research. Students for both disciplines had studied same-sex attraction in the contexts of child development, socialisation and the family and these sessions were well received. I handed out questionnaire forms and invited students to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire form, anonymously, and returning in a sealed white envelope to a box which was held by the teacher in their

classroom. I was delighted to get a 73% return from this questionnaire survey and I was asked to return and present interim findings, at a later date which I duly did.

3.5 Research Design

Wolff *et al.* (1993) have commented on the mixture of scepticism and enthusiasm with which respective practitioners have greeted a single research design which seeks to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in an “eclectic mix of methods”. They argue that the two approaches can work together, in harmony, as long as an integrated multi-method research approach is adopted in which the strengths and limitations of both are taken into consideration. Indeed, illustrating their argument with a study conducted in 1988 in Thailand which combined the concurrent use of focus groups with sample surveys, they argue that the two approaches can be ideally complementary. I argue the same for my study.

I have found the focus group to be a valuable way of moving from the general to the particular. Morgan (1977:35) defines focus group methodology as:

A research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. In essence, it is the researcher’s interest that provides the focus, whereas the data themselves come from the group interaction”.

The emphasis, therefore, is on participants interacting with each other, rather than the interviewer, so that the view of the participants can emerge, rather than the researcher’s agenda predominating. Kitzinger (1994:105) argues that, in the social science research process, the researcher needs to overtly explore and exploit this group interaction between research participants as “the one feature which distinguishes focus groups from one-to-one interviews or questionnaires”.

Like Kitzinger (1994), in her study of the production, content and effect of media messages about AIDS, I saw the benefits of working with pre-existing friendship groups, in order to explore how LGB youth manage their identity formations. By bringing together a natural social network, in this way, I hoped to be able to: “tap into fragments of interactions which approximated to “naturally occurring data” (such as might have been collected by participant observation)” (Kitzinger, 1994:105).

Peers and friends could relate each other's comments and experiences to actual incidents in their own lives. There were opportunities for students to challenge, question and disagree with each other's assumptions, as well. As my main aim was to enable the young people to develop a sense of their own identity formation, through group interaction, I decided not to use sub-sets of other individuals, such as teachers, peers or family members, referred to by Knodel (in Morgan, 1993) as "break characteristics", but instead sought to discover how these sub-groups responded to LGB identities, through the eyes of the LGB focus group participants themselves.

Knodel (1993), believes that homogeneous groups are likely to produce information in greater depth than heterogeneous groups. The group compositions for my focus groups were fairly homogeneous, as nearly all group members were white (one Asian), lived in the same geographical area, although from different socio-economic backgrounds, and identified as attracted to the same-sex. One participant did not identify as same-sex attraction but did experience extensive homonegative victimisation, however, for the purposes of the qualitative part of my research, I have focused exclusively on the contributions of LGB identifying young people and, therefore decided not to include this participant's data. In some respects, group composition was heterogeneous, however. Both genders were represented in most groups and students represented a cross-section of socio-economic groupings. In this way, I hoped to capture a broad range of experiences, thereby exploring the individuality and diversity of these young people, as well as the commonalities which they shared.

Morgan and Kreuger (1993:9) have sought to debunk the notion that focus groups should be validated by other methods, relegating focus groups to a preliminary, exploratory role that prepares the way for "real" research. Like Morgan and Kreguer, I regard focus groups as having a distinct advantage, in some research situations, enabling the researcher to generate theoretical specifications, engaging with particularised "how" and "why" questions, rather than generalising patterns and trends, using "what" and "how many" questions. Focus groups use more natural settings than quantitative research allows, enabling the replication of fairly "natural" conversation, between pre-existing friends, though not as "natural", perhaps, as participant observation would allow. In seeking to gain a picture of same-sex attracted identity formation, from the perspectives of LGB adolescents, the focus group proved to be a most appropriate primary method of data collection and was not limited to preliminary explorations.

Morgan and Kreuger (1993:5) also point to the important role of the focus group moderator, reminding us that if the moderator is not well-prepared and skilful, the results could be as bad as those of a poorly designed questionnaire. The moderator will exert a powerful influence on the nature and quality of the discussion but s/he needs to do so without leading the group to reinforce existing expectations or confirm a prior hypothesis. Robson (2002:287) defines the function of the moderator, also known as facilitator thus:

The terms signal two aspects of their role: to moderate in the dictionary sense of regulating, or keeping within measures or bounds; to facilitate in the sense of helping the group to run effectively.

Achieving a fine balance between an active role, which might have too-powerful an effect in leading a focus group discussion, and a passive role, where the interaction may become unfocused, the moderator must gain the trust of the participants, establish a professional rapport and demonstrate attentive listening skills and genuine concern when appropriate (Morgan, 1993). The dilemma for the moderator is whether to give complete control to the group, with the possible loss of direction, or exert more control and risk losing the free flow of conversation. The moderator must encourage full and frank contributions, therefore, whilst maintaining sufficient distance and neutrality to avoid the introduction of bias. The moderator's task is also to ensure that dominant personalities are not allowed to shape the group's collective response, by being alert to individual responses and intervening with skilful questioning, where necessary. As moderator I was also aware of the potential conflicts which could arise from existing personal relationships. As I commenced data-collection, I felt that, because focus group participants belonged to a pre-existing natural social network, interpersonal conflicts were less likely to occur.

The successful facilitation of focus groups depends, therefore, on the moderator's social and psychological understanding of the group dynamics which inform the composition of a particular group and this is particularly the case relating to the discussion of a sensitive topic. Zeller (1993) identifies the three processes of *reactivity*, *legitimization* and *self-disclosure* by which the moderator can set the agenda without appearing to do so. *Reactivity* refers to the phenomenon that the very process of measurement can induce change in the phenomenon itself. Zeller argues that the researcher should capitalise on the principle of reactivity by encouraging participants to mull over the topics before the discussion, perhaps in a screener questionnaire. I followed his example and provided participants with a copy of the focus group interview schedule before the focus group took place (See Appendix F). This was a

more overt shaping of the focus group conversation than Zeller recommends. It did, however, mean that participants were fully aware of topics for discussion beforehand and, therefore, removing the chance of putting a participant “on the spot”.

By the process of *legitimization*, Zeller is referring to the shift that should ideally take place, during the middle section of the focus group, from individual participant conversation with the moderator to whole group interaction. During this most important stage of the focus group, participants were discussing types of homonegative bullying which they had experienced, alongside their experiences of coming out as LGB, and Zeller argues that it is important that excessive pressure should not be placed on participants who are shy or reluctant to contribute. The moderator should, in Zeller’s view, legitimate the participants’ rights to “pass” if they so wish, thereby ensuring the participants’ feelings of “safety”. Reading Zeller’s account made me aware of the great need for sensitivity at this stage of the discussion.

As another means of setting the focus group agenda, Zeller (1993), recommends that the moderator (myself, in this case), should open the discussion with a disclosure from his or her own experiences, in order to alleviate embarrassment and facilitate a more relaxed environment for group discussion. Accordingly, I opened my pilot focus group with a brief disclosure of a personal school sixth form experience, in which a fellow male student, in one of my classes, had pretended to make a pass at me, behind my back, as I entered the room. Other students laughed but refused to let me in on the joke. I remembered how hurt and upset I was when one of the students eventually confided in me. As I narrated this episode, I was aware of the potential dangers of talking too much and inadvertently becoming a participating member of the group, so that the group might be more likely to provide the types of responses they thought I was looking for (demand characteristics). I, therefore, kept the opening frame of the discussion brief. It seemed to be a successful opener and I subsequently adopted this approach for other focus groups.

Zeller has also made some interesting observations on the excessive over-disclosure of sensitive information during focus groups. This can happen when the “thrill” of discussing a taboo topic and the group momentum leads participants to reveal details of their personal lives which they would ordinarily keep private. If the moderator does not pull back from the initial disclosure of over-sensitive information, other participants may follow with similarly personal disclosures. Brown (1999) has reminded his researchers that the focus group is not being run for therapeutic purposes; it is not a support group, although the participants may gain much from their shared experience. As a researcher working with sensitive topics I recognised the need to both

encourage appropriate self-disclosure and discourage disclosure that went beyond my legitimate research aims.

Alongside the over-reporting of sensitive material, the moderator needs to have strategies to address under-reporting. I adapted the use of Q-sort cards from the methodology for Duncan's (1999) study of sexual bullying. To facilitate data collection, Duncan used a series of Q-sort cards, which he generated during a pilot sessions where he asked PSHE students what sorts of behaviour they disliked in the opposite sex (e.g. "Boys spreading dirty rumours about a girl"; "A group of girls threatening a boy's girlfriend"). Behaviour types were put on sort cards which were then used to facilitate discussion in small groups. In this study, Duncan was interested in all aspects of sexual bullying, especially sexist, racist and homophobic and his main focus was on the interface between adolescence, gender, social organisation and educational institutions.

My own adaptation of Duncan's sort card methodology involved various homonegative bullying types which covered the spectrum of cyber, physical, psychological and verbal forms of bullying (see Appendix E for the full range of bullying types). This activity related to the first sub-set of my research questions relating to fragmentation of LGB sexual identity. Focus groups were firstly asked to sort these bullying types according to how bad they thought they were. They were then asked how often particular bullying incidents occurred, during the last two years of compulsory secondary education (years 10 and 11) and in sixth form college, and also how often these incidents were reported. Participants were, therefore, being asked to recall recent events, which were likely to have special significance, in their lives, and were, therefore, more likely to be remembered easily. These cards were introduced during the most important section of the discussion and facilitated a great deal of comment concerning personal experiences and group collective experiences. Indeed the problem was far less concerned with stimulating conversation, but rather with reigning it in to finish in the allocated time.

Albrecht *et al.* (1993) have commented on the focus group moderator's need to pay attention not only to opinion formulation but also to opinion articulation, whilst remaining alert to the dangers of inadvertently shaping participants' responses. They refer to the three processes of Kelman's (1961) typology of opinion giving: *compliance*, *identification* and *internalization*. Each one of these processes could represent a potential threat to the internal validity of the focus group, if the moderator does not respond appropriately. *Compliance* is the act of responding in ways that the respondent believes are desired or expected by the questioner, possibly in anticipation

of a reward from the moderator. *Identification* is related to a situation where a respondent's position, on an issue, is similar to the position held by someone who is admired by the respondent, possibly the moderator. The danger, here, is of a group consensus ("groupthink") response in which group cohesion takes precedent over independence of thought. The third form of opinion disclosure, *internalization*, refers to those opinions which are most personal and deeply ingrained and least susceptible to material rewards or group dynamics. These are the attitudes, thoughts and feelings which the moderator must seek to elicit, through the skilful use of questioning techniques.

Kreuger (1998) identifies a stage process for question development which I found particularly useful, when facilitating group interaction on sensitive topics especially when refining the focus group question schedule in a revised version used with the last three of the seven focus groups (Appendix G). Initially, an opening ice-breaker question was necessary to put participants at ease and to establish a sense of community amongst the respondents: "Tell me who you are, what you are studying in this college and what you like doing when you are not in College". During this stage, I sought to avoid the dangers of an invalid group consensus emerging, due to the dominance of one or two individuals in a group, by going round the group, with the ice-breaker questions, to ensure that all broke their silence in the first ten minutes or so. This stage was followed by an introductory question which generally fostered interaction amongst participants but which was not critical for analysis. Besides introducing the general discussion topic, this question provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and their connection with the overall topic: "When you hear the words "homophobic bullying" what comes to mind?" This question also had the important function of identifying what participants understood by the term "homophobic bullying" and thereby establishing if there was a fairly uniform understanding of this particular phenomenon amongst group members. This introductory question was followed by a series of transitional questions, which were intended to move the discussion in the direction of the key questions which formed the heart of the discussion: "What is it like for LGB students in schools? What is it like for LGBT students in sixth form colleges? How old were you when you first thought you might be LGB? Who did you tell? How did you tell them? How did they react?" As these questions did not always foster personal reflection and the generation of group discussion, I realised that, as moderator, I might need to ask parallel questions (same question, different wording), repeat the questions or change the direction of questioning if saturation occurs.

The key questions form the most critical stage of the focus group discussion, driving the study and linking directly with the research questions. I found it extremely helpful to facilitate this part of the discussion with the sort cards mentioned above. One participant who attended the first focus group later volunteered to pilot the sort cards, which I introduced, for the first time, to the third focus group, and found that the cards were extremely helpful in “jogging” her memory: responding to the same questions as before, she recalled new experiences, with the aid of the cards. Because of my original research focus, my key questions had a specifically educational focus:

Think back to when you were at school...Tell me about any examples of homophobic bullying which you experienced at school. Tell me about any examples of homophobic bullying which you experienced at college. Tell me about whether or not issues to do with an LGB lifestyle were discussed in lessons at school. Tell me about whether or not issues to do with an LGB lifestyle have been discussed in lessons at college. Tell me about any experiences you had when you chose to come out as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

The sort cards facilitated considerable discussion concerning homophobic bullying, on both personal and group interactional level (Appendix E). The cards were colour coded according to three main groups: types of homophobic bullying, frequency of homophobic bullying and reporting of homophobic bullying. Participants were asked to group types of homophobic bullying according to how often they occurred, using the *frequency* cards as headings (very often; quite often; some of the time; not at all). Participants were then asked to group the bullying types according to how often they were reported, using the *reporting* cards as headings. In order to try and avoid the trap of easy group consensus arising from the first opinions and to promote further reflection, I tried to double-check that no-one disagreed on each occasion where there appeared to be unanimity. When considering any “mentions” of LGB lifestyle issues in classes, students were provided with a list of possible subjects to consider but few participants could recall any mention beyond biological and clinical associations with HIV and AIDS, despite the use of probing questions from myself, as moderator “Can you say more? Can you give me an example?” However, the last question, on personal disclosure, really seemed to bring the discussion alive. From this question, it became apparent that, in order to get a clear picture of how these young people were managing their identities, my research focus needed to consider the interface of teachers, peers and families and the impact of these three key ecosystems on sexual orientation identity formation.

3.5.1 Questionnaire Survey: “algorithimising” the truth?

Sears (1992:147), begins his defence of qualitative research on same-sex attraction in education, by reminding “those who algorithimise reality into probability tables and reify objectivity into treatment groups” that, in the process of objectifying the “other”, the researcher is also compelled to objectify the self. Such studies, according to Sears, impose order and structure, to try and ensure methodological rigour but lack any true sense of the complexity or richness of the human condition. Quantitative data collection methods, especially questionnaire surveys have, in the past, been used extensively in LGB research, primarily to extrapolate generalisations concerning the experiences of the LGB population and the effects of heterosexism on sexual orientation identity formation. In this way, quantitative research can, it is hoped, be used to change social values and inform social policy. Hakim (2000:77) has commented on the two main attractions of a survey which samples a minority population group: its *transparency* and *accountability*. The methods and principles of survey data-collection, she argues, can be made more visible than qualitative data collection, in the form of documents such as introductory letters, questionnaire forms and code-books. “Evidence” such as this is thought to be more accessible than tape-recordings of interviews or group interactions. Like Savin-Williams (2005), however, Sears is concerned that well-meaning positivistic approaches, which focus on the negative aspects of LGB identity formation continue to pathologise young people as victims of social oppression.

Courtenay (1978:26) identifies the characteristics of an effective questionnaire as:

designed specifically to suit the study’s aims and the nature of its respondents. It needs to have some of the same properties as a good law: to be clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable.

Precise wording and considerable piloting were needed to ensure that questions were easy to understand and were unlikely to be interpreted in different ways, thereby minimising the chances of misinterpretation. Morgan (1997:25) identifies the benefits of extensive pre-testing, with small groups, to facilitate questionnaire design. These include capturing the domains that need to be measured and determining the dimensions which build up these domains, as well as ensuring that item wordings effectively convey the researcher’s intentions. Over a two month period, in 2006, my questionnaire was pre-tested with a group of 25 fifteen-year-old PSHE students and a group of ten sixth form college students from the Gay-Straight Alliance at my workplace college, piloted with a further 18 sixth form college English Language

Advanced Level students and finally sampled with 159 Advanced Level Sociology and Psychology students (actual response = 116 students).

To elicit answers which the participant believes to be truthful, the survey endeavoured to engage interest and motivate the students to complete the survey. There are two limitations of the self-completed survey. Although it is possible to improve the participants' likelihood of completing the survey, by interspersing attitudinal questions with factual information retrieval, for example, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to verify whether the survey respondents were telling the truth. I introduced my survey to the main population sample, Advanced Level Sociology and Psychology students, with a short presentation, followed by questions and answers on my research methodology, which made these students feel as if they were part of the data collection process. Students, in my experience, are generally not well-disposed towards questionnaires as they are asked to complete them frequently, in school or college, for the purposes of course or student services evaluation. However, on this occasion, because the students felt as if they were assuming dual roles as student participants and co-researchers, they were enthusiastic to participate. Further, as social science students, many had a strong sense of social in/justice and were keen to "get back" information to those people who had power over them.

There were several reasons why I adopted a mixed methods approach for data collection. Firstly, I wanted to provide a quantifiable descriptive context for the personal accounts of victimisation and disclosure which were emerging from the focus group discussions. My original research focus was specifically educational so, once again, respondents were asked to recall any experiences of homophobic abuse (cyber, physical, psychological or verbal) which they had witnessed in the previous two years of compulsory education at secondary school or at sixth form college. They were also asked to indicate in which subjects they had heard any "mentions" of LGBT lifestyle issues and to anonymously comment on the experiences of anybody they knew who had disclosed feelings of same-sex attraction to peers and/or family. The concepts and indicators for this questionnaire were, therefore, very similar to those adopted in the focus group question scheme. However, there were significant sampling differences between the two methods of data collection as the survey included both heterosexual and same-sex attracted students.

I was initially concerned that I would have difficulty accessing LGB identifying young people who would participate in an interview or group discussion, for data-collection purposes. I hoped that these LGB identifying young people might be more prepared to complete an anonymous questionnaire which could be returned to me safely sealed in

an envelope, resting assured that they were not being asked to “out” themselves publicly. To further protect the privacy of these LGB-identifying students, the sample consisted of all the social science students at my workplace college, irrespective of sexual orientation. This expansion of the survey’s scope, including the perspectives of heterosexual, as well as same-sex attracted students, I hoped, would afford interesting comparisons with earlier surveys on homophobic bullying such as Rivers (1995) or Alexander (1998). Ultimately, I sought to find out what is going on in British schools and families, today and to extend these surveys further.

The sample survey of my research coincided with an important national internet survey, entitled “Speak Out”, which was conducted by the Schools Health Education Unit, on behalf of Stonewall UK: a charity concerned with campaigning and lobbying for the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women. The focus for Stonewall’s survey bore similarities to my own questionnaire focus, the main conceptual issues being anti-LGB bullying, school practices, educational achievements and absenteeism. It is my understanding that, by including educational achievement and absenteeism, Stonewall were seeking to test River’s (2000) hypothesis correlating the high levels of anti LGB bullying experienced by four out of five LGB teenagers, in his study, with high levels of absenteeism and poor progression rates to further education. The 2007 Stonewall report resulting from this survey (“The School Report”) confirms that this is the largest poll of young gay people ever conducted in Britain, with responses from 1,145 young people. The usual reservation concerning internet surveys applies, however, which is that it is impossible to verify whether respondents are being truthful regarding age, sexual orientation or any harassment experiences mentioned.

Because my own small-scale study of 116 students consisted of heterosexual and LGB students, I chose to ask about personal experiences of anti-LGB bullying, school practices and “mentions” in the curriculum. I chose this last aspect because I was interested in comparing my results with earlier findings of the curricula “mentions” of LGBT lifestyle issues in the studies of Trenchard and Warren (1984) and Ellis and High (2004). As this questionnaire survey was designed to inform my primary data-collection (focus-groups) with a contextual backdrop, I subsequently decided to disregard the section of my questionnaire concerned with curricula, as my research focus became more concerned with identity formation and I realised that a much larger survey was needed to be able to extrapolate generalisations concerning the mention of LGBT lifestyle issues in the curricula.

There are some obvious sampling differences between the “Speak Out” survey and my own survey, “Same-sex attraction in schools”, resulting from the fact that Stonewall’s

survey was a large-scale, broad, Internet-based survey, intended for any LGBT identifying young people in the UK. The sample age range differed, in the two surveys, because the Stonewall survey was seeking to gain a wider sample of respondents in the age range 13 (and under) to 19 years, whereas my survey was specifically concerned with sixth-formers (16-19 year olds), from one geographical area, though, in many cases, they were recalling experiences from the last two years of compulsory schooling, as well as more recent experiences.

Like my own survey, Stonewall's was informed by earlier research including Rivers' study (2000) which suggested that four out of five LGB identifying students do not progress into post-compulsory education, because of homonegative bullying, despite attaining the British government target of five or more G.C.S.Es with A* to C grades. Respondents were asked how many GCSE exams they had sat, how many GCSEs they had passed at grade C or above and whether they had pursued any further education after GCSEs. These questions were not relevant for my own sample because participants were a heterogeneous mix of sexual orientations and most had already progressed to a level three further education course requiring five GCSEs, at grade C or above, as an entry requirement. This did remind me, however, that the LGB identifying participants in my survey (19%) were unrepresentative of the 80% of LGB people, in Rivers' study who had not progressed into further education. Once again, it must also be remembered that the participants in Rivers' study were adults (mean age 28 years) recalling their experiences retrospectively. In many cases, the educational experiences examined in Rivers' study, therefore, dated from the 1980s and early 1990s. Stonewall's survey was setting out to test Rivers' findings, in a contemporary British context. Given the small-scale nature of my research and the heterogeneous mix of my questionnaire sample population, I did not feel that it was justifiably viable to test these aspects.

Rivers' study (2001) also establishes a correlation between a high rate of absenteeism, as a result of high levels of homonegative bullying, during the last two years of compulsory secondary education and non-progression to further education. Stonewall's survey asks three rating questions relating to this:

- Have you ever missed a day at school because of anti-gay bullying?
 - No
 - Yes-Once
 - Yes - 2 or 3 times
 - Yes - 4 or 5 times
 - Yes- 6 or more times

- How likely is it that you will miss a day at school in the future because of anti-gay bullying?
 - Very unlikely
 - Not very likely
 - Likely
 - Very likely

- Do you think anti-gay bullying has had an effect on your school work?

My survey included the first of these questions, concerning how many days respondents had missed school, as a result of anti-LGB bullying. However, as my respondents were all sixth form students answering these questions retrospectively about the last two years of compulsory secondary education and their contemporary experiences at sixth form college, I decided not to ask about the future likelihood of absenteeism, due to bullying. Instead, a final open question invited students to make any further comments about any of the following:

- Homophobic bullying
- School or College responses to lesbian, gay or bisexual issues
- Experiences of people coming out as gay, lesbian or bisexual at School or College.

This gave students the opportunity to reflect further on personal experiences and to report any current harassment, anonymously if they chose, which could then be followed up by myself, in a different role, as College Equal Opportunities Co-ordinator.

An examination of some of the key similarities and differences of the two surveys also raises some of the definitional issues which I have addressed in this chapter. The Stonewall survey asks respondents to circle which of the following best describes your sexual orientation:

- Bisexual.
- Gay.
- Heterosexual/Straight.
- Lesbian.
- Unsure/Questioning.

During the first pilot of my own questionnaire, with student members of the Gay-Straight Alliance, at my work-place College, there were objections to the use of these labels. They were seen as constraining, limiting and generally unhelpful. As a result, the fourth question on my questionnaire asked “Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?”

- I am attracted to the opposite sex.
- I am attracted to the same-sex.
- I am attracted to the opposite sex and the same-sex.
- I am not sure.
- None of the above.

During the lesson in which I introduced my research to the social science students and asked for their help in completing the questionnaires, I discussed the problems relating to sexual orientation labels. During the discussion, we clearly defined what was meant by “attraction”, in terms of sexual orientation, and students recognised that this was not an attempt to “fix” their sexuality in finite terms and were, therefore, comfortable with this difficult part of the questionnaire.

Both surveys foregrounded the key section on experiences of homophobic bullying, in different ways. The Stonewall survey prefixed their main section on different types of homonegative bullying with a series of questions designed to test the respondents’ perceptions of the degree of LGB inclusion in the school and their feelings of isolation in the school community. In this section, respondents were asked to rate their responses to such statements as: “My school is an accepting, tolerant school where I feel welcome”, “I feel I have good friends at school” and “There is an adult at school who I can talk to about being gay, lesbian or bisexual”. This illustrates the process, identified by De Vaus (2007:48) as “descending the ladder of abstraction”, during which questions move from the broad to the specific, as a means of tapping abstract concepts and developing specific dimension indicators. My own foregrounding of this central section of the survey, took place during the preliminary scene-setting lesson, in which I was able to raise the issues of homophobic bullying and collectively agree a definition which was acceptable to all class members. Because of this preliminary discussion, which all survey respondents participated in, it was unnecessary to foreground the topic of homophobic bullying with an extensive series of questions though I acknowledge the advantage of this approach in a large self-completed survey, particularly when the questions are dealing with sensitive topics.

Finally, both surveys sought to elicit information regarding the types of homophobic bullying experienced by participants, in similar ways. In both surveys, participants were asked if they had experienced or seen somebody else experience anti-gay bullying and, if so, what form it had taken. Participants were asked to tick boxes from a list of bullying types which covered a spectrum of cyber, physical, psychological, and verbal forms of abuse. In this way, comparison could be drawn with Rivers (1995) retrospective survey of 37 men and women recalling educational experiences, with the obvious addition of cyber abuse. Rivers had, himself, used a modified version of the bullying questionnaire devised by Olweus (1993). Although my questionnaire was replicating this section of the Stonewall survey, the purposes of the two surveys were very different. Stonewall's survey was a large, national survey intended to inform policy-making decisions whereas my own questionnaire survey was a small-scale survey, which was designed to contextualise my primary qualitative data collection.

Mixing Methods: Linking Focus Groups to Surveys

Wolff *et al.* (1993:120), identify four main ways in which focus groups can complement sample surveys. Firstly, focus groups can be conducted before the survey to facilitate the whole process of questionnaire design from the formulation of questions to the fine-tuning of wording or to try to anticipate problems with hard-to-reach sample population. Secondly, focus groups can be used to evaluate the survey process, soon after it has been administered, including participants' reactions to the survey and the cognitive processes which influenced their responses. Third, the focus group can be used to corroborate the survey findings and explore any arising issues further. A fourth approach is to conduct the focus groups and sample survey concurrently as complementary components of a unified research design to mutually enhance the analysis and understanding of each method by the other. To these approaches, I would like to add a fifth approach which is to add the survey as a means of widening the sample, accessing a hard-to reach population, and providing a contextual background, to primary qualitative data, which will test earlier theoretical assumptions and widen the contemporary picture.

In the next chapter, I describe the beginning of the research process and relate how I established an initial context for my focus group analyses by combining a questionnaire survey of students from Millais Sixth Form College with a management interview and a questionnaire survey of teachers from Palmerston Secondary School.

Chapter 4: Beginning the Research Journey

In this chapter I present aspects of findings related to the early part of this research. I examine how and why this study originated connected to the experiences of one young woman, who I will call Alice, which acted as a catalyst for this research process. To provide a contemporary backdrop for the qualitative analysis which follows in later chapters, I analyse the findings of questionnaire surveys conducted with Sixth Form College students (Millais Sixth Form College) and Secondary School teachers (Palmerston Secondary School). I also analyse interviews with members of a Secondary School Management Team (Palmerston Secondary School).

4.1 Alice's story

This chapter begins with a story. I choose to begin with Alice's story because, like Plummer (1995:168), I believe that "good story-tellings may come very close to the life as experienced". Alice's experiences do not only represent a significant moment in her own life-course. They have also become a turning point or "epiphany" (Denzin, 1989:22) in my life as teacher, tutor, postgraduate research student and gay male. As such, they represent a narrative springboard for this research journey which began in the summer of 2005 with the following observations:

I feel as if I have let Alice down. I feel as if the College has let Alice down. Why couldn't she tell me what the problem was? Why couldn't she confide in me until it was too late? Why couldn't she trust me? Alice has fallen by the wayside and I wonder how many other students have done the same.
(Field notes, June 2005).

I felt a personal responsibility for what happened to Alice, as she had joined my tutor group in November of 2004, having transferred to Millais College, the sixth form college where I work, from the sixth form of a single-sex city comprehensive school in the same city. From the start, Alice's circumstances were shrouded in mystery and she seemed unprepared to talk about the reasons for her transferal, six weeks into the first academic term. I reassured myself, however, that such a situation is not uncommon when things go wrong and students wish to make a "fresh start".

Alice showed great promise, academically, but gradually things started to fall apart. Over a three month period, Alice became a rule-breaker, quickly establishing a trend for poor attendance and punctuality, non-completion of homework and failing to meet deadlines

together with a “lack of respect” for teachers when challenged about these laxities. As a pastoral college tutor, it was my job to try and establish what the problems were and to support Alice’s progress, if necessary using disciplinary systems designed to regulate “inappropriate” behaviour.

Knowing that I would be waiting to discuss these matters with her, Alice avoided my weekly tutor session, could not be contacted by telephone and did not respond to my e-mail messages. As I did not teach Alice and her attendance was poor, the weekly tutor sessions seemed to be the only way of making contact. However, Alice had formed a very close relationship with a fellow tutee (Tanya) who did attend tutor sessions and through Tanya, I was able to persuade her to make an appearance. Alice was not willing to time this in accordance with the start of the hour-long tutor session, sadly, arriving five minutes from the end.

I had several questions for Alice. Firstly, I was puzzled that most of the absences and late arrivals for lessons were in the afternoon: a reversal of the normal trend. I wondered if Alice had a part-time job or if she was being expected to carry out care duties of younger siblings or older relatives at home. Alice was not prepared to explain the reasons for her absences other than an assertion that it was “vital” for her to leave the College most lunch-times and make her one and a half mile journey into the city. Inevitably, she would either return late in the afternoon or decide not to bother returning, at all. During the first two interviews, Alice appeared to be assertive, confident and very self-reliant.

After these difficult meetings, college disciplinary systems required me to become tougher in my lines of enquiry indicating that it would be necessary to inform Alice’s mother, a course of action that she implored me not to follow. Alice’s problems had clearly escalated, by this stage, and there were clear visible indications that she was finding it difficult to cope. She did not want to discuss the causes of these difficulties, however, and was not prepared to seek “counseling” voluntarily. It had become necessary for me to refer Alice to my pastoral line manager. This referral was quickly superseded by a very serious event, however, as Alice became involved in a fight with a group of female students, on the way home from college, leading to a temporary suspension of all participants, pending internal investigation.

One week later Alice was invited to return to college, even though the circumstances surrounding the fight were not fully understood. She appeared in the doorway to my tutor room clutching a “leaving form” and my heart sank. She had aspirations of joining the Royal Navy and seemed to be buoyant, if not relieved, by the opportunity to “move

on” with her life, albeit without any advanced level academic qualifications. She was, at last, prepared to explain recent events. Alice told me that she had confided in a female best friend that she thought she was lesbian, during year eleven, at school. The “friend” had become Alice’s worst enemy and informed her entire class of this disclosure, using a social networking site. Alice had subsequently been subjected to continuous verbal, psychological and physical abuse and this had continued into the sixth form at school. Hopes of a fresh start at Millais College were dashed, as several of the original school perpetrators were now students at Millais.

Asked why she had not reported it to me so that an intervention could resolve the situation, Alice replied, with steely determination: *“I needed to sort it myself. I had to deal with it”*. I took the “it” to refer to the ongoing abuse which Alice had been subjected to and, for the first time, started to understand the social context which had brought about Alice’s rule-breaking: the absenteeism, the lateness, the defensiveness when questioned by teachers. Alice, it emerged, had been journeying two miles from the College to a City centre cafe, most lunch-times, in order to be with similar others: same-sex attracted or gay-friendly peers. Being with others who could share day-to-day experiences, discuss coping strategies and offer hope was more important to Alice than anything else, during this stage of her life.

It occurred to me that Alice’s “problems” had been brought about because she had implicitly broken another code of rules: the institutionalization of heterosexual values, referred to by Rich (1980:652) as “compulsory heterosexuality”, which assumes that men and women are innately attracted to each other, emotionally and sexually, and that heterosexuality is “normal” and universal. It seemed to Alice that peers, parents, teachers and significant others in her life were conspiring to “impose, manage, organise, propogandize and maintain by force” (Rich, 1980:652) identity values that she did not subscribe to. Ultimately, she felt that she was being “coerced, controlled and punished” for “stepping over the line” (Plummer, 1989:202).

Alice had attempted to maintain verbal and non-verbal invisibility, as she was coming to terms with her new-found identity as a young same-sex attracted woman, but her confidante “friend” had forced visibility upon her. Most important, for me, as a closeted gay teacher, Alice did not feel that there were any visible gay, lesbian or bisexual role models that she could trust. Like Alice, I was fully aware of the pressures of the hidden educational curriculum, which communicated clear messages to students and teaching staff about gender roles. I had also witnessed, at first hand, an evolving organisation of peer relationships which appeared to marginalise LGB young people as “others” (Foucault, 1970:326). To be a good role model for students like Alice, I would also

need to face the consequences of being visible. My field notes, at this time, reflected these tensions:

I suppose it's not so much college that has let Alice down as society, as we are reflecting, perhaps even helping to determine, societal expectations. Alice's problems have been caused by resistance to a perceived need for invisibility. I want to help, as a teacher and a researcher, but doing so will entail *facing my own demons* as a gay male teacher. I have told a few close colleagues that I am gay. Many others have probably guessed but it isn't mentioned. My feeling is that many of them don't want it to be mentioned. But if I am going to help the Alices of this world, I will need to face up to this.

Starting research on this topic will mean making a very public statement. My commitment to this issue will mean that many people - managers, teachers, students, parents and governors - will make assumptions about my own sexual status and I will need to be prepared to deal with that. I do feel that I need to do this. LGB young people need good role models and I don't feel I can be a good role model unless I am honest.

(Field notes, June, 2005)

As I look back at these field notes, I find myself reflecting on what these *demons* were that I was wrestling with. They seem to have been born of fear: fear concerning my teaching career, and the anticipation of possible rejection by colleagues, parents, governors and students; fear concerning what others would think of me. I remember wondering whether I would be judged, stigmatised, pathologised, mocked or regarded with suspicion by all those around me: a dangerous person seeking to investigate and examine the invisible and the unspeakable.

But first and foremost, my research journey was not about me, it was about the students that I came into contact with. Alice had made me realise that early twenty-first century Britain could still be a dangerous and hostile place for same-sex attracted teenagers to grow up in. Alice's world seemed remarkably similar to the 1970s world that I had witnessed as a teenager: a world where visibility was cruelly enforced by others, including false "best friends" who became enemies when trusted with a confidence by a confused young LGB person. Fortunately, Alice was able to find confident, self-assured friends who made her feel better about herself. Looking at Alice, I wondered why some of the LGB-identifying teenagers that I had encountered, as a teacher, appeared to be happy, well-adjusted, "out" and proud individuals, whereas others appeared to be in hiding, in denial, suffering and struggling with the effects of

isolation and rejection. I wanted to give LGB teenagers themselves the opportunity to tell me what their experiences were like, as they developed their identities in early twenty-first century Britain.

4.2 Establishing a Context:

4.2.1 Student Survey: Millais Sixth Form College (Appendix A)

Chapter 3 (Investigating Identities), outlines the difficulties which I encountered when approaching secondary schools for data collection concerning teenage LGB issues. I therefore commenced initial focus group data collection at my workplace (Millais College) in February 2006. This college, with a capacity of 1500 students, provides a range of academic (General Certificate of Secondary Education and Advanced Level) and vocational (National Vocational Qualifications and General National Vocational Qualifications) courses for 16 to 19-year-old students of mixed gender.

Like Savin-Williams (2006) and McConaghy (1999), I question the wisdom of extrapolating findings concerning LGB young people from research solely based on a population of highly selective adolescents such as those who identify themselves as gay. As a contextual backdrop for the focus group data obtained from LGB-identifying participants, I surveyed 160 Millais College students in Advanced Level Psychology and Sociology classes, representing a 12% sample of the college student population and achieving a 73% response rate (n=116 students), in June-July 2006. The gender composition of this sample (27% young men; 73% young women) reflects the gender imbalance in the courses themselves. These students, irrespective of their sexual orientations, were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning their experiences of witnessing homophobic victimisation, curriculum mentions of same-sex attraction and disclosure (coming out), in the last two years of compulsory education in secondary school. If the respondents had not experienced homophobic harassment, they were asked to record what they had witnessed relating to others. This approach enabled me to broaden my sample to include the observations of heterosexual students concerning the experiences of LGB youth, as well as the first-hand experiences of self-identified LGB students. I also hoped that this survey would enable me to access a hidden population: those students who might identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual but who would not choose to attend a focus group for a variety of possible reasons including possible peer and/or family reactions to their association with LGB research.

The composition of self-described sexual orientation is not reflective of what would be anticipated based on the current Department of Education (DoE) estimate (six to ten per cent). As evident in Table 4.1, there is a ten per cent increase in LGB respondents

compared with the DoE estimate, which may be due to some subjects attracting more LGB students, in particular female students who identify as attracted to the other sex as well as the same sex. There was some discussion concerning the definition of “sexual orientation”, during the preliminary session when I introduced this questionnaire to the students and invited them to participate in the survey. I was mindful of the different possible interpretations of this term (Klein *et al.*, 1995, 1990; Diamond, 1998, 2000, 2007; Diamond and Savin-Williams, 2000), whether specifically referring to sexual activity or interpreted more broadly to include attraction, attitudes, feelings and lifestyle. This might be reflected in the outcomes detailed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2

Attracted to other sex	Attracted to same-sex	Attracted to other and same-sex
80%	8%	12%

Table 4.1: Millais Sixth Form College; Self-described sexual orientation of students

Sexual Orientation	N (total 116)	N (Male)	% Male	N (Female)	% Female
Attracted to other sex	93	23	20%	70	60%
Attracted to same sex	9	6	5%	3	3%
Attracted to other sex and to same sex	14	2	2%	12	10%

Table 4.2: Millais Sixth Form College; Self-described sexual orientation of students according to gender

In conducting this survey, my particular concern was to monitor the educational concerns identified by Rivers (2000, 2001) concerning experiences of homonegative victimisation. Rivers’ study also sought to determine whether there was a correlation between levels of absenteeism, due to homophobic victimisation, and educational achievement in secondary school and the progression rate of LGB students into post-compulsory education. I decided not to try and measure the educational achievements of the LGB identifying respondents in this anonymous survey, as a detailed listing of GCSE subjects and grades might well have affected my response rate. As this survey was being conducted in a sixth form college and many of the respondents had

progressed successfully from secondary school, in the previous year, these were all students who had made the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education. At the time of data-collection (2006), I was mindful that English educational institutions were required by law to collect data concerning these issues relating to ethnicity (The Race Relations Act, 2000), disability (The Disability Discrimination Act, 2006) and gender equality (The Gender Equality Act, 2006) but there was no such requirement for educational institutions to collect data concerning sexual orientation, which is currently still the case at time of writing (2011).

The findings of these survey data demonstrate close correlations with the levels of homonegative abuse identified in numerous studies (Hersheberger & D’Augelli, 1995; Rivers, 1995; Douglas *et al.*, 2001; Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; Warwick *et al.*, 2002; Stonewall, 2007). Table 4.3 illustrates that at secondary and sixth form level, bullying tends to be verbal (being ridiculed, name-calling, etc) more so than physical. Malicious gossip which is spread around the school, often after a student has confided to a “friend”, is reported frequently, alongside psychological forms of bullying such as being ignored or being stared at (intimidating looks). This data also reveals the high levels of homophobic harassment which heterosexual-identifying girls can be subjected to which, as Duncan (1999) has demonstrated, is used by males and females to enforce heterosexual norms of femininity.

Types of harassment	N for type of harassment (total 116)	Gay/Bisexual Male	Lesbian/Bisexual Female	Heterosexual Male	Heterosexual Female
Verbal bullying	79/116 (68%)	8%	12%	9%	39%
Malicious gossip	59/116 (51%)	4%	7%	9%	31%
Being ignored or isolated	44/116 (39%)	5%	9%	5%	20%
Physical	39/116 (34%)	6%	8%	4%	16%
Intimidating looks	39/116 (34%)	6%	11%	3%	14%

Table 4.3: Millais Sixth Form College: levels of homophobic abuse

Frequency of Homophobic harassment experiences

Table 4.4 supports the findings of Rivers (2001), that homophobic bullying frequently occurs in corridors and classrooms, whilst racist bullying tends to occur in the playground or outside the school grounds. It must be remembered, however, that Rivers' research, conducted while Section 28 was still in force, was a retrospective study, the mean age of his respondents being 28 years. My study demonstrates that, post Section 28, high levels of homophobic victimisation still occur in classrooms and corridors, often in the presence of teachers who fail to challenge it.

Location	N for type of harassment (total N 116)	Gay/Bisexual Male	Lesbian/Bisexual Female	Heterosexual Male	Heterosexual Female
School corridors	59/116 (51%)	6%	10%	3%	32%
Social areas	52/116 (45%)	6%	12%	4%	23%
Classrooms	42/116 (36%)	7%	13%	6%	10%
Changing rooms	36/116 (31%)	5%	11%	3%	12%
Walking to school	28/116 (24%)	5%	8%	2%	9%
Travelling to school by bus	16/116 (14%)	4%	7%	1%	2%

Table 4.4: Millais Sixth Form College: Location of Homophobic harassment

This survey also sought to discover the student perceptions of mentions concerning same-sex attraction in the school curriculum. In order to examine this, I included a section in the questionnaire which replicated the questions concerned with curriculum mentions from the work of Trenchard and Warren (1984) and Ellis and High (2004). Trenchard and Warren's pioneering study of London LGB youth was conducted in a pre-Section 28 climate whereas Ellis & High's research replicated the education section of this report in 2001, two years before the repeal of Section 28. Whilst recognising that it was not possible to precisely identify the "effect" of Section 28, in relation to the experiences of the LGB respondents in their study, Ellis and High were nevertheless able to examine some of the different patterns and trends between the two periods. I

was interested to add a third dimension to this project: a small-scale report on the perceptions of teenagers in 2006, three years after the repeal of Section 28. Remembering that I was asking students to recall memories of classroom discussions in secondary schools during the previous two years (Years 10 and 11), I was interested to discover whether, in the experiences of these heterosexual and LGB-identifying young people, the repeal of Section 28 had led to more “mentions” of same-sex attraction and whether these discussions were thought to be “helpful”. I agree with Ellis and High (2004:215) (see also Chadwick, 1995:33) that, given contemporary cultural and social representations of same-sex attraction, “any mention of homosexuality has significance that is worth investigating”. Respondents were asked to name the subjects in which same-sex attraction had been mentioned. Participants were then asked to nominate whether these mentions had been “helpful” (positive) “unhelpful” (negative) or if there had been no mentions at all in that subject area. Table 4.5 details the subjects which these “mentions” relate to and records whether or not these “mentions” were considered to be “helpful” or not:

Curriculum subject	Helpful mentions	Unhelpful mentions	Not mentioned
English	9	2	4
PSHE/sex education	24	24	
Religious education	2	15	
Biology	7	4	
Sociology	3	2	
General Studies	10		
Art and Design	2		3
Psychology	5		

Table 4.5: Millais Sixth Form College: “Helpful” mentions related to subject areas

It is important to remember that there had been several important changes to the educational landscape in the three year period prior to this survey, including the repeal of Section 28 and the introduction of the Every Child Matters agenda. The participants in this study were recording their perceptions of curriculum “mentions” which had been experienced during this period. It is disconcerting to see the equal number of “helpful and unhelpful mentions” in PSHE and the proportionately large number of “unhelpful mentions” in Religious Education. Table 4.6 compares the findings from the current 2006 study with those of Trenchard and Warren (1984) and Ellis and High (2001).

Curriculum subject		Year 1984 N=416	Year 2001 (n=384)	Year 2006 (n=116)
English	Count	44	113	15
	% within year	10.6	29.6	12.9
PSHE/sex education	Count	11	89	48
	% within year	2.6	23.2	41.4
Religious education	Count	43	67	17
	% within year	10.3	17.5	14.6
Biology	Count	36	47	11
	% within year	8.7	12.3	9.4
Sociology	Count	19	39	5
	% within year	4.6	10.2	4.3
General Studies	Count	12	16	9
	% within year	4.6	4.2	7.7
Art and Design	Count	4	23	6
	% within year	1	6	5.1
Psychology	Count	2	21	5
	% within year	0.5	5.5	4.3

Table 4.6: Millais Sixth Form College: Comparison of 1984, 2001 and 2006 “Mentions”

It is interesting to note the increase in “mentions” for all subjects in 2001, during the Section 28 era, and the drop in “mentions” in the current 2006 study. In order to consider the implications of these findings further, it is necessary to compare student perceptions of helpfulness, with findings of the 1984 and 2001 studies. This is recorded in Table 4.7.

Helpful mentions?		Year 1984	Year 2001	Year 2006
Helpful	Count	35	65	62
	% within year	8.4	17	53.4
Unhelpful	Count	139	227	47
	% within year	33.4	59.3	40.5
Not mentioned	Count	242	91	7
	% within year	58.2	2.8	6
Total	Count	416	383	116
	% within year	100	100	100

Table 4.7 Millais Sixth Form College: Comparison of 1984, 2001 and 2006 results for question about “helpful”

All of the subjects have a reported decrease in the number of mentions, with English representing a considerable decrease of 16.7% compared with 2001. It is very encouraging to see the marked increase of “helpful” mentions, when comparing the three studies, especially when comparing 2001 with 2006. It can also be seen that there appears to be a marked reduction in the reporting of subjects where same-sex attraction is not mentioned. Ellis and High (2004) comment on the considerable increase in “unhelpful” mentions, when they compare their findings with Trenchard and Warren’s findings from a pre-Section 28 era. My 2006 post-Section 28 study indicates a drop in “unhelpful” mentions but these still represent 40.5% of student responses suggesting that there is still a long way to go and this is confirmed by the frequency of homophobic harassment reported in Table 4.3

Qualitative data from student responses to these questionnaire forms also confirm that for many LGB identifying students it is very difficult, if not impossible, to be visible and to “stay safe” (Every Child Matters, 2003). One student reported of her female friend: “My friend took an overdose because of homophobic bullying”. Another student commented on how peers were often stigmatised as same-sex attracted, even though they were trying to maintain invisibility:

Most people at my school that had feelings for the same sex came out once we had left. I know many people who did not feel confident enough to come out because people already suspected and acted in a hostile way towards them.

Another student recalled a tokenistic attempt to mention same-sex attraction which only managed to minoritise LGB identifying students even further:

It was talked about once: how gay doesn't mean you necessarily have AIDS. Other than that the school never talked to us about homosexuality. My friend confided in someone and then the next day everybody knew. She was humiliated and the bullying increased.

The discursive strategy employed here only serves to pathologise same-sex attraction, associating it with illness and implying that it is something to be tolerated but which is ultimately undesirable. This underlying implication is all the more apparent because of the single attempt to break what appears to be a curricular silence of disapproval. However, a young girl who feels confident enough to confide in a "best" (false) friend, is subjected to a noisy barrage of peer homonegative rejection. Another student commented on the strategy that her school adopted when her trusted confidence with a best/false friend became public knowledge:

When I was at an all girl's school, I wasn't allowed to get changed in the same changing room as the other girls because I'd told my friend I was bisexual.

Several comments in this data suggest the school's complicity in allowing homonegativity to persist. One student remembers how a teacher in a Religious Education class allowed a student-led homophobic discussion to continue without challenging any of the assumptions being made or pointing out the likelihood that there would be LGB identifying students present in the lesson:

In an R.E. lesson, the girls were very homophobic and nothing was said by the teacher.

In hostile environments such as these, many LGB young people who are seeking to make sense of the world and understand the similarities they may share with other human beings, as well as the differences, will be striving to develop strategies for survival.

4.4 In Search of Best Practice

4.4.1

Palmerston Secondary School: Management interviews; student and teacher surveys

The Millais College Questionnaire raised a number of questions concerning how schools respond to young people who are beginning to cross the threshold of same-sex attraction. I also sought to discover how LGB young people are exploring boundaries between invisibility and visibility, in the face of likely danger. Chapter Three details my attempts to extend this contextual backdrop: I approached nine city secondary schools and was invited by the Headteacher of Palmerston Secondary School to conduct semi-structured interviews with members of senior and middle management, as well as a questionnaire survey of teachers and one class of Year 11 PSHE students. By obtaining responses from students and teachers, as well as management, I hoped to progress beyond “an idealised picture wrapped in public relations rhetoric rather than one reflecting the realities people struggle with” (Charmaz, 2006:20). This city community school, with a capacity of 1400, provides secondary level education for 11-16 year olds of mixed gender. Data collection took place between September 2006 and February 2007. At the time of commencing this research, the school had just been graded in an Inspection by Ofsted (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate) as “Outstanding” (Ofsted, 2006). Ex-Palmerston students who were now members of the Millais College Gay-Straight Alliance also assured me that Palmerston was one of the safer places for LGB students to be. I therefore sought to examine those aspects of best educational practice which made Palmerston appear to be so welcoming to young LGB students.

The Ofsted Inspection Report on Palmerston Secondary School (2006) indicates that many “highly effective” changes have taken place in the school, since the previous Inspection five years before, to create a safe and tolerant environment. In particular, the school’s specialist performing arts status is singled out for praise in developing a school ethos centred around teamwork, verbal presentation across the curriculum and, as I will demonstrate, an important challenging of heteronormative notions of gender. The report comments on the school’s “outstanding” attention to the personal development and well-being of students:

Students feel safe and they trust the school’s ability to deal effectively with occasional incidents or conflict or intimidation (Ofsted, 2006)

The report also comments on a strong sense of community prevailing between teachers, students, parents and external agencies. Student behaviour is described as “exemplary” which is partly attributed to the school’s anti-bullying practices which actively involve students as prefects and mentors making important contributions to school programmes such as those designed to combat bullying. In addition, the report praises the school’s links with external agencies to ensure that all students, including those who are vulnerable, have access to all the possible sources of support that they might need. This whole-school approach to improve the school ethos is reflected in the improved academic achievements of students aged fifteen. Over a three year period (2003-6), the percentage of fifteen-year-olds achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C had steadily improved to exceed the national benchmark by at least five per cent.

To prepare for the first interview, with the Deputy Head at Palmerston Secondary School, I analysed the school’s policies regarding Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and Anti-Bullying. I begin with Palmerston’s SRE policy, which was a revised version of the school’s Sex Education Policy originally adopted in October 1995. The revision of this policy, in 2001, meant that the rationale had been updated to include the DfEE Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (2000:5) which states that Sex and Relationship Education is:

lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or activity.

This “guidance” from central government is clearly underpinned by the legacy of Section 28 warning against the “promotion” of same-sex attraction and advancing a “hidden curriculum” (Plummer, 1989:202) which communicates clearly defined gender roles centred on normative heterosexual values. An immediate tension is created by the Every Child Matters agenda (author, 2003) which states that young people must “stay safe” and “enjoy” education. Palmerston’s SRE policy seeks to help pupils recognise the “physical and emotional” factors associated with established relationships and the risks associated with “indiscriminate sexual behaviour” - no apparent heterosexist bias, there. But, inevitably, given the underlying assumptions of the SRE guidance, the “benefits of mutually supportive, stable relationships” are considered in the context of “the value of family life and the responsibilities of parenthood”. This policy is clearly governed by a heterosexual presumption (Savin-

Williams, 1990:1) which places family values alongside parenting. Three years after the repeal of Section 28 (2003), it is clear that any school which seeks, as Palmerston does, to create an ethos which includes LGB identifying students, will need to find ways of negotiating these tensions.

In seeking to create a community of students, teachers, parents and governors who are all committed to a strong anti-bullying ethos, Palmerston's Anti-Bullying Policy (2007) adopts a direct, honest stance from the start:

However slight or infrequent the incidence of bullying, no school can claim that "there is no bullying here". Every school has some degree of bullying and parents and the wider community know this.

Clear objectives are stated for all staff and a whole-school co-ordinated approach to raising awareness about bullying behaviour and the school's anti-bullying policy is adopted and promoted through dedicated curriculum time, assemblies and the School Council. Departmental staff also consider how they can promote anti-bullying values in subject lessons. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for safe spaces where students feel they can go, during non-teaching time, to contact staff, or peers for mentoring support. A "bully box" is available, at all times, for students to report harassment and witnesses are encouraged to report incidents rather than placing the onus on the students who have been targeted. There are specific guidelines for those middle and senior managers who deal directly with bullying incidents: whilst recognising that a number of approaches may be appropriate, a "no blame" restorative justice approach is recommended, which brings bullies and victims together (with the victim's approval) to enable the perpetrator to see the incident/s through the eyes of the victim.

Informed by these policies, I conducted the first semi-structured interview (September 2006) with Palmerston's Deputy Headteacher, who I call Tom Ackroyd, the senior manager who had responsibility for implementing the school's Anti-Bullying policy. I was particularly interested to discover what else he could tell me about the school's ethos, how this ethos had developed and the implications for LGB identifying students. Tom began by referring to the school's Performing Arts academy status which the school had assumed in 2003 and which he believed had a very high credibility in the school culture. All students, male or female, were now encouraged to specialise in dance, drama and/or music from the age of eleven. An extensive programme of performing arts events took place throughout the year, including events such as a B-boy dance night, Battle of the Bands, dance trips to the local arts centre and school

dance awards. This, he believed, had helped to build students' confidence and break down the heterosexist stereotypes which were so often responsible for bullying related to gender and sexuality.

There were no class PSHE lessons specifically dedicated to LGB representations and there was no whole school policy to ensure that LGB issues were addressed in different subject areas across the curriculum. This, Tom claimed, was a deliberate strategy to avoid minoritising LGB students and "putting them on the spot". Instead, there were several dedicated Sexual Health days, away from normal curriculum teaching, when speakers from external agencies were invited into the school but this would be confined to discussions about safe sex. Similarly, there was no specific singling out of homophobic bullying. Instead, all kinds of bullying, whether racist, disablist, homophobic or sexist were addressed by the whole-school during tutorials with Year Coordinators, anti-bullying PSHE lessons and the anti-bullying week which happened in November, when visiting speakers from external organisations and assemblies were invited to attend with stalls. When asked if he thought there was still a danger of students being minoritised, if they felt under-represented by the curriculum, Tom spoke quite forcefully in a discourse of political neutrality which, nevertheless, seemed to be underpinned by nervousness, perhaps generated by the government's SRE (2000) policy, still in place, and the legacy of Section 28:

We should not allow personal agendas to determine school policies. Schools are not designed to serve political agendas. They are designed to serve moral agendas – that's to do with right and wrong. You do not want the school to have a pinko-liberal pro-gay sex reputation but there has to be a point where you say "it's about serving the needs of all students in this school regardless of sexual orientation or the colour of their skins". If the Every Child Matters agenda really does mean every child, then the schools have to front that up regardless of how uncomfortable it is for some members of staff.

As Tom spoke, there was a real sense of the political constraints which prevented a school such as Palmerston from being more open about LGB identity. There was a clear awareness of the difficulties that he felt some teachers might experience as facilitators of LGB visibility in the classroom (feeling "uncomfortable"), perhaps due to a lack of teacher training in issues relating to (homo) sexuality (Warwick *et al.*, 2004). There was also a very real desire to provide a more comprehensive programme of Sex and Relationship Education: one which fulfils the task of supporting all young people through their physical, emotional and moral development. The SRE policy which was still in place had been revised in 2001 and was, therefore, subject to the constraints of

Section 28, which were no longer in place at the time of this interview. The SRE guidance (2000) which determined the rationale was still very much in place, however, evidence of the legacy of Section 28. Tom's imperative about the importance of political neutrality and his specific concerns about the possibility of the school gaining a "pinko-liberal pro-gay sex reputation" seemed to evoke 1980s pre-Section 28 Conservative concerns about social liberals attempting to develop an identity politics and social justice agenda around sexuality and gender. In this way, political constraints continued to maintain a strangle-hold on Palmerston's attempts to safeguard the human rights of all students and staff, including LGB young people.

I was interested to discover what happens if an LGB young person discloses to a member of staff that she or he believes they might be same-sex attracted. Tom replied that at the time of the last Ofsted Inspection, in 2001, any support for LGB students in Palmerston School would have been provided confidentially by a school nurse or a counsellor, thereby rendering LGB identity as embarrassing, shameful and problematic. Much progress had been made, however. At Palmerston, in 2006, the policy was to refer the student to a Progress Leader (Middle Manager) who would meet the student. If it was felt that the young person needed some help with the coming out process, particularly with the family, there would be further discussion with a member of Senior Management probably resulting in a referral to an Outreach Educational Social Worker. This person was employed by a coalition of four secondary schools, including Palmerston, to individually support any young people who were experiencing difficulties with personal development. She would discuss disclosure strategies with the student and visit the family home with the student, if he or she so wished, to facilitate the coming out process.

In this way, the school seems to recognise the significance of identifying with a stigmatised identity, particularly one which is concealable. In particular, researchers (Savin-Williams, 1994; Frable, Platt & Hoey, 1998; Smart & Wegner, 2000; Frost & Bastone, 2007) have demonstrated the likely long-term consequences of concealing LGB identity including impaired interpersonal relationships, damaged self-esteem and a preoccupation with the stigmatised identity as well as the disastrous consequences which could result from disclosure of LGB identity which has not been thought out or managed carefully, including likely rejection and victimisation. The school's response appears to be a sensitive, well thought-out intervention which seeks to avoid the frequently reported consequences of LGB identity fragmentation (Rivers, 2001; Savin-Williams, 2004; Stonewall, 2007) – absence, behavioural problems and increased vulnerability – by discussing visibility management strategies (Lasser & Wicker, 2007) and facilitating acceptance within the family unit, thereby aiding identity integration.

Having identified two examples of LGB inclusive best practice, relating to the creation of a performing arts culture and the provision of pastoral support for LGB coming out, my data collection at Palmerston Secondary School continued with a group interview of five Progress Leaders (PL): middle managers with responsibility for academic achievement and pastoral development. I began by asking the Progress Leaders if they were aware of specific examples of homophobic victimisation. The general consensus was that physical and verbal abuse would always be challenged by teachers and that students would have confidence reporting it. Cyber-bullying was presented as a particular challenge which the Progress Leaders accepted had not yet been fully addressed by the school. I then asked if they had heard examples of the word “gay” being used as a noun or an adjective in a pejorative sense to refer to an action, a person, a type of behaviour or an object as dysfunctional (Athanases & Connor, 2008; Stonewall, 2007; NUT, 2009). Following general agreement, I asked for some specific examples of when and where it was used in the school. One Progress Leader claimed that it was in constant use and offered an explanation for this:

I think it’s part of the language, now, particularly as the meaning of the word “gay” has changed over the last fifty years. I think its recent meaning is an accepted meaning. It used to mean happy and gregarious, then it had sexual overtones and now it’s a widely accepted way of addressing something that’s not right. It’s moved up the language spectrum so that you can now expect adults to use it as well as children.

This response goes to the very heart of a major dilemma which continues to trouble British secondary schools: whether or not to challenge the use of “gay” as a pejorative. As the participant indicated above, the word has shifted its meanings so that it currently appears to have a dual function: to refer to same-sex attraction and to refer to something or somebody as dysfunctional. Very often the two different meanings are seen as quite separate and, therefore, the claim is made that the pejorative “gay” bears no relation to same-sex attraction. In this way, students do not appear to understand or care about the implications of saying “that’s so gay!” for developing positive LGB self-esteem and identity development. This was recognised by two Progress Leaders who believed that it now replaced the derogatory term “Queer”, which was generally seen as unacceptable by staff and students. Whilst there was a general agreement that the pejorative “gay” was implicitly homophobic there was still considerable uncertainty as to whether it should be school policy to challenge it. One Progress Leader commented:

I think it would be very difficult to challenge. I think it's become such an accepted word you would be banging your head against a brick wall. Last year, one of our year eleven boys used the word "gay" towards another boy and I picked him up on this and said "it's unacceptable". Then I had a phone call from Mum who said "well, I think it's an acceptable word, nowadays, everybody uses it." So I think we'd have a real battle on our hands.

Without a common school policy, which sees the pejorative "gay" as equally offensive as other terms of abuse such as "nigger" or "spastic", teachers feel disempowered and unable to challenge its use, even if they are offended by it. Athanases and Connor (2008:24) demonstrate that a lack of educational interventions concerning language and power and the ways in which language can harm, perhaps due to linguistic naivety, has led to student (and, in some cases, staff and parents) lack of awareness and even indifference. To address this, it is recommended that a whole-school zero-tolerance policy be introduced at the beginning of the year, all academic and support staff trained so that its use can be collectively challenged and a letter sent to home to parents and caregivers to explain the rationale behind this policy. To legitimise this policy, schools need to have the legislated backing of central Government (not the case in 2006) and Ofsted Inspectors.

The discussion with the Progress Leaders continued by considering whether it was possible to collect Quality data concerning LGB students. This could either be quantitative and qualitative data which monitors incidents of homophobic victimisation similar to the data which schools were required to collect at time of data-collection, concerning sexism, racism and disablism, or data which monitors students' GCSE results to see if academic achievement were affected by LGB identity development, as recommended by Stonewall (2007). Four Progress Leaders thought that it was not possible to collect such data, due to LGB stigmatisation, one was not sure and one believed that it was possible but only retrospectively, as year eleven students were completing a leavers' questionnaire. Mitchell *et al.* (2008:13) have commented on the heterosexist assumptions which have governed LGB data collection, in the past, resulting in the reinforcement of gender norms and marginalisation of alternative sexualities:

The absence of reliable statistical data on sexual orientation presents a major obstacle to making progress on tackling discrimination and tackling inequality.

Mitchell *et al.* (2008) demonstrate the vital need for statistical evidence concerning same-sex attraction. Where no data is collected, a vicious circle emerges whereby no

data is collected, due to the school’s unwillingness or concerns about parental responses, and this, in turn, perpetuates LGB in/visibility, danger, fear and mistrust. Quinlivan (2002:21) has reminded us, though, that it is important to ensure that the data collection should not pathologise LGB students as “at risk”: “This process reinforces notions of disease and deviance and simultaneously operates to normalise heterosexuality”. Rather than abnormalising and marginalising LGB students, whilst simultaneously legitimising heterosexuality, schools need to ensure that the data collection of information concerning LGB students is contextualised in a Quality data process which seeks to alleviate and monitor discrimination of all kinds.

As this group discussion with Palmerston middle managers unfolded, it became more apparent to me that there were uncertainties concerning policies and procedures, concerning LGB youth. I next decided to examine some of the experiences and opinions of front-line teaching staff. A questionnaire was administered (see Appendix D) which asked teachers about their experiences of homophobic bullying in and out of school, experiences of LGB student disclosure, LGB curriculum mentions, training regarding same-sex attraction and school LGB support groups. All teaching staff (108) were invited to participate and 38 responded (35% return). Table 4.8 details the findings concerning types of homophobic bullying witnessed by these teachers inside and outside the school.

Types of harassment (total N 38)	Occurring inside school	Occurring outside school
Verbal	35 (92%)	10 (26%)
Intimidating looks	13%	4 (11%)
Physical	3 (8%)	6 (16%)
Being ignored or isolated	9 (24%)	5 (13%)
Malicious gossip	20 (53%)	4 (11%)
Phone bullying via text	4 (11%)	4 (11%)
Internet bullying via postings or website	3 (8%)	5 (13%)
Chat forums (MSN etc)	4 (11%)	
e-mails	4 (11%)	3 (8%)
Blogs	4 (11%)	

Table 4.8: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: Types of Homophobic Bullying

It is interesting to compare this teacher report of homonegative abuse with the Millais College student report of abuse experienced in various secondary schools (Table 4.3). There is a disconcertingly high report of verbal abuse at Palmerston (Millais: 68%; Palmerston: 92% occurring in school). Verbal was defined as referring to both written and oral abuse and six teachers (16%) chose to add comments which related to this abuse. Five of these referred to the use of “gay” as a pejorative term, a personal put-down, and a hate-word. A Design and Technology teacher referred to the tagging of walls and school equipment with the word “gay”, sometimes alongside a student’s name. There are similar levels of homophobic malicious gossip reported between the two surveys (Millais: 51%; Palmerston: 51% occurring in school) and one teacher commented on the inevitability of this in school environments and the need for students to “get used to it over time”. It is pleasing to see that there is a reduction in psychological abuse: being ignored or isolated (Millais: 39%; Palmerston 24% occurring in school) and a considerable reduction in the reporting of physical abuse (Millais: 34%; Palmerston: 8% occurring in school). The reporting of other types of homonegative abuse, by teachers at Palmerston Secondary School, indicate that the perceptions of these teachers are that levels of LGB victimisation are low. The second section of the teacher survey asked teachers about the location of homophobic bullying which they had heard about or seen and findings are detailed in Table 4.9.

Locations of Homophobic Bullying	
Travelling to/from school on the bus	1 (3%)
Walking to school	1 (3%)
School corridors	16 (42%)
School social areas	8 (21%)
Classrooms	12 (32%)
Changing rooms	2 (5%)

Table 4.9: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: location of homophobic bullying

The reported locations of this victimisation confirm the findings of Rivers (2000) that most homonegative abuse takes place in classrooms, corridors and school social areas, unlike racist abuse which tends to occur in playgrounds and outside the school buildings and this is confirmed in both Millais and Palmerston surveys, indicating that students recognise the unacceptability of racist abuse but do not consider homonegative abuse to be as “bad” confirming the findings of Duncan (1999), Thurlow (2001) and Athanses and Connor (2008). Teachers were next asked if they thought

that discussions about same-sex attraction should be included in PSHE (Table 4.10) or elsewhere in the curriculum (Table 4.11)

Yes	29 (77%)
No	4 (11%)
Not sure	3 (8%)

Table 4.10: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: Curriculum mentions in PSHE

Yes	11 (29%)
No	14 (37%)
Not sure	10 (26%)

Table 4.11: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: Curriculum mentions elsewhere

Table 4.10 demonstrates that some teachers have concerns about the inclusion of same-sex attraction in PSHE, even though a high percentage of teachers agreed with this inclusion. Two teachers believed that it should be delivered by “trained professionals only” and two teachers specified that it should be included “in order to educate, normalise reactions to same-sex attraction and prevent bullying but not to promote”. One teacher was concerned about PSHE discussions about same-sex attraction “putting unnecessary pressure on LGB students”. Possibly as a consequence of the repeal of Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act (2003) and the government mandate that “Every Child Matters”, teachers seem to recognise that there are now expectations that LGB issues will be addressed in the classroom. A tension emerges between the need to ensure equality for all and the demands of the “achievement agenda” of exams, tests and league tables identified by Alldred (2003:80) and the predominantly scientific “ultra-rationalist” approach to sexuality (Epstein, 2003:35) evident in the government PSHE guidelines (DfES, 2000). Timetable pressures emerge which make more curriculum demands on teachers thereby relegating discussion about same-sex attraction to PSHE, lessons which parents are allowed to withdraw their children from, if they so wish. Table 4.11 demonstrates that the majority of teachers had reservations about including discussions across the whole curriculum despite the recommendation of Warwick *et al.* (2004), Stonewall (2007) and the NUT (2009). Stonewall (2007:17) claim that LGB students who have been taught about gay issues are thirteen per cent less likely to experience homophobic bullying and recommends:

Schools need to consider ways in which sexual orientation can be integrated into the curriculum, in a positive and constructive way, which enables both heterosexual and gay pupils to understand and respect difference and diversity.

Kumashiro (2002) argues that, if same-sex attraction is to be regarded as a viable alternative to heterosexuality, subject teachers need to consider ways in which the “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1986) which currently pervades the curriculum can be “de-naturalised”. Kumashiro (2002:54) demonstrates that the English Literature curriculum, in particular, is often criticised for its middle-class or wealthy male heterosexist bias, in terms of authors and characters. He adds:

By only learning about certain groups and perspectives in society, students are not learning about alternative perspectives and the contributions, experiences, and identities of those Othered, and by not learning such knowledge, students are not troubling the (mis)knowledge they already have.

When “canon” literary texts do touch on same-sex attraction, Kumashiro suggests, this is often rendered invisible in the classroom. If students are studying Shakespeare sonnets, they need to know that many of these sonnets were written to a man; if they are studying the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, their understanding will be enhanced by an understanding that Duffy identifies as same-sex attracted. Kumashiro argues that this should equally apply to other curriculum areas. If students are studying a Schubert symphony, a painting by Michealangelo or the mathematical achievements of Alan Turing, some understanding of the artists’ sexual orientation will help to develop an understanding of the cultural and personal contexts in which they lived. Through raising LGB visibility across the curriculum, in this way, students are less likely to regard same-sex attraction as simply another “issue” alongside drugs, alcohol and safe sex.

Raising LGB visibility will also facilitate the process of disclosure to others such as peers, teachers and family members. Survey participants were asked if they knew of any students who had chosen to “come out” as lesbian, gay or bisexual, whilst at school (Table 4.12)

Yes	29 (77%)
No	9 (24%)
Not sure	3 (8%)

Table 4.12: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: Student experiences of disclosure

The high percentage of teachers who responded in the affirmative demonstrates that levels of LGB visibility, at Palmerston school are high. Not all of this LGB visibility will be by choice, however, as some LGB young people will have their visibility managed by others. Teachers narrated many incidents concerning students who chose to disclose an LGB identity or who appeared to be struggling with LGB identities. A Physical Education teacher describes three boys who would not go into the changing rooms and wanted to be excused from P.E. The boys told the teacher that no-one was dealing with the “real issue” but they did not want it to go any further. A drama teacher comments on a gay male year eleven student who seemed to have problems accepting his sexuality, even though it appeared to be accepted by the class and teacher. He attempted suicide on several occasions and his self-esteem was “severely affected”. Of these students, one teacher commented: “Sometimes because they are too young they don’t understand what is happening to them”.

The difficulties experienced by these students correspond to the coalescence of “personal” and “social” identities (passive, active, politicised) identified by Bradley (1996:25). Several teachers comment on the ways in which LGB young people lost control of their LGB visibility as they tried to make the transition from *passive* to *active* identity. A Science teacher describes how, after receiving counselling, one female student decided that she would like to tell a best friend in confidence. The friend told other girls in a female friendship group, resulting in a very public argument, on the way to school, which was witnessed by many other students. A dance teacher narrates how a year 11 student came out to a group of friends who then discussed it publicly in an extra-curricular club so that the whole class got to hear about it. To avoid this happening, students will sometimes choose a teacher to disclose to. A P.E. teacher explains how a girl “quietly” told her that she thought she might be bisexual and how “a great weight was then lifted off her shoulders”. A drama teacher was asked by a male student to help him explain to his peers that he had a boyfriend.

Teachers comment on some students who already seemed to be supremely confident with their *active identities* and were even moving towards *politicised identities*. These students were accepted by other peers and friends when they disclosed an LGB status. They tended to be females rather than males who enjoyed good relationships with

others, although one teacher commented on a well-known year eleven group of gay male students, six of whom were very open about their sexuality. Teachers comment on the ability of these students to form supportive peer networks with other LGB students which met informally during the breaks and lunchtimes. Besides establishing friendship networks, these students also “asserted” their coming out through their dress and physical appearance and had a strong political awareness concerning LGB rights. The teachers who narrated these episodes felt able and confident to respond to these students and it is a tribute to these teachers that these students felt able to confide in them. An English teacher commented, however, that: “if teachers feel uncomfortable talking about this, it will do more harm than good.” If only a few teachers feel confident in facilitating coming out disclosures there appear to be implications concerning the need for training. Palmerston teachers were asked if they had received any internal or external training which was concerned with homophobic bullying or discussions concerning same-sex attraction in the classroom (Table 4.13).

	Training received	No training
Homophobic bullying	2 (5%)	34 (95%)
Discussions concerning same-sex attraction in the classroom	1 (3%)	35 (97%)

Table 4.13: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: External or internal anti-homophobia teacher training provided

The lack of staff training, identified in Table 4.13, confirms the findings of Douglas *et al.* (2001): initial teacher training and in-service staff development training provide little or no support for teachers who wish to support LGB students and challenge homophobia. To date, there has not been any published research which establishes how many UK Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) courses include same-sex attraction in the curriculum. The “techno-rational” world-view and failure to explore “the eroticism associated with sexuality” (Sears 1992:18), which has pervaded the teaching of sexuality in Britain for more than a decade, has meant that emotional and personal aspects of sexuality have been de-emphasised in PGCE courses. Teachers are consequently ill-prepared to talk about LGB life-style, whether in PSHE or in any other subjects. The NUT surveys (2009) indicate that the majority of qualified teachers (Lancashire: 67%; Liverpool: 73%) are in favour of whole-school training which would enable them to address same-sex attraction with confidence. The nervousness generated by this lack of training was very apparent, in the Palmerston Secondary School survey, when teachers were asked whether same-sex attraction should be included in PSHE or elsewhere in the curriculum (Tables 4.10 and 4.11). The majority

of teachers were positive, in their responses, but not confident due to this lack of training.

Alongside initial teacher-training and in-service staff development training, another recommendation by Douglas *et al.* (2001) and Warwick *et al.* (2004) is that schools and colleges facilitate LGBT support groups. Palmerston school teachers were asked if they believed that schools should provide the facility of a support group for students who may identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (Table 4.14). The responses to this question are presented in Table 4.14

Yes	23 (63%)
No	7 (20%)
Not sure	6 (17%)

Table 4.14: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire: Whether or not school should provide an LGB support group

There were five concerns expressed about running an LGB support group or Gay-Straight Alliance. Teachers were especially concerned that, if students were known to be attending such a group, this would lead to an increased amount of bullying, finger-pointing and rumours. One teacher asked “Has anyone asked the pupils if they want one? In a sense you could start to label groups of pupils”. Several teachers thought that the existing Connexions counselling service was sufficient, though this was only available on an individual basis and there was an understanding from one teacher that this could lead to pathologisation as same-sex attraction would then be associated, in many students’ minds, with the need for “support” and “therapy”. Two teachers thought that such a group could exist, after school, on an anonymous basis, in the Connexions room where counselling normally took place. One teacher asked “Will there be one for heterosexuals? Doesn’t this isolate/separate them? Isn’t Connexions enough?” suggesting that this teacher did not fully understand the identity fragmentation which often occurs when a young person begins to identify as same-sex attracted but also signalling the very real worries identified by several other teachers that students might be further isolated and stigmatised as a result of well-meaning “special attention”. Some teachers considered that an LGB support group should only exist if privacy and confidentiality could be assured. A few, however, believed that such a group would have an important function in raising general student awareness of LGB lifestyle issues. All teachers were next asked if they thought that more should be done in secondary schools to increase student awareness of these issues and the findings are detailed in Table 4.15.

Yes	23 (63%)
No	6 (16%)
Not sure	7 (20%)

Table 4.15: Palmerston Secondary School: Teacher Questionnaire – Increasing student awareness

Several teachers suggested that more could be done to increase student awareness about LGB issues but were worried about the implications for an already overloaded time-table. A PE teacher interpreted “issues concerning same-sex attraction” to mean sexual activity and commented “talking about sex could detract from why they are at school – TO LEARN”. A Science teacher recognised that the school often represents a microcosm of societal heterosexism but wasn’t sure if much more could be done at Palmerston:

I believe schools are often homophobic places, reflecting society at large and students are often incredibly insensitive in their attitudes. They will laugh at Graham Norton but will freak out at an overtly gay/lesbian teacher and tease or bully an openly gay student.

These teachers seemed caught in a debate between reflectionist and determinist views of the function of a school as a socialising agent. On the one hand, the school is seen as mirroring social values reflecting contradictory tensions which both condone and condemn same-sex attraction: acknowledging non-heterosexuality whilst, at the same time censoring with morally conservative and religious concerns and objections. On the other hand, some teachers believed that it was the responsibility of the school to challenge societal values and determine alternative perspectives. It was now time to canvas the experiences and opinions of some Palmerston students.

I completed my data-collection at Palmerston Secondary School with a short survey of twenty-five year 11 students in a PSHE class (Table 4.16). This gave me the opportunity to capture the views of a small group of students, concerning levels and frequency of homophobic victimisation. There was a fairly even gender representation in this class: eleven males; fourteen females. As these students were still in compulsory secondary education, it was not thought appropriate to ask these students about their personal sexual orientations. Besides enabling a sense of Palmerston students’ perceptions of homonegative bullying at the school, this data-collection also enabled me to trial a series of Q cards, detailing different types of homophobic bullying, designed to facilitate memory recall, which I used in the next stage of data-collection with focus

groups of LGB identifying students at Millais College. I have described the process of developing these Q cards in Chapter Three.

N= 25 M= 11 F= 14

Bullying type	Happen s very often	Happen s quite often	Happen s some of the time	Does not happen	Reported frequently	Reported some of the time	Not reported at all
Verbal abuse	100% M =11 F= 14				80% M=8 F=12	20% M= 3 F= 2	
Physical abuse	60% M = 7 F= 8	20% M = 2 F = 4	20% M = 2 F=2		60% M=7 F= 8	32% M= 3 F= 5	8% M=1 F=1
Malicious gossip	80% M = 8 F = 12			20% M = 3 F = 2	60% M=6 F=9	20% M=2 F=3	20% M=3 F=2
Internet Chat forums (e.g. MSN Messenger)	60% M = 6 F = 9	20% M = 3 F= 2		20% M = 2 F = 3	10% M=3 F=0	50% M=7 F=5	40% M=1 F=9
Internet e-mails	40% M = 3 F = 7	20% M = 3 F = 3	20% M = 2 F=2	20% M = 3 F= 2		40% M= 4 F= 6	60% M=7 F=8

Table 4.16: Palmerston Secondary School: student survey - Frequency and Reporting of Homophobic bullying

There are similar levels of gossip, verbal and physical homonegative abuse to those identified by Rivers (1995), Stonewall (2007) and the N.U.T. surveys (2009) with a particularly high reported frequency of verbal abuse. When compared with the Palmerston teachers' perceptions of frequency of homonegative bullying, recorded in Table 4.9, it can be seen that student perceptions of this abuse are considerably greater for each type of abuse but that incidents of gossip and physical abuse are frequently reported. Of particular interest, in both teachers' and students' perceptions of abuse, is the growing trend for electronic bullying involving internet chat forums and malicious e-mails. This would sometimes occur on the school premises, despite

the use of censorship electronic filters which the school used as an attempted preventative measure. When compared with the Palmerston teacher's perceptions of cyber-bullying it can be seen that the student perceptions of the frequency of this type of abuse was far greater than the teachers' perceptions (teachers' average: 8%). However, more often than not, these incidents would occur at home. One student reported how a whole class had been informed, on an Internet social networking site, by the "best friend" of a girl who had confided in her that she thought she was attracted to the same-sex. Unsurprisingly, the girl who had disclosed to her "friend" did not attend school for several days after this occurred. These examples of electronic bullying were often not reported to the school and, in this way, the bullying of a student could continue for a very long period before the school intervened (if at all). Although students feel confident to report gossip and physical/verbal abuse at Palmerston, they are less willing to report electronic bullying. Stonewall (2007) report that this is often because students have not yet achieved a high level of self-acceptance. Further, they have probably not told members of their own family and are worried about possible family reactions.

4.4.2 Summary: Moving beyond Safety and Tolerance

This chapter contextualises the LGB focus group qualitative data which I analyse in chapters 5 and 6. Participants in the Millais College survey have set the scene by providing information about homonegative victimisation and LGB curricula content in the very schools which the focus group participants have attended. As this data was collected in 2006, in a post-Section 28 context, it is interesting to compare it with earlier research. The data which has been analysed in this chapter has provided more than a backdrop for the focus group data, however. The Palmerston Secondary School case study sought to identify aspects of LGB inclusive best practice. A complex picture has emerged, however, which was not entirely LGB inclusive.

In the Millais College survey, there were direct correlations between the frequency and types of homonegative victimisation experienced and witnessed in years 10 and 11 and the frequency and types identified by earlier researchers such as Rivers (2001) and Warwick *et al.* (2004). Corresponding with Rivers (2001), it was also found that homonegative abuse tends to take place inside schools, rather than in school playgrounds, unlike racist abuse. Reported "mentions" of same-sex attraction across the curriculum were compared with the curricula "mentions" identified in the studies of Ellis and High (2004) and Trenchard and Warren (1984). The Millais College survey has demonstrated that, in a post-Section 28 context, there is an 18.3% increase in the number of "mentions" of same-sex attraction in PSHE, compared with Ellis and High's

study. However, these PSHE “mentions” are deemed to be equally “helpful” and “unhelpful” and there is a corresponding decrease in the number of “mentions” in other curriculum subjects, with the exception of General Studies.

Some aspects of the policies, procedures and practices at Palmerston Secondary School seemed to be very inclusive of LGB students but others were less so. On the one hand, there were two outstanding examples of LGB-inclusive best practice. Firstly, the Performing Arts status of the school meant that a culture had been created which helped to disrupt heteronormative gender expectations. Secondly, any LGB identifying students would benefit from the support of an educational social worker who would help them to come out to family and peers. On the other hand, there were three main indicators that life could still be very difficult for LGB students at Palmerston. The first of these concerned homophobic bullying: high levels of homophobic bullying were identified by the students, although incidents of gossip, physical and verbal abuse were reported unlike cyber-bullying which was rarely reported. The next of these concerned the curriculum: PSHE opportunities for discussing LGB lifestyle were confined to sexual health days, when the normal curriculum was suspended. The last of these concerned school policies and procedures: managers and teachers were unsure about several initiatives which would make the school more-LGB inclusive. Managers were divided about a zero-tolerance whole-school approach to the pejorative use of “gay” and whether it was feasible to collect LGB quality data. Teachers were unsure about whether there should be a whole school curricular approach and increased student awareness of same-sex attraction.

An early model emerged, as a result of my analysis of these findings which helped me to conceptualise some of the issues regarding best practice. The Safety and Tolerance Framework, Figure 4.1, is designed to enable schools to map where they are, in terms of LGB inclusion, with the ultimate objective being to reach beyond Safety and Tolerance in order to embrace the full acceptance and integration of LGB identifying students and staff in the school community. It appears to me that the example of Palmerston Secondary School serves to illustrate a school that it is largely operating within the Safety and Tolerance zone. There may be some aspects of the school’s policies, procedures and practices which seem to go beyond the Safety and Tolerance zone, such as Palmerston’s support system for students who wish to come out as LGB, but ultimately the school will need to implement a best fit approach to decide where they are in the framework.

Pre-Safety and Tolerance	Within Safety and Tolerance	Beyond Safety and Tolerance
Frequent homophobic bullying	Infrequent homophobic bullying	Very infrequent homophobic bullying
A reporting system for bullying which is not trusted and not used by the victims of homophobic bullying	Anti-homophobic bullying contextualised within a general whole-school anti-bullying ethos but not monitored by regular data collection	Specific anti-homophobic bullying measures embedded in school policy and practices. Monitored by regular data-collection
No specific curriculum opportunities for the positive classroom discussion of LGB issues identified in subject schemes of work and few, if any, additional curricular opportunities such as Health Promotion Days	Some specific curriculum opportunities for the positive classroom discussion of LGB issues identified in some subject schemes of work and additional curricular opportunities such as Health Promotion Days	Active whole-school curricula inclusion to enable the positive classroom discussion of LGB issues identified in subject schemes of work and additional curricular opportunities such as Health Promotion Days
No overt framework in place to provide guidance for students during the “coming out” process within the school context.	A support framework in place to provide specific guidance for students during the “coming out” process within the school context (i.e. a school counselor who is trained to advise on disclosure.)	A support framework in place to provide guidance for students during the “coming out” process and to provide liaison between school and families if that is appropriate.
No staff have received training concerning aspects of challenging homophobic	Some staff have received training concerning aspects of challenging homophobic	Whole school training is available for all staff (teaching and support staff).

bullying, discussing LGB issues in lessons and advising students concerning the coming out process.	bullying, discussing LGB issues in lessons and advising students concerning the coming out process. However, this training of individual teachers has not been disseminated to the whole school staff.	It should address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging homophobic verbal, physical and cyber abuse • Discussing LGB issues in subject-based lessons • Advising students on the process of coming out as LGB
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Figure 4.1: The Safety and Tolerance Framework

4.4.3 Transforming data: finding an analytical direction

This chapter has primarily taken a positivist direction in order to provide a contextual backdrop for the qualitative analysis of focus group data. It has sought to examine key issues emerging from extant research (Rivers; Stonewall) such as the correlation between homophobic bullying, absenteeism, academic achievement and progression to post-16 education. In this chapter, I do not seek to generalise and universalise concepts but it does seek to explain the secondary school settings in which focus group respondents were developing their LGB identities. As I started to collect qualitative and quantitative data from Millais College and Palmerston Secondary School, I faced a challenge which Grounded Theorists (Glaser, Strauss, Corbin and Charmaz) have frequently grappled with: to find a way of asking analytic questions of this data which would help direct subsequent data-collection towards the analytic issues which were emerging. As I sought to refine my methodology for focus group data-collection, I needed to develop an interpretive approach for data analysis which would pay close attention to the participants' use of words to invoke mental images of events, experiences and objects.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter three, the model of Grounded Theory which I have developed is drawn on the social justice conceptualization of Charmaz (2005:513) in which researcher/s and participants work together in a commitment to improve practice. The Grounded Theory coding practice identified by Charmaz (2006:42) involves **initial coding**, involving word-by-word and line-by-line analysis and **focused coding**, which involves selecting what appear to be the most significant initial codes and comparing them with the emerging codes from a more extensive selection of data. Through constant comparison, in this way, I have sought to avoid imposing preconceptions (forcing the data) which might arise from life-experiences and extant theories. Where appropriate, however, existing key concepts and ideas have earned their way into my research but these have always been acknowledged.

In order to progress from line-by-line analysis to theory generation, my analysis of narrative data has moved through the four stages of analytical scaffolding eventually leading to theory generation: **coding** (identifying key anchors which inform further data collection), **conceptualising** (collecting codes in data groups), **categorising** (grouping similar concepts enabling theory generation) and **theorising** (weaving fractured concepts into theoretical explanations). I now turn to some examples of the developing analytical process.

The original focus for this study was on the school experiences of LGB youth, focusing in particular on homophobic victimisation, curriculum mentions of LGB lifestyle and responses by peers and teachers to disclosure of LGB identity. From the start, I was keen to avoid imposing negative preconceptions and unwittingly leading the participants into “suffering suicidal script” narratives (Savin Williams 2005:49). Initial line-by-line coding of data from the first focus group nevertheless invoked pain and misery:

<p>Laurie: I had <u>scissors</u> thrown at me, in the lunch-hour, and was told to <u>cut my wrists</u>. I was suffering from <u>depression</u> and was on <u>Prozac</u>. Everybody knew about it because the <u>teachers had told them</u>.</p>	<p>Initial codes: <i>physical violence</i> <i>self-harming</i> <i>mental health</i> <i>told by teachers</i></p>
<p>Christie: Yeah. We were just walking through the school in the <u>lunch-hour</u>. It didn't help that everyone knew we were both on <u>anti-depressants and gay</u>. They figured we were on them <u>because we were gay</u> so they took the piss all the more. It's a good job we <u>had each other</u>. We were <u>best friends</u>. We'd go down to the <u>park</u> and have a cry together. Then they'd be on at us for <u>missing lessons</u>.</p>	<p><i>lunch-hour</i> <i>correlation: mental health and LGB</i> <i>In-group support</i> <i>LGB solidarity</i> <i>absenteeism due to victimisation</i></p>

Figure 4.2. Initial Coding: Laurie and Christie

Through line-by-line analysis, I was able to examine the heterosexist mind-set which established a correlation between being same-sex attracted, mental illness and suicide. By grouping the initial codes into data groups (victimisation; mental health;

absenteeism; school responses), I was able to conceptualise the attitudes and values which were being exhibited as well as Laurie and Christie's response to the ways in which they were treated. In this initial stage of codification, I found a number of correlations with extant research which supported the emerging picture. The data establishes a further correlation between LGB victimisation and absenteeism (Rivers, 2000). Once again, physical and psychological cruelty is being enacted on the school premises unlike racism which tends to occur off the school premises (Stonewall, 2007). The teachers are unsure about how to explain Laurie's absence to his peers which is at least partly responsible, albeit unintentionally, for the negative reception he receives on returning to school, demonstrating a lack of training (Warwick *et al.* 2004). These conclusions enabled me to establish a broader picture of the setting for this data collection.

The conceptualisation which was emerging from this initial data analysis, revealed a legacy of pathologisation which seemed to assume that Laurie and Christie were on medication because of their sexual identity rather than because of social stigmatisation. This conceptualisation was further supported by other narratives of LGB victimization which emerged during the first and second focus group discussions. I was now becoming increasingly interested in the process of sexual orientation identity formation: how LGB young people manage their developing identities, often in the face of negative and positive responses from peers, teachers and families, It became apparent to me that Laurie and Christie seemed to have little or no control over their identity development, in the face of this adversity. Furthermore, the process of reconciling their *private selves* (self-knowledge and understanding) with their *public selves* (societal expectations) seemed to be extremely chaotic and messy, as they were struggling to make sense of their identities whilst others were *managing their LGB visibility* for them. For Christie and Laurie, there seemed to be a process of *Coming In*, including the realisation of a "spoiled" identity (Goffman 1963) and the consequent fragmentation of the self, which overlapped with the *disclosure of the self*. It seemed to me that this could not be accounted for with a linear identity development model and that this would have significant implications for my own theory of LGB identity development: I was beginning to weave fractured concepts into theoretical explanations.

Accordingly, the focus of my research questions broadened as I began to understand the importance of the interface between all of the socialising agents which seek to control, organise and regulate LGB identity development. By the time I had reached the third focus group, in May 2006, I had become particularly interested in the ways in which the family developmental trajectory could affect LGB identity development and

the implications this could have for schools and colleges. Line-by-line initial code analysis of the following data set demonstrates the variety of responses that an LGB person may encounter when disclosing same-sex attraction to family members:

	<i>Initial codes</i>
I told my older sister first – she’s 24. She was <u>alright</u> about it.	<i>Sister - positive</i>
Then I told my mum and she said “ <u>How do you know?</u> ”	<i>Mother- doubt</i>
That’s what you feel right now but <u>it’ll probably change</u> ”.	<i>Teenage phase</i>
My brother who’s fourteen is <u>really homophobic</u> .	<i>Brother - negative</i>
This weekend I asked him “ <u>why are you being so homophobic</u> towards me?” He said “ <u>It’s sick</u> . I don’t want to talk about it.	<i>Challenging</i> <i>Pathologisation</i>
We’ve got visitors downstairs, can you <u>keep your voice down?</u>	<i>Imposed silence</i>
You’re <u>disgracing the family</u> ”.	<i>Disgracing the family</i>

Figure 4.3. Initial Coding: Ayisha (Chapter 6)

When particular attention is paid to the actual words used by the brother in the last code (“disgracing the family”) it can be seen that the value systems which lie behind these various family reactions are operating on two levels: the heterosexist values of the immediate family and the heterosexist value systems of an Asian extended family network. When I compared this narrative with other focus group narratives, I found a similar code frequently emerging (“shaming the family”). Charmaz (2006:55) demonstrates the symbolical importance of codes which preserve the actual words and phrases of participants (In Vivo codes). As I started to categorise initial codes in conceptual data groups (moral conservatism; causality; pathology; guilt; shame) I began to uncover the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich:1986) which permeated the family’s value systems. It seemed to me that the immediate family developmental trajectory was going through a fragmentation process which was similar to the fragmentation of the LGB person’s developmental trajectory which can occur throughout the processes of *Coming In* and *Disclosure*. I was also struck by the assertive ways in which Ayisha was responding to the attempts, by various family members, to control and manage her visibility as a same-sex attracted young woman. I was keen to discover what enabled young LGB people, like Ayisha, to take control of their own LGB visibility in the face of barriers and pressures to conform. I hoped that the embryonic theory of LGB identity development which was evolving from this data analysis would be of benefit to LGB young people and the practitioners that work with them, in facilitating emotional and physical well-being. My research was now guided and influenced by my developing understanding of the verbal, non-verbal and social

means by which some young LGB young people can successfully manage their own visibility, as can be seen in the initial coding of the following data set:

	<i>Initial codes</i>
I used to watch “ <u>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</u> ” and I dressed	<i>Media influence</i>
and made myself look like Buffy with my <u>clothes,</u>	<i>Non-verbal</i>
<u>make-up and hair.</u> Some of the girls said that I was <u>weird</u>	<i>Non-conforming</i>
and that was when <u>the word got around</u> that I was	<i>Gossip</i>
lesbian. <u>I wouldn’t tell them until I was ready.</u>	<i>Self-control of visibility</i>
Girls would come and ask me, “ <u>are you a dyke?</u> ”	<i>Hate language</i>
When I wouldn’t answer, they would <u>tell me to stay away</u>	<i>Marginalisation</i>
from them and not touch them. <u>I would just shrug it off</u>	<i>Resilience</i>
and <u>laugh</u> at them. I had other <u>girl friends who supported</u>	<i>Solidarity</i>
me and <u>they were the ones who mattered.</u>	<i>True friendship</i>

Figure 4.4. Initial Coding: Dina (Chapter 5)

As I coded this data, three main groups emerged for more focused data coding: the visibility management of others (gossip; hate language; marginalisation through psychological abuse), the self-presentational methods used by Dinah to manage a non-conventional physical appearance (clothes, make-up, hair) and the social and verbal means of resisting peer control (resilience; solidarity; true friendship). Informed by the ideas and research of Goffman, Butler and Foucault, I became interested in the means by which the more resilient LGB young people in my focus groups were able to challenge heteronormativity through verbal and non-verbal means. I compared the initial and focused codes which were emerging in this data with the codes which I had identified in earlier narratives such as Alice’s story, at the beginning of Chapter 3 of this thesis. I discovered familiar codes such as *breaking the heteronormative rules* and *fighting back* in the face of oppression. When I also looked back at the student comments in the Millais questionnaire survey and the Palmerston survey, I was able to add the notion of *false friends*, who were trusted by often troubled best friends and then betrayed a confidence by telling others, which contrasted with the concept of true friendship coded in the current data: friends who remained loyal and provided support for an LGB person who is being marginalized by others. I also coded various stigma-management strategies, such as *passing*, *identity hiding* and *denial*, which were adopted by LGB identifying students as they were learning about how to assess likely reactions to disclosure and how to manage their visibility in different social situations. The theoretical codes which now emerged were concerned with different levels of

invisibility and *visibility* which LGB young people are learning to navigate as they are beginning to form adult identities. I became interested in the *thresholds* which LGB identifying young people need to cross as they move from one level of in/visibility to another.

Through the analytical coding and constant comparison process, I realised that this visibility management was operating on two levels – it was not just about LGB self-management of identity, it was also about the ways in which others, such as family members, teachers or other members of the community, controlled your visibility. On returning to focus group data collection, I returned to my original focus: the response of secondary schools and sixth form colleges to the visibility of LGB students. In order to get a broader sense of the ways in which LGB young people develop a sense of self when interacting with others, I realised that I would need to consider the ways in which LGB visibility is managed by other socialising agents, including family, schools and the community, as well as the ways in which this visibility is managed by the self. Chapter 7 is concerned with the generation of a theory which incorporates and extends existing ideas on LGB identity development. However, it is to a closer examination of the visibility management strategies employed by LGB youth, in the face of barriers and pressures, that I now turn.

Chapter 5: Managing the Self

In this chapter, I examine the verbal, non-verbal and social visibility management (VM) strategies adopted by LGB youth during identity development. I also consider the variety of visibility management (VM) functions which are adopted during this process including assimilation, denial, internalised homophobia and transgression. I identify the factors which advance or hinder visibility management of the self, analysing in particular the VM responses of LGB youth to regulatory practices which seek to constrain and control.

5.1 Crossing the threshold of in/visibility

The process of developing an LGB identity is both deeply personal and political for many LGB people. On a personal level, the disclosers will probably be fulfilling a need to be truthful and honest simultaneously seeking “self-worth, identity and a sense of community” (Martin, 1993:278). Their narratives are likely to be couched in terms of personal discovery and the recovery of authenticity (a sense of their “true” self). But the discloser is also engaging with “the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted or embraced” (Scott, 1993:408). Stone-Fish and Harvey (2005:54) divide this process of identity formation into the dual process of *coming into oneself* and *coming out to others*

First is the development of a unique autonomous self and second is learning to negotiate the feelings of being different from a majority of peers, family and community and yet remain connected to them.

In one sense, disclosure appears to have a liberatory function, in which the very act of naming oneself as lesbian, gay or bisexual can be seen as an act of empowerment: part of the process of perpetual spirals of power and pleasure, identified by Foucault (1978:44) as dramatising troubled moments which resist the censure of non-heterosexual sexuality. Zimmerman (1985:259), in a study of literary coming-out narratives, states that:

Power, which traditionally is the essence of politics, is connected with the ability to name, to speak, to come out of silence. Powerlessness, on the other

hand, is associated with silence and the speechlessness that the powerful impose on those dispossessed of language

Some young people, who are beginning to identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual may feel that they are in control of the process as they step across the threshold which demarcates visibility from invisibility. They may feel confident that they are able to enjoy autonomy and liberation, as self-identified and self-labelled LGB people. They may well believe that individuals, like themselves, can have authentic sexual selves which can exist outside of social control and cultural pressures. Others will not. It is important to consider how LGB young people narrate the dual process of *coming in* and *coming out* – whether as liberating discourses or otherwise. It is to Jack’s story that I now turn.

5.2 Jack’s story: aligning with kindred spirits

In Chapter Four, I examined the data-collection process at Palmerston Secondary School and part of this process involved a group interview with four Progress Leaders. One of these managers, Will, could not attend but left a message that he had a particular concern with LGB young people and that he would be happy to be interviewed separately on another occasion which was duly arranged. He had several narratives to share with me but one, in particular, seemed to illustrate the process of crossing the threshold from invisibility to visibility particularly well. A young man called Jack came to Will’s attention, during Year 11, six months before he was due to take his GCSE exams. He was predicted high grades in at least seven subjects but his attendance had now become poor. His teachers commented that he appeared to be “experiencing a lot of problems”. Will met Jack and found a young man who was “really quiet and unhappy”. Will suspected that he was being subjected to an ongoing tirade of verbal abuse and asked him about this. Jack would not discuss the reasons for his unhappiness, however, and appeared to be “awkward” and “painfully embarrassed” throughout the meeting. Will followed this up by telephoning Jack’s mother, a conversation which quickly turned into a counselling session. Jack’s mother was a lone parent who relied on support from Jack in bringing up her other children. Jack had recently disclosed to his mother that he thought he was gay and she requested some guidance from Will regarding how best to support him during the process of coming out to other family members. Jack was not ready to come out as gay at school, indeed Jack’s mother thought it very unlikely that this would happen at all, given that there were only six months left to the end of Jack’s career at Palmerston School.

There was an informal support group of male and female students that used to meet at lunch and break-times, who were referred to by the other Palmerston students as the “Gay” group. Others were very wary of them because there was the very real fear of being stigmatised as “gay” yourself, just because of an association with them. In other students’ eyes, there may be “something wrong with you”, too. These *discreditable* young people (Goffman, 1963:57) had dared to resist the pressures to assume a heterosexual *virtual identity* and had allowed their *actual social identities* to be known and recognised by other Palmerston students as *spoiled* and *discredited*. In the June of Year 11, there was an end of year school disco, which also represented the end of the school career for these students. The “Gay” group attended this symbolic event and, not surprisingly, were clearly separated from other students who kept their distance. Jack arrived quite late, at around 9.30 p.m., and appeared unusually confident. In hindsight, Will suspects that he might have been drinking alcohol. He had obviously made a pre-planned decision to join the “Gay” group. He was immediately welcomed and seemed very comfortable in their company, even though he had not been part of this group before. In the mean-time, other onlookers “whispered, pointed and gossiped”. Will remembers that Jack behaved in an uncharacteristically flamboyant way, during this evening, which the other group members accepted, his behaviour possibly corresponding with Troiden’s (1990) stigma-evasion strategy, *minstrelisation*, during which the individual behaves in ways that are thought to be highly stereotypical (i.e. male effeminacy). He had clearly decided to cross the threshold of in/visibility, and this was illustrated by his colourful clothes and his hair, which had been dyed a vibrant colour.

As it was near the end of Jack’s school career at Palmerston, he did not attend for many days after this event. However, the police were soon in touch with Will. Jack had been physically assaulted, near where he lived, by a gang of youths from another area of the City. One motive for the attack may have been territorial. However, Will suspected that he had become a prime target because he was alone and because his physical appearance did not conform to the gender expectations of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1995:75). Jack did return to visit his old teachers, the next year, one afternoon after school. He had not performed very well in his GCSE exams, the previous summer, but he had decided not to progress on to further education. Instead, he was working in a shop in the town. Will observed that he seemed quite happy. He had, however, learnt to tone down his appearance and mannerisms, in accordance with the expectations of the “heterosexual assumptions” (Plummer, 1989:202) made by the world of work.

Crossing the threshold was clearly a well thought-out political statement, for Jack, which he felt most confident making as his school years were coming to an end. For students from other city schools, however, becoming a member of a similar LGB support network was not necessarily a conscious strategy. Joe, a sixteen year old male from a sixth-form college Gay-Straight Alliance, belonged to a close circle of male friends at schools. Having recognised that he was not heterosexual at thirteen and self-labelled at fourteen, he then disclosed his identity to a best friend who confirmed that he, too, was gay. Joe and his friend then realised that their close circle of friends were probably all gay. The group gradually acquired the label “gay group”, during Year 10. Having come out as gay, at the age of fourteen, Joe did experience verbal and psychological abuse but because of his close social network he felt supported.

Rachel, another member of Joe’s Gay-Straight Alliance, came out as lesbian at fifteen and had a different experience to Joe. She had belonged to an informal social group of girls, since Year 9, at secondary school. Rachel was the ring-leader of this group who would make the lives of other girls miserable through homonegative physical and verbal abuse, using such labels as “lezzie” and “dyke”. Hey (1997) and Duncan (2004) have demonstrated the shift which often occurs, in secondary school, as “popular” girls move from dyadic homosocial “best friend” relationships to a network of apparently heterosocial friendships, a social world which is often characterised by verbal and physical abuse. Kahn (1991) has demonstrated how, in order to achieve a synthesis between inner self-acceptance and sexual behaviour, young people will often go through a process of dealing with an internal negative self-concept which mirrors how others will react to same-sex attraction (internalised homophobia). Rachel added that most of the members of this group of girls had since identified as lesbian.

This assimilation of private and public selves which results from group alignment with a supportive social network of LGB-friendly young people can, therefore, play an important part of the process, as a young man or woman makes the transition from the first stages of LGB identity development, identified by Troiden (1990) as *sensitisation* and Cass (1990) as *identity confusion*, to the first stages of visibility. This is also illustrated by Alice’s story (Chapter Four), though Alice’s lunchtime group met outside College and she was very keen to “hide” the existence of this group from others. This was one of a range of strategies employed by Alice to “cover” or deny (Troiden, 1990) her same-sex attraction. In common with this, Alice had not disclosed her lesbian identity to her mother and pleaded that the college should not communicate her absences lest her mother should find out the cause. Tom, on the other hand, had disclosed to his mother before joining the “gay” group whilst Joe had gained confidence from coming out to his social group which enabled him to proceed

with the next stage of disclosure: his mother. It is to the process of family disclosure that I now turn.

5.3 Family Disclosure

For Foucault (1978:60), the entire coming-out process may be seen as “thoroughly imbued with relations of power”. Foucault’s (1978:63-65) explanation of the repressive hypothesis argues that discourses about sex have proliferated since the late nineteenth century, leading to a gradual loosening of censorship, taboos and legal imperatives and ever expanding levels of openness about sexuality in the twentieth century. Confession, originally in the form of penance, but later expanded in a wide variety of forms and relationships, “was, and still remains, the general standard for governing the production of the true discourse on sex” (Foucault, 1978:63). Foucault interrogates the notion that confession has a liberating effect: the assumption that “confession frees but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to an order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom” (p.60). He points out that the ritual of confession unfolds in a power relationship: there must be an audience who may “judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile” (p.62). He suggests, therefore, that the emancipatory function of the coming-out process may be an illusion: by entering the confession ritual, one appears to escape from one power relation only to enter another. Weeks (1985:209) points out that:

in a culture in which homosexual desires, male or female are still execrated, and denied, the adoption of gay or lesbian identities inevitably constitutes a political choice. These identities are not expressions of secret essences. They are self-creations, but they are created on grounds not freely chosen but laid out by history.

Tony, a sixteen-year-old young man from an LGB youth group, remembered how a scene in the BBC soap opera, *Eastenders*, depicting two lesbians in a domestic setting (Sonia and Naomi) provided the opportunity for him to make the difficult move of coming out to his family. He commented:

My mum and dad are divorced and I live with my mum and we were watching “Eastenders” and it was the Sonia/Naomi thing and we were talking about that and saying what a good storyline it was and I thought “well, this is as good a time as any” so I said “Mum.....” – and I just couldn’t bring myself to use the

words “ I’m gay”- I just couldn’t do it – so I said “I’m like Naomi”. And I just looked at her and she said “what black?” “no” “you gay?” “yep” and we just carried on watching “Eastenders”. Relatives know about it, now, and that’s good.

In this case, a very short-lived affair between two female characters, before Sonia returns to a heterosexual relationship, provides the opportunity for Tony’s own revelation to his mother. He clearly had been thinking about telling his mother for some time and this media representation provided the final impetus for disclosure. Tony’s inability to utter the self-identifying label which positions him clearly in this short coming-out narrative (“gay”) demonstrates the personal difficulties he may still be encountering as he identifies with a frequently stigmatised sexual orientation. He is also unsure about how his mother will react: his disclosure may prompt interpersonal confrontation, outright rejection, denial, reconciliation or solidarity. Nonetheless, this dramatised construction of same-sex attraction has facilitated Tony’s coming out to his mother, affording both the opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings.

Tony’s experience is a positive one but family reactions are frequently less positive. Savin-Williams and Dube (1998) list the stages which parents often go through, after the disclosure of an LGB son or daughter, before eventually reaching tolerance or acceptance: shock, denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Nathan, a seventeen year old young man from a sixth form college Gay-Straight Alliance, finds that his life has been turned upside down when his father suddenly becomes aggressive following a family argument concerning a disclosure of his bisexuality:

I’ve told everybody in my family recently. I thought my Dad was alright with it but then during half term we started arguing about just about everything. He threatened to kick me out but then my mother came to my rescue and threatened to divorce him if he ever did such a thing. He said “I don’t want to see your face again” so I left. Then I had a ‘phone call from my sister saying “Are you alright? Where are you? I ended up sleeping on a mate’s floor that night. Everything’s alright now. He will occasionally have a go but I just rise above it.

Nathan’s attempts to “rise above” this family discord, by maintaining a positive self-concept, suggest that he has reached the final stage of the internal process of coming to terms with sexual stigmatisation identified by Plummer (1995:88): devaluation, secrecy, solitariness, self-consciousness, finally reaching identity synthesis. The

integration of private and public aspects of selfhood, implied by this identity synthesis, means that he feels confident enough to disclose his bisexual feelings to a family audience even when he anticipates (and receives) a hostile reception. The ability to demonstrate high levels of resistance, recovery and coping strategies, in the face of risk challenges such as these, is illustrated by Mastern's (2003:4) concept of resilience: "patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity". Mastern and Garmezy (1985:49) identify the three main protective factors which enable an individual to adjust to life stressors, such as stigmatisation and rejection, as *individual attributes*, such as high levels of self-esteem, *family qualities*, indicated by cohesion and a positive involvement in the young person's development, and *supportive systems outside the family*, such as the LGBT youth group that Nathan belongs to. The fragmentation of Nathan's family unit describes a moment of crisis which very nearly leaves Nathan homeless. Even though he has reached an identity synthesis, partly through the support of his LGB youth group, crises such as these will often leave LGB youth with long-term mental health problems (Remafedi, 1987b; Savin-Williams, 1994).

The instability which often accompanies disclosure to a family can mean that a young LGB person can be on tenterhooks for a considerable period of time whilst the family are working out their responses and hopefully moving towards an acceptance. Lasser and Tharinger (2003:242), demonstrate that family members often experience "cognitive dissonance" (Floyd and Stein, 2002) and other identity fragmentation issues, in the same ways as their LGB children or siblings, and they, too, will need time to adjust. Sara, a seventeen year old woman from a sixth form college Gay-Straight Alliance, was still deciding how to tell her family when an argument about the group of friends she was socialising with led to her spontaneously "blurting out" the fact that she was now identifying as lesbian. Telling the story three weeks after this event had taken place, Sara was making contingency plans for moving out as the atmosphere of uncertainty was still unbearable:

It's been really bad for me at home. There's been a lot of anger and confusion and my mum keeps saying "I'm going to pack your bags NOW" but I haven't been kicked out yet. Still I think it could happen any day.

Disclosure does not always result in discord, however, as Tony's example has demonstrated and sometimes family members will actually provide an opportunity for disclosure. Terri had already disclosed her lesbian status to her mother, with a good reaction, when she had a conversation with her eighty year-old grandmother:

I was going out with Jules. We were driving back from the village one day and she asks “So, are you and Jules like boyfriend and girlfriend?” I said “Yes, Gran” and she says “well, better than men, they’re too much hassle”.

Terri’s grandmother re-conceptualises her relationship according to a “heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1990:174). However, it is a family acceptance which will now enable her to achieve full family visibility. Terri has already introduced her partner to the family, hidden under the guise of being a “best friend”, and is reassured that the nature of her relationship is now fully understood and accepted.

For many LGB young people in this study, however, the anticipation of rejection or hostile reactions similar to those experienced by Nathan (above) mean that they remain invisible and in “hiding”, often until they leave home. Identifying as bisexual, Ian, a sixteen year old male from an LGB youth group, considers that his family can only be told in the relatively distant future:

Maybe I’ll tell them, in a few years, when I’ve moved away – a long distance. I’ll need to leave home, first, because my family’s very homophobic. I was brought up to be homophobic. I wasn’t a bully towards gay people or anything but I would snigger and call people “it”. That’s the main reason why I can’t tell them because the whole family’s really homophobic. I don’t mind it. To be honest, it’s my life and they’re just the people I live with because I’m not really at home much now anyway. I do my own thing.

Savin-Williams (1994) suggests that young people often withdraw from families rather than risk disclosure which disappoints their parents or results in their being rejected or abused. Ian has managed to achieve congruity between his inner self-identification as bisexual and his outer public self as “passing” heterosexual by dehumanising the family loss which he feels will be inevitable. His use of the adverb “maybe” suggests that he envisages it is possible that they might never be told. Having *come into* himself (Stone-Fish & Harvey, 2005) and recognised that he is a sexual minority individual, Ian has also sought the support of an LGBT youth group. By making friends in this group, he will share experiences and informally learn about the processes of coming out, enabling him to develop an armoury of protective strategies which might enable him to withstand adversities and hardships such as the anticipated rejection by his family. Bourdieu (1986:241) demonstrates that *social capital* which facilitates individual or collective action, generated by networks of relationships, is analogous to other types of economic capital:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively -owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit.

The benefits of *social capital* for a young LGB person, enabling him or her to develop an individual and collective sense of emotional well-being, as well as practical help and support in moments of crisis such as these, are very apparent, here. In the process of discovering an LGB self, the importance of supportive and understanding friends such as these cannot be overestimated.

5.4 Testing the allegiance of Friends

If friends play a key role in facilitating a positive LGB self-concept, they can also play a fundamental role in fragmenting a sexual identity. For Foucault (1978:62), the intimate disclosure to a friend is on a par with a confession discourse which is firmly located in a power relationship:

The agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained) but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who know and answers but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know.

The disclosure to a friend, often carefully thought-out beforehand, will begin a life-time process in which the LGB person will need to analyse the likely costs and benefits (see Lasser, 2005) of disclosure to various people in different situations. Even after many years experience, predictions of likely responses can be mis-judged. Feeling particularly close to a best friend, after a party and a sleep-over at her friend’s house, Tracy, student member of a sixth form college Gay-Straight Alliance, decided that she would be a reliable confidante:

I lost my best friend when she found out I was lesbian. I stayed at her house after a party and I told her the next morning. She was really unpleasant about it and said “Oh that’s disgusting. Get out of my house”. I was so hurt.

By using the word “disgusting”, Tracy’s best friend, Sian, has pathologised Tracy’s same-sex attraction by suggesting that it is somehow perverse, deviant and abhorrent. By following this with the imperative to leave, she has personalised her rejection in such a way as to make Tracy feel like an unclean pollutant whose stigmatised presence is contaminating the home environment. There is a sense of mutual betrayal, here: Sian no doubt feels that Tracy has deceived her by “passing” as a heterosexual; Tracy cannot understand this spontaneous rejection. Butler (1990:170) considers the ways in which the border and boundary between the “inner” and “outer” worlds of the self are maintained for the purposes of social regulation and control:

The operation of repulsion can consolidate “identities” founded on the instituting of the “Other” or a set of Others through exclusion and domination.

As Sian is the first person that she has told, Tracy will probably be at the delicate *identity confusion* stage of LGB identity formation (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1990) where she is taking her first steps over the threshold into visibility. Her own levels of self-confidence and self-esteem will determine whether she feels able to reject such a homo-negative reaction or whether she is likely to retreat into anti-homosexual strategies such as *denial, passing, avoidance, repair* and *immersion* in heterosexual lifestyle. Butler (1990:171) describes the “displacement” of the “inner” and “outer” worlds of the self when the inner stability and cohesion which has been consolidated by this binary structure is challenged:

If the “inner world” no longer designates a topos, then the internal fixity of the self and, indeed, the internal locale of gender identity, become similarly suspect.

The isolation which can result from the betrayal of a best friend need not be confined to the disclosure of one’s personal sexual orientation, however. In a Steiner co-educational secondary school, Tanya confided to her best friend that her Uncle was gay:

I told my best mate about it and then she went off with them. She went and told people that my Uncle was gay. She took their side and then it was just me. Then I started hanging out with the guys because they didn’t seem to care. When I was changing with the girls in PE, they’d be giving me funny looks and so on and they’d say “Stop watching me changing. I’m talking to you!” They’d say “it must run in the family”. I was like “What.....?”

The “best friend” has, in fact, proven herself to be a false friend. In the heteronormative world of teenage female friendships (Hey, 1997) the “friend” will have to decide whether she wishes to be allied with a stigmatised “other”, and suffer the consequent peer norm-enforcement consequences, or go over to the other “side” thereby isolating Tanya even further. Excluded from these female social networks, Tanya becomes part of the boys’ social network system, thereby confirming her outsider “other” status, in the eyes of the on-looking girls.

The sense of outrage with which Tanya narrates this episode conveys her incredulity at the suggestion that her Uncle’s sexuality could be in some way hereditary. At this time, Tanya was beginning to identify as attracted to both sexes and was beginning to reveal her individuality partially through her unconventional dress:

I used to dress up like Rocky Horror and they used to go mad about that. I used to go to school with pink hair and chain mail and they were like “you must have been traumatised when you were a kid.

Tanya’s refusal to conform to heteronormative notions of femininity (Duncan, 1999) means that her identity is seen as dysfunctional by the other girls. Mythical stereotypes associated with notions of causality (inheriting her Uncle’s “gayness”) and aetiology (“traumatised”), stemming from Freudian notions of dysfunctional childhood, are evoked by the girls to classify and objectify Tanya. Navigating this confusing world of gender norm-enforcement mechanisms, Tanya seeks to establish an autonomous, individual sense of self.

In Tanya’s case, there was a clear-cut decision for Sian to make: she had to determine her allegiance one way or the other. For others, however, the function of the friendship is not so clear. Studying in a sixth form college, Tim is an “out” young gay male. His best friend also belongs to a network of PE students so Tim frequently finds himself in the role of spectator as his best friend is seeking to “impress” his sporty friends:

He’s one of my closest friends who I really get on with and I know he says he’s joking but his comments are really hurtful. The worst one I can remember was about bringing back the Nazis to get rid of gay people. He really laughs and jokes about it so I just follow along but he’s one of my closest friends and I have to deal with the jokes and that. It’s like I can’t get away from it because every time I see him I’ve got to put on a false front and pretend “you’re so funny” and then I’ll go back and get so annoyed with it.

Tim's narrative is delivered with few pauses, as a sort of therapeutic discharge of internal confusion. On the one hand, he feels compelled to assume a "false front" – a persona which condones and even encourages these homophobic "jokes". On the other hand, jokes about the genocide of gay people make him personally feel worthless and very angry ("so annoyed") creating an internal "cognitive dissonance" (Floyd & Stein, 2002) which could have profound implications for his psychological adjustment. The function of his friend's performance constitutes a public humiliation masquerading under the guise of friendly "banter" which only seeks to enhance the credibility of his friend, in front of other males, whilst simultaneously degrading Tim.

Each of the narratives in this section has been equally concerned with a dyadic "best" friend and a vulnerable LGB person who has chosen to disclose same-sex attraction. Not all LGB young people are easily identifiable as different, however. If the young person has combined peer popularity with an ability to "hide" because of apparent gender conformity, crossing the in/visibility threshold may be even more problematical. Dave is a sixth-form college PE student who identified as bisexual at thirteen but saw others being bullied and decided to "hide" his bisexuality and "pass" as heterosexual for three years at school:

I was too scared of losing the friends that I had and didn't want to lose my reputation for the kind of person I am.

Dave was a keen footballer and had a social network of male friends who he played sports with which he wanted to maintain. He moved to Sixth Form College with many of these friends in September and decided to tell his friends about his bisexuality in November. Dave could see same-sex couples holding hands at College and hoped that, in an environment where gender norm-enforcement mechanisms seemed to be less pervasive, his friends would now accept his true self. Three months after this disclosure, he reflects on how his disclosure had affected his social network:

I'm starting to feel isolated because I've lost some of the friends that came with me from school. Now it's just an occasional "hi" or a wave and we never really have conversations anymore. It's a real let down. I didn't think they'd be like that. One of them is using MSN to make the odd comment saying things like "Gay people shouldn't be allowed to live" and "You should all get together and die" and stuff like that. I'm not really bothered about it but when they don't just mess with me but they do it to others who are insecure ... well, that's just wrong.

Dave has a strong sense of self-concept. He is disappointed by the reactions of his old friends but quickly able to make new friends using social systems such as the College Gay Straight Alliance and the local LGBT youth club. In particular, Dave has become the victim of hate-crime which, if he chose to report it, would lead to a police investigation and likely prosecution. Thurlow (2001) and Athanases and Connor (2008) have demonstrated that, because of a lack of educational interventions, students rarely regard homophobic comments in the same way as racist comments and are indifferent to the consequences for the developing identities of LGB people. Dave chooses to ignore the Internet hate-messages which he is regularly receiving from a one-time friend. He is angry, however, about the generic devaluation of LGB people, a wider community that he now feels he is a part of, in particular the targeting of those who are most vulnerable.

Of course, there are many friends who remain loyal to the LGB young person but these, too, can become victims of association with the stigmatised other. When the gossip spread in Year 10, that Stephanie was identifying as lesbian, in an all-girls' school, her loyal friend, Jackie, was subjected to victimisation which would, in the adult world, be classified as Grievous Bodily Harm. Stephanie remembers how she felt about this:

I was bunking off school because it was so bad. Jackie was in the Science lab and the teacher had gone out of the room. Some girls decided to spill acid on Jackie's trousers, making out that it was an accident. It was a good job they were thick trousers. Then they threw the brush that was used to clean the test-tubes at her and it got stuck in her hair. She didn't report it. It made me feel really guilty and so I made myself distant from her.

Goffman (1963:46) has identified the two types of social stigma that are illustrated here: the *self-stigma*, associated with guilt and shame, which is experienced by Stephanie and the *courtesy stigma*, in which the stigma can spread from those affected to those connected with the stigmatised, such as Stephanie's friend, Jackie. In order to protect Jackie, Stephanie feels the need to isolate herself from the one support mechanism that she is experiencing at the time: her friendship with a close ally. She regrets telling another small group of girls who have become the instigators of the gossip and now feels powerless to stop the abuse. Both girls decide that reporting the incident is not an option, partly because Stephanie feels that this will inevitably entail her parents finding out that she has identified as lesbian and mainly because both girls feel that the school response will be ineffective and may make things worse. Stonewall (2007) have reported the reluctance of young people to report acts of homophobic abuse such as this, because of stigmatisation, fear of others finding out or concerns

that others will perceive them to be “weak” victims in need of “support”. Because of an enforced visibility, which she does not appear to have any control over, Stephanie feels unable to manage her situation. Visibility Management of an LGB self-identity is a phenomenon that all LGB young people will need to develop an awareness of. Some will consciously employ a repertoire of visibility strategies, to signify and perhaps even celebrate their non-normative differences. Others will render themselves partially visible, perhaps without fully realising how this process is being achieved.

5.5 The non-verbal control of LGB visibility

By attending to the ways in which LGB people control their visibility non-verbally, it is possible to open up insights into masculinity (Connell, 1995) and femininity (Hey, 1997) both as processes and as a field through which power is articulated (Foucault, 1981). For Butler (1990:43), gender is managed by:

the repeated stylizations of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.

By repeating actions, masculine and feminine “genders” are constituted and naturalised. But it is not an endless list of configurations enacted by specific bodies. For Butler (1990:44), the body should be regarded: not as a ready surface awaiting signification but as a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained”. According to Butler (1993:3), gender norms are constantly invoked and referenced whereas anything which is not seen as socially acceptable is repudiated as a “constituted outside” and an “abject identity”. This repudiation creates a “threatening spectre” of gender deviance which will need to be continuously repudiated through ritualised interactions.

During Year Ten, in an all-girl’s school, Dina began to alter her physical appearance in a way that was not seen as acceptable by her female peers. Instead of disclosing her same-sex attraction verbally, Dina began to emulate the physical appearance of Buffy: the empowered female lead character in a popular gothic horror youth culture American television programme: “Buffy, the vampire slayer”:

I used to watch “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and I dressed and made myself look like Buffy with my clothes, make-up and hair. Some of the girls said that I was

weird and that was when the word got around that I was lesbian. I wouldn't tell them until I was ready. Girls would come and ask me, "are you a dyke?" When I wouldn't answer, they would tell me to stay away from them and not touch them. I would just shrug it off and laugh at them. I had other girl friends who supported me and they were the ones who mattered.

The character of Buffy Summers was originally conceived, by writer Joss Whedon, as an apparently insignificant woman who actually becomes an extraordinary hero. As the leader of the "Scooby gang", in a Californian High School, Buffy fights a variety of demons, ghosts, werewolves and zombies and, as such, represents an inversion of the Hollywood formula of the "the little blonde girl who goes into a dark alley and gets killed in every horror movie" (Billson, 2000:24). By identifying with Buffy, using clothes, make-up and hair style, Dina is using the body as a message-board (Lasser & Wicker, 2007:110) to signal her refusal to pass as heterosexual and dress according to gender-normative practices. As such, Dina is using coded referencing to communicate her differences to those who are "in the know". She realises, however, that other girls will regard her as a "threatening spectre" and stigmatise her appearance accordingly. Her responses to their comments demonstrate high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Schlenker (2003:498) comments on the two main ways in which people construct desired identities, thereby enhancing self-esteem: *self-glorification*, in which people want others to see them as having socially desirable qualities, and *self-consistency*, in which people want others to confirm their self-beliefs. By presenting an unfamiliar self-presentation in these ways, Dina needs to draw on a repertoire of personal and cognitive skills, as well as the social support of her friends, to maintain an inner sense of self-worth.

Dina's partial visibility is a strategy which she manages consciously. For other LGB young people, partial visibility might occur without a full realisation of how this is being achieved. Tina, a Sixth Form College student who identifies as lesbian, is being informally mentored by her "out and proud" friend, Rachel. She has achieved full visibility at College, under Rachel's "guidance" but has not officially told her family:

Tina: I went to a single-sex school. There was no way I would have come out at school. I didn't really want to come out at College but she (pointing to Rachel) made me. I haven't told them at home. I don't want to. It's private.

Rachel: But they know. Your Mum says things. And you've got all those posters of women on the wall.

Tina: Maybe she knows. It's just a confidence thing. I don't want to go in over breakfast, or something, and say "Oh, by the way.....I'm a lesbian".
No.

Tina has moved from invisibility to varying levels of visibility: a highly visible presence at College, where she socialises with a group of popular girls who identify as Lesbian, and a "private" one at home. However, as Rachel points out, she is unconsciously maintaining a partial visibility at home, through the use of posters. In this way, she is "paving the way" and preparing her family for a future realisation of her full identity. It is clear to Rachel, however, that this has worked and that Tina's mother is fully cognisant of the situation. In this way, Tina is beginning to use *active behaviours* (Lasser, Ryser & Price, 2010:415) which facilitate disclosure, as opposed to *inhibitive behaviours* which limit disclosure.

For Tina, visibility is a very gradual process, operating on a number of different levels over an extended period of time exceeding twelve months. For Neil who came out as gay to friends and family in the second year at Sixth Form College, full visibility was achieved within the space of four months. Educated in a single-sex secondary school, Neil had realised that he was not heterosexual at eleven and self-labelled aged fourteen. Narrating this story at eighteen, he reflected on the ways in which he had controlled visibility over the previous four years:

It was really hard, especially if you went to a single-sex school, like I did. I never liked it at all. It wasn't possible to be out as a gay student in my school. Everybody would have been bullying you. You had to keep it quiet. I tried to persuade myself that I wasn't gay and I tried to fight it. But then I realised I was and I had to just accept it. I've only come out very recently, when I knew that everybody was going to be okay about it. I've got family and friends who are really open and easy to talk to and supportive.

Subjected to a "hidden curriculum" (Plummer, 1989:202) which communicated messages about clearly defined gender roles and the centrality of normalised heterosexual values, including family life, Neil felt that he had no option but to pass as "heterosexual normal" (Savin-Williams, 1990:1). He describes the painful process of self-denial and loathing (seeking to "persuade" himself and "fight" his inner self). During his first year at Sixth Form College, Neil finally reached congruity between inner and outer selves, at the age of seventeen, and became a prominent member of his College Gay-Straight Alliance. It is remarkable to note how much control Neil had been able to exert on his visibility to protect himself until he was absolutely convinced that

it was safe to disclose. Having come out at seventeen, Neil very quickly became assimilated into an LGB social network at College and the local LGBT youth group. Three months after Neil had come out to family and close friends, he decided to apply for a degree course in Events Management and stated, in his application personal statement that he eventually wished to set up his own company arranging post civil partnership receptions for same-sex couples. At the Leavers "Prom" Ball, Neil chose to dress in full drag, complete with dress, wig, high-heels and make-up. He happily gave permission for a photograph to appear on the College Intranet website, along with other "Prom" photographs. This represented Neil's most public coming out to date as many of the peer students who knew Neil were still unaware that he was now identifying as gay.

Neil's female persona at the Prom Ball demonstrates the ways in which his identity has been assimilated, integrated and synthesised but it also demonstrates Neil's implicit understanding of gender as a process of signification. It is by subverting the gender norms that have constrained him, that Neil is able to open up possibilities of "agency" which would normally be foreclosed by conventional identity categories, even the LGB labels that are, in themselves, the product of a heterosexist world-view. Butler (1990:187) claims:

The loss of gender norms would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilising substantive identity and depriving the naturalizing narratives of their central protagonist: "man" and "woman".

Butler argues that it is through the repetition of subversive strategies, such as Neil's act of gender defiance, that gender norms will be de-naturalised and de-stabilised. Moving between the worlds of masculinity and femininity, Neil becomes a fascinating figure of liminality: he has achieved the ability to inhabit multiple identities – a power which is rarely available to most LGB teenagers until they have left secondary education. Working within the confines of compulsory heterosexuality, Neil has, nonetheless, managed to break the rules of gender-norm enforcement. Many LGB teenagers find that they are breaking the rules, either explicitly (school regulations) or implicitly (compulsory heterosexuality) as they are learning to manage their identities.

5.6 Breaking the Rules

Wright and Perry (2006) have examined the phenomenon of *sexual identity distress*: the inner turmoil which emerges from conflicts and tensions between self-identity and stigmatised societal images of same-sex attraction during LGB identity development. Wright and Perry have demonstrated that frequently high levels of psychological turmoil occur during stages such as *identity confusion* and *comparison*. During this time, LGB young people who are victimised will often find themselves either breaking the *explicit* rules of school, such as attendance or behaviour or the *implicit* rules of compulsory heterosexuality by not complying with peer or family expectations. Laurie, seventeen year-old member of his sixth form college Gay-Straight Alliance, describes the high levels of physical and verbal abuse which lead to his becoming involved in a serious fight during Year Eleven:

What got me angry was that it was every single lesson, every single tutor period, every single break, every single minute of the day and yet they did nothing and that really got to me. When you've waited for months and months, even years actually, and the school does nothing and then you take it into your own hands in the only way you know how, you just get so angry. I was walking home from school one Friday and I had a fight with this bully. I broke his nose. On the Monday morning, the Head of Year called me out of tutor and said "he's decided to press charges against you for Grievous Bodily Harm".

Laurie has been socialised into the discredited position of being a "threatening spectre" (Butler, 1993:3) before he has fully learnt and incorporated the normative heterosexual standards against which he "falls short". Butler (1990:184) has examined the regulatory processes of compulsory heterosexuality through which the heterosexual "I" is able to exist by constituting an abject "Other":

This binary opposition is a strategic move within a given set of signifying practices, one that establishes the "I" and through this opposition and which reifies that opposition as a necessity, concealing the discursive apparatus by which the binary itself is constituted.

This unremittingly continuous process of being demonised and dehumanised, the process of Othering (constituting the Other), has finally taken its toll and Laurie is no longer prepared to be positioned as weak and powerless. Ironically, the main

perpetrator of his victimisation now becomes a victim himself and feels justified to prosecute for Grievous Bodily Harm.

Often the process of Othering has long-term consequences (Rivers, 2001) which can sometimes mean that LGB youth do not manage the transition into post-compulsory education successfully. At secondary school Tim had felt the full power of “censorship” (Foucault, 1981:84) which proscribed against his same-sex attraction as “inexistent, illicit and inexpressible”. At thirteen, he felt compelled to conform to the rules of the “heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1990:45):

I remember having a girlfriend when I was thirteen. I didn't feel anything for her but I felt really unsure of myself. I thought if I slept with a girl it might change so I did. But it just wasn't good. I could see the older boys at school and I was starting to realise.

At seventeen, in his first year at Sixth Form College, Tim was in a same-sex relationship with another student at College. He was also in constant trouble for “rudeness” to teachers and students. The real problem seemed to be that Tim insisted on talking graphically about same-sexual activity during lessons. His gratuitous comments seemed to his teachers to be a deliberate and malicious strategy designed to disrupt lessons. After a succession of warnings, half way through his first year at Sixth Form College, Tim was “asked to leave college” by a senior manager, a euphemism for expulsion. To complicate matters, his male partner found out that Tim had slept with another girl and this time a pregnancy had resulted. Tim was not allowed to return to College the next year.

Epstein (2003) has demonstrated how a predominantly scientifically-based sex education agenda, which focuses on rational decision-making, has resulted in a mind-body split where there is a failure to explore the physical dimensions of sexuality. Tim's sexuality education has conveyed pathologising messages about the body (HIV, AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases) combined with silences regarding positive aspects of LGB sexuality and identities, which have led to a shut-down of physical expressions of sexuality in the classroom. Sears (1992:27) has identified the “techno-rational world-view” which students are presented with through sexuality curricula:

Although viewed as an instrument for sexual control, sexuality education is, in fact, an instrument for social control.

The consequence for a young man like Tim, who is keen to establish his sexual identity, is sexual confusion, experimentation and eventual transgression. Tim's graphic descriptions of sexual activity can be seen as "points of resistance" (Foucault, 1981:94) which exist in the "strategic field of power relations". Now that he is in an environment where sexuality can at least be discussed, Tim is constructing a means of exploring his same-sex attraction, albeit gratuitous, obsessive and "illicit", which challenges the constraints and restraints which have rendered his sexuality invisible.

A year after Tim left College, another gay-identifying member of the same college Gay-Straight Alliance, named Joe, attempted to render his sexuality visible by drawing graphic illustrations of same-sexual activity and taking these into his lessons. He also insisted on talking "loudly and inappropriately" about same-sexuality during lessons. Asked to produce a business plan for a Business Studies class, he decided to design one for a shop which would cater for LGB customers and the name of this shop would be "Fagtory" (as an intended pun on "factory"). When advised, challenged and cajoled to amend this behaviour, Joe believed that he was, once again, being silenced and controlled by the regulatory mechanisms of compulsory heterosexuality. Joe, too, was on the verge of being "asked to leave College" but, as the new College Equal Opportunities Co-ordinator, I was now in a position to intervene. Interpreting these strategies as "counter discourse" (Foucault, 1981:96) following years of social control, I was able to discuss Visibility Management strategies with Joe that would not lead to his "dropping out" of education, including his becoming the president of the College's Gay-Straight Alliance. In his first year at College, Joe had moved from a *passive* to an *active* gay social identity (Bradley, 1996:25), though his search for suitable ways of attaining visibility had caused severe disruption to his studies. Moving into a *politicised* social identity, as he became more involved in his College Gay-Straight Alliance, Joe was able to "start again" in his second year. After three years, at College, Joe achieved high grades in his subjects and progressed to Higher Education – he had, at last, found himself.

5.7 Finding the Self

For many of the young people who have told their stories in this chapter, the process of self-discovery has been and continues to be an extremely complex process. Achieving a positive self-concept, reconciling inner and outer worlds, will almost inevitably involve challenging dichotomous structures (man/woman; homosexual/heterosexual; gay/lesbian) at various stages of the lifespan. Many LGB

young people will resist labelling themselves using “forced choice options” (Savin-Williams, 2005:35). Finding the self involves acquiring an understanding of many cognitive, emotional and personal aspects of Selfhood.

Ayisha, a seventeen-year-old Asian student at Sixth Form College, remembers two significant developmental milestones in the journey of her self-discovery:

I can remember having a crush on a teacher when I was ten. She was an American and I still have feelings for her, even now. She handled it very well. I said that I was attracted to girls and I felt really attracted to her and she said that it was okay to feel like that but she was married. I was crying and really upset about it.

When I was thirteen, I was put in a home and lots of the other kids asked me if I was lesbian. They seemed to know before I was ready to tell anybody. They said it was because of the way I dressed and because I was like a tomboy. I was really confused about it.

Ayisha already understood that she was attracted to females at ten years of age. Her emotional crush on a teacher, at this age, is similar to the crushes experienced by several young women in this focus group data. Ayisha has the advantage of speaking to a teacher who does not feel compelled by Section 28 to control, regulate and silence discussions about sexuality. Three years later, Ayisha finds herself the subject of sexual curiosity as others identify her appearance as gender atypical (“tomboy”) and make assumptions about her sexual identity before she is ready to tell anybody. Savin-Williams (2005:105) has demonstrated how default assumptions establish a correlation between same-sex attraction and gender-atypical behaviour, such as acting like a tomboy and cross-dressing, even though the research link between tomboyishness and sexual orientation is disputed. Rich (1986:24) identifies three ways in which lesbian existence is marginalised: it is regarded as “unnatural”, it is considered as “sexual preference” only and it is seen as a “mirror image” of either heterosexuality or male gay relations. As somebody who feels that she is being categorised, labelled and organised in a gender hierarchy, Ayisha is “confused”, frustrated and angry.

This confusion continues, three years later, at Sixth Form College. By this time, Ayisha identifies as attracted to both males and females. In a discussion with Joe, a self-identifying gay male student, complexities surrounding definitions of bisexuality become apparent:

Ayisha (to Joe): Last year, you got really annoyed with me because I was going out with boys.

Joe: I thought you were in denial. I was really angry with you.

Ayisha: I wasn't. I was genuinely interested more in boys, at the time. I wasn't ignoring my feelings for girls but I felt more interested in the boys. Now, I look at some boys and think "he's cute" but I'm not really attracted to them.

Ayisha is caught between definitions of bisexuality (Zinik, 1985). Joe has suggested that she has not fully accepted her "true" lesbian identity and Ayisha sees her sexual identity as adaptive and flexible to different situations and contexts. As such, Ayisha feels marginalised by some heterosexuals because of her non-heterosexual attractions (lesbian), labelled as if in "denial" by other lesbian and gay people, and ostracised by some non-Asian people because of her ethnicity. Fox (1993) has sought to challenge dichotomous views of sexual orientation which complicate bisexuality including the notions that heterosexuality and same-sex attraction are mutually exclusive, that gender is the primary criterion for the selection of a partner (choosing the gender rather than the person) and that sexual orientation should be seen as fixed and immutable.

Ian, member of an LGB youth group, also narrates a story which illustrates the difficulties that can arise from identity categorisation. Identifying as gay at fourteen, Ian carefully managed a coming-out process to his friends only to realise that his process of self-identification was going to be more complicated:

First of all, when I was fourteen, I thought I was gay. It was overwhelming. So I thought I'd tell all my friends because if I just kept it to myself I was going to do my head in. I told my friends in a group of fourteen or fifteen people: "I am now gay". They were okay with it. Then about seven months later, I realised I still do have feelings for women, as well, and then I realised I'm bisexual. So after a year, I thought to myself "I must be bisexual, I'll start telling people that, now," so I went and backtracked a bit and that's where I am now.

Ian experiences initial "cognitive dissonance" (Floyd & Stein, 2002) on recognising his feelings for the same sex and trying to reconcile this with social stigmatisation ("overwhelming"; "do my head in"). When he realises that he is also attracted to females, he decides to wait a full year before initiating a new coming-out process. Ian's

final comment (“that’s where I am now”) indicates that he sees his sexual identity as fluid and mutable. Butler (1991:14) sees identity categories as “stumbling-blocks” and seeks to disrupt heterosexist binary structures by promoting them as “sites of necessary trouble”. For Dave, seventeen year-old member of a college Gay-Straight Alliance, however, accepting that he was bisexual at thirteen was relatively unproblematic because he had a very positive sense of self-concept:

I knew there was nothing wrong with it. I didn’t try to fight it or anything. I just thought “okay, that’s cool!” I’m a really nice person and nobody has the right to judge you because they’re slightly different to you. It’s totally wrong.

Dave’s sense of self-worth comes partly from his popularity with his peers, his sporting achievements and his belief that he will probably be able to “hide” his true identity from others for as long as he chooses. In Dave’s case, there was a delay of three years before he told his friends, in the first year at Sixth Form College. As revealed earlier in this chapter, when Dave did finally tell his friends in the sixth form, he did so because he felt that they would react differently in an environment which he considered to be more tolerant of same-sex attraction. He would be disappointed, frustrated and hurt by their responses which were mainly characterised by disassociation and outright rejection.

These narratives all involve a re-evaluation of the self in some way. For Ed, another member of Dave’s college Gay-Straight Alliance, this meant dealing with his own internal pathologisation of same-sex attraction, first, and then dealing with the pathologisation of others:

Most of the abuse happened when I thought I was “straight”: verbal, physical, being ignored and being isolated. At that time, I thought being gay was the most disgusting habit in the world until I found out I was and then I was besides myself. That really changed my views. I had to have time off school. When I went back, in Year Eleven, it was terrible. I didn’t want to tell anybody. I knew I had to survive. People kept asking “did you have time off school because you were gay?” and I said “no”. I attended a counselling session in a hospital unit with some medical students. Then when we were walking home, I told my mum and I was expecting her to turn around and slap me around the face but all she said was “okay”. As we walked home I thought “all that worrying for nothing”.

Ed has been positioned as an object “Other” by his peers, an image that he finds personally repulsive, having internalised morally conservative judgements about same-sex attraction as a personal choice (“disgusting habit”). As he comes to terms with his same-sex attraction, he experiences a period of high mental anxiety (“besides myself”) and is kept at home. When he returns to school, peer curiosity only serves to pathologise his same-sex attraction by correlating it with an illness rather than the effect of social stigmatisation: “Did you have time off school because you were gay?” As Ed struggles to make sense of his identity, “counselling” sessions at the local hospital may send conflicting messages to his self-concept of a “spoiled” identity (Goffman, 1963:57): on the one hand, they give him the self-confidence to disclose his identity to his mother, with surprising results; on the other hand, “counselling” sessions in a hospital unit confirm his self-belief that he is in need of medical attention. At the time of data-collection, six months after the narrative events, Ed was, once again, discharged from school “on medical grounds” describing very serious levels of social anxiety. Various models of LGB identity development, such as developmental stage models (Cass, 1990; Troiden, 1979), and differential developmental trajectories (Savin-Williams, 2005; Diamond, 2007) have all sought to demonstrate that mental health problems, such as those experienced by Ed are products of social stigmatisation rather than the effects of a dysfunctional childhood (Freud, 1991) or “symptoms” of a disease or an illness. In the worlds of teenagers who are trying to make sense of gender atypicality, however, these mythical stereotypes persist.

One of the key ways in which dangerous stereotypes can be dismantled, of course is through media representations of same-sex attraction. For many people, the representations of LGB people which they encounter on television, in films and in the press provide their first encounters with same-sex attraction. Popular television dramas or situation-comedies seem to play a particularly important part, here. Young people see characters which they can identify with, facilitating the first stages of the coming-out process: self-acceptance. They also see characters which they dis-identify with, causing confusion or self-rejection. Laurie, in his second year at Sixth Form College, describes the key moment when he realised that he was gay:

I’ve always said that there was so much you needed to understand before you could say you were actually gay. I think I’ve always had attraction to men but I finally realised it when I was thirteen. It was when I saw the gay midwife in *Holby City* (laughs). Suddenly everything made sense and I realised I was.

Watching a popular BBC medical soap opera, *Holby City*, Laurie has identified with an “out” gay character, named Ben Saunders, who was presented in the series as capable, confident and popular. The series was not without controversy, however, receiving 114 viewer complaints when Ben was seen kissing his on-screen boyfriend. Laurie remembers being further assisted in the positive development of a gay self-identification, by the widespread media publicity which surrounded David Paisley, the actor who played Ben. As an “out” gay actor in a stable same-sex relationship, Paisley interviewed for several publications and Internet websites and spoke openly about his gay life-style and his own gay identity development.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered various verbal and non-verbal aspects of Visibility Management as LGB young people are developing a sense of self-concept. It is clear, from these narrative accounts, that Visibility Management is not purely self-centred. It is, instead, a social process which occurs through interaction with others. Because of social regulation, these young men and women have responded to their visibility with a range of approaches: some denying, some self-loathing and some transgressing. However, as they have begun the life-long process of managing disclosure, many have already assimilated private and public selves and become integrated, well-balanced young people.

This study has illustrated several aspects which advance and assist this part of LGB identity development. Crossing the Threshold from invisibility to visibility will sometimes mean losing old friends and it will probably be important to establish a new supportive social network of loyal friends. LGB young people will need to learn how to judge appropriate levels of LGB Visibility in different situations and act upon these accordingly. As they travel through stages of adjustment they will look around for positive representations of same-sex attraction in their personal lives, in society and in the media and the role of a supportive family network is crucial to this process of self-integration. Some young people will find learning about Visibility Management easier than others. Those who do not “fit in” with gender expectations, in particular, may find themselves cruelly marginalised and targeted for abuse. An awareness of the processes of Visibility Management will assist both the LGB young people themselves and those professionals, such as counsellors and teachers, who can provide helpful interventions such as liaising with families and teachers, where this is deemed to be appropriate.

Having explored these different accounts of self-discovery in this section, I recognised that it is important not to be entrapped by self-limiting narratives which accidentally reify stereotypes. Savin-Williams (2005:55) demonstrates how the words *gay*, *young* and *troubled* are often inextricably linked and he attributes this to a well-meaning research tradition (“invention”) of the 1970s and 1980s which he refers to as “The Suicide Script”. Most of the young people who narrate these stories recall confusion, pain and uncertainty in the early stages of their LGB identity development. Most now appear confident, resilient and determined to celebrate their new-found identities with great gusto. As these young people inch forwards with new-found confidence, they will need to judge different situations astutely and respond accordingly with appropriate levels of LGB Visibility, in order to maintain a positive self-concept. Not least, they will need to decide how they are going to respond when their LGB Visibility is managed by others. It is the topic of Visibility Management by Others to which I now turn.

Chapter 6 : Visibility Management by Others

In this chapter, I consider how LGB visibility is managed by others: family, peers, teachers and other members of the community such as work colleagues and members of a church congregation. I explore the impact of this Visibility Management on LGB young men and women and their responses to having visibility controlled in these ways.

6.1 “Shaming the Family”

Savin-Williams (1998b:79) has identified the two main reasons why LGB youth choose not to disclose their sexual identities to parents: fear of physical, verbal and/or emotional abuse and an altruistic desire not to disappoint, hurt, shame their family or create potential problems for them with neighbours and relatives. In a lesson, I was drawn into a private conversation between two female students, who I will call Kirsty and Sheila:

- Sheila: There are too many gay students in this College. It’s wrong. Something should be done about it.
- Me: Why?
- Kirsty: It’s just not right is it?
- Me: Why not?
- Sheila: It’s just not right is it?
- Kirsty: They’re not brought up right are they?
- Me: What if you had a gay child?
- Sheila: I wouldn’t because they would be brought up right.
- Me: Some people say you are born gay.
- Sheila: I’d throw them out. They’re embarrassing the family. Shaming the family.
- Kirsty: I wouldn’t do that. I wouldn’t like it but I wouldn’t throw them out.

Kirsty and Sheila both object to what they see as the high level of Visibility of LGB students in their College. Their disapproval clearly stems from a moral conservatism which regards same-sex attraction as shameful and stigmatised and only to be mentioned in a hushed whisper. Kirsty and Sheila are both contemplating future motherhood and considering what it would be like to have an LGB son or daughter.

Macgillivray (2004:17) explains that morally conservative parents are concerned to foster the “correct beliefs and dispositions in their children” and to insulate them from “the corruptive influences of modern society”. On the one hand, same-sex attraction is seen, by Kirsty, as the effect of poor parenting (“not brought up right”); on the other hand, the LGB son or daughter is seen, by Sheila, as wilfully disrupting the heterosexual nuclear family ideology (“Shaming the family), although Kirsty is not sure about this. Both Sheila and Kirsty are deeply concerned about the tendency of a stigma such as same-sex attraction to spread from the stigmatised individual, through the social structure, to closely connected family and relations (Goffman, 1963:43). In the eyes of these two young women, the whole family shares the “shame” and “embarrassment” which has been brought about by a family member’s disclosure that he or she is non-heterosexual. These two students are shocked and surprised to see the visibility that LGB students now have at their College. They attribute this partly to the Gay-Straight Alliance that I openly facilitate, and wish to communicate to me how uncomfortable they feel about this. Their conversation provides considerable insight into the power of the socio-cultural value systems around which they construct their impressions of family organisms.

As a young Asian woman, Ayisha has a triple stigma to contend with: her ethnicity, her bisexuality and her same-sex attraction. Eight months before she is preparing to leave home and start University, Ayisha feels the need to decide whether she should remain a deceptive “fraud” who has a home, food and safety, or achieve individuation and likely improved confidence and self-esteem by coming out to her family:

I told my older sister first – she’s 24. She was alright about it. Then I told my mum and she said “How do you know? That’s what you feel right now but it’ll probably change”. My brother who’s fourteen is really homophobic. This weekend I asked him “why are you being so homophobic towards me?” He said “It’s sick. I don’t want to talk about it. We’ve got visitors downstairs, can you keep your voice down? You’re disgracing the family”.

Savin-Williams (1998b:91) observes that an LGB identify will likely be in conflict with the constellation of the traditional extended family within the ethnic support system:

Given the emotional centrality of the extended family, youths with same-sex attractions may feel that they must inevitably choose between their familial or ethnic affiliation and their personal sexual identity.

Ayisha's mother conveys her disapproval of same-sex attraction by dismissing Ayisha's sexuality as a "phase" which is of minimal significance. It has taken five years since self-labelling as same-sex attracted for Ayisha to understand her sexual identity and disclose this to her family. By doing so, she has risked losing the support of her extended family and thereby her ethnic community. By taking a minoritising view (Sedgwick, 1990:1) and seeming to regard Ayisha's sexual identity as transitory and insignificant, Ayisha's family are reducing her status to that of a minority within a minority community. Her younger brother reinforces this by making her feel ashamed and guilty ("disgracing the family"). As a young Asian woman, Ayisha has received a lot of advice and support from her family and extended family network concerning how to manage ethnic discrimination. As her bisexual identity is a concealable stigma (Frabble, Platt & Hoey, 1989); Frost & Bastone, 2007), which her family has not known about and do not approve of, she has not received any support regarding how to manage the visibility of her sexual identity. Ayisha's family seem to be in crisis. They have a two-fold dilemma: firstly, they must deal with their own heterosexist values and beliefs; secondly, they must deal with the heterosexist value-systems of their extended family. Ayisha runs the very real risk of being "cut-off" from the family network.

For many parents, the disclosure of sexual minority status will necessitate a restructuring process of dreams, hopes and expectations. Often the disclosure will follow a difficult period during which the parents have felt alienated from their son or daughter. Savin-Williams (2001:17) has demonstrated that LGB young people often choose to come out to the mother citing better relations with the mother and fearing an adverse reaction from the father. Laurie came out to his mother when he was fifteen. Her reaction was "don't tell your father". An enforced invisibility ensued which is still maintained:

It took a whole year after I'd told my mum before I told my dad. He's very much "Girls like boys and do makeup. Boys do football". It was hard but now it's okay. My dad sometimes makes a joke about it. My mum keeps it very hushed. She doesn't want my aunties or granddads or anybody else to know so it's just within the six of us in the family.

Laurie's immediate family seems to be structured around notions of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995:76) where notions of appropriate maleness are defined and boundaries of acceptability are drawn. Lasser and Wicker (2007) demonstrate how the families of LGB young people often experience a process of Visibility Management which is parallel to that experienced by children/siblings. During this period of adjustment they need to decide who they will tell, when not to tell and how to tell, as

well as to anticipate the likely consequences of disclosure. Laurie's gay visibility is carefully controlled by his mother, which he accepts, meaning that there is a considerable time lapse before his father is informed. A sense of status loss is also apparent as Laurie's family are concerned that, if members of the extended family discover their "secret", Laurie's stigma will spread and affect them. Griffin, Wirth and Wirth (1996:8) describe the multiple losses which parents and caregivers often go through when a child discloses his or her same-sex attraction: emotional, biological, spiritual, social and status losses. Emotional loss is associated with the hope that children will get married and provide grandchildren; biological loss is experienced by those parents who grieve that family genetic characteristics will not be continued through grandchildren; spiritual loss is experienced by some parents who worry about religious strictures on same-sex attraction; social loss accounts for the worries about how friends, relatives and colleagues will react; status loss is experienced when parents feel that the stigma attached to their children will affect them as well. It will often take a long period of time for parents to become reconciled to these losses, if reconciliation is ever to be achieved.

Quite often the LGB young person who decides to disclose their identity to their family will underestimate the period of adjustment which families often need when they are re-evaluating their heterosexist world-views (Savin-Williams 1998b:76). Rachel also tells her mother first about her lesbian identification, believing that she will be more accepting than her father and that she will facilitate the process of disclosure to the father. Rachel gets a surprising reaction, however:

I told my mum when I was fifteen and she cried and stuff. She said that she'd really hoped that I would get married and have kids. I said that I could still do that with a woman but that just seemed to make things worse so I kept quiet about it. My dad was relieved 'cos he thought I was pregnant. All he said was "so you're not pregnant then? Thank god for that!"

Rachel's mother seems to be initially struggling over feelings of emotional and biological loss: she is grieving for the loss of the life hopes which she had for her daughter. Rachel begins the process of educating her parents about what it is to be LGB by telling her mother about civil partnerships and same-sex couple adoption or fostering. However, she realises that it will be a much slower process than she had anticipated and accepts the need for maintaining a low lesbian visibility, at this stage of the process. Eventually, however, she intends to educate her parents about LGB lifestyles by introducing them to a gay and lesbian community which conveys

normalising messages enabling them to see firsthand that LGB people can and do live happy, fulfilling lives.

Rachel's story demonstrates that parental reactions can be unpredictable. They can also convey mixed messages which can be very confusing for the young LGB person. Eight months after disclosing to her mother, Christie narrates how she is still getting conflicting messages:

My mum had a depression when I first told her: a bit of a nervous breakdown, actually. Now she seems okay with it. When we go shopping in town, she'll see a girl and she'll ask me "do you think she's fit?" She does this thing, though. If I say I'm a lesbian, she'll scream at me that I'm bisexual, not lesbian, 'cos she definitely wants grandkids. She said that to me the other night.

During her mother's "depression", it seemed to Christie that she was questioning her own parenting abilities and feeling guilty that she may have been "responsible", in some way for Christie's same-sex attraction. She has reached the point where she is trying hard to enable Christie to reach a positive self-concept, even trying to understand her world-view ("do you think she's fit?") On the other hand, Christie's mother is not yet prepared to accept the emotional and biological losses that not having biological grandchildren will entail and insists that Christie must be bisexual ("She definitely wants grandkids. She said that to me the other night"). Rich (1986:25) comments on the "female doublethink" which emerges as the result of the "male credibility and status" which permeates compulsory heterosexuality and means that it is often difficult for women to conceive of a woman-to-woman relationship:

However woman-to-woman relationships, female support networks, a female and a feminist value system are relied on and cherished, indoctrination in male credibility and status can still create synapses in thought, denials of feeling, wishful thinking, a profound sexual and intellectual confusion.

Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) have demonstrated the importance of family support if a young LGB person is experiencing victimisation at school. They demonstrate that the mental health problems resulting from school homophobic victimisation can be circumvented if the young person receives high levels of family support resulting in self-acceptance and increased levels of self-esteem. However, those victimised young people who do not get family support are more likely to experience psychological problems including suicidality. At fifteen, Diane has started a year early at Sixth Form College, as an alternative to home-education. She is experiencing mental health

problems such as depression and anxiety, partly induced by high levels of a homophobic victimisation at school. Home circumstances do not help either. Identifying as lesbian at twelve years of age, Diane remembers what happened when she told her mother about her new-found identity:

When I was eleven, me and my girl-friend, we got really close and we starting going out. A few weeks later, when I was twelve, I told my mum and that was it. Oh! She was really against it and called us names. She cried when I told her I was going out with a girl. I really tried to shove those feelings aside and I feel like doing it now but I can't because it's always going to be like that. My mum still calls me "faggot" and "dyke". She's told me "I don't want you bringing any of your dyke friends home".

Living at home in a one-parent family, Diane feels unable to be herself. Having experienced an enforced visibility at school due to homophobic stigmatisation, her mother has enforced invisibility at home by making it clear that she cannot take LGB friends home. By resorting to hate-labelling ("faggot" "dyke"), her mother has perpetuated the verbal abuse that she has experienced at school on a daily basis. It is not surprising that she has to some extent internalised these hate messages ("shove those feelings aside"). She is still experiencing the "cognitive dissonance" which results from the internal conflict between self-identity and the social stigmatisation reinforced by her mother ("I feel like doing it now"). In the company of other LGB young people, at the College Gay-Straight Alliance, however, she has become reconciled to her lesbian identity and is beginning to develop a positive sense of self-concept ("it's always going to be like that").

The families in these coming-out stories have sought, in various ways, to control the visibility of their LGB family member. It may be temporary control, during a period of adjustment, whilst the family learns to negotiate with the LGB young person. However, it may result in long-term rejection with likely consequence for the young person's self-concept. Savin-Williams (2001:18) claims that many LGB youth come out to their families after they have disclosed to a same-age peer or group of peers. These narratives demonstrate, however, that in some cases a young person is not able to control their visibility management in a measured way. In some cases, they look to their families for support when they are experiencing a personal crisis such as intense victimisation at school. It is the peer control of LGB visibility that I will next consider.

6.2 Isolating the Other

Homophobic victimisation often takes the form of emotional, physical, verbal or cyber abuse and is a way of enforcing the visibility of an LGB young person or Othering a heterosexual who does not conform to gender expectations. Duncan (1990:110) identifies it as a control mechanism to enable the “toughest” males and females to “maintain the freedom and power position” which they have “fought for and enjoyed throughout their schooldays”. In this ways, heterosexual (often male) credentials are bolstered by locating “weakness” in others. Bontempo and D’Augelli (2002) identify two levels of LGB victimisation (high and low) and demonstrate that the most vulnerable young people are those who exhibit gender atypicality (especially boys). For Olweus (1993:35), the wielding of power which is associated with homophobic bullying is seen, by many of the “tougher” students, as a rite of passage to heterosexual adulthood and is:

a component of a more generally anti-social and rule-breaking (“conduct disordered”) behaviour pattern.

Christie and Laurie, identifying as lesbian and gay at the age of fourteen formed a protective dyadic relationship when the victimisation escalated. The school had advised Laurie’s parents to keep him at home “for his own safety” for two months. Christie and Laurie remember what happened on the day of his return:

Laurie: I had scissors thrown at me, in the lunch-hour, and was told to cut my wrists. I was suffering from depression and was on Prozac. Everybody knew about it because the teachers had told them.

Christie: Yeah. We were just walking through the school in the lunch-hour. It didn’t help that everyone knew we were both on anti-depressants and gay. They figured we were on them because we were gay so they took the piss all the more. It’s a good job we had each other. We were best friends. We’d go down to the park and have a cry together. Then they’d be on at us for missing lessons.

Laurie and Christie are pathologised through the association of sexual minority status with mental illness and suicide. An assumption has been made that they are both on anti-depressants because of their same-sex attraction rather than because of the stigmatisation to which they are being subjected. Foucault (1981) has demonstrated how different sexualities have been discursively classified as mental illnesses or

precursors to infections since the early nineteenth century. Due to the invisibility of LGB history in the school curriculum, it is highly unlikely that any of the perpetrators will be aware of the ways in which social scientists and researchers have sought to break down the links between same-sex attraction and illness, leading to declassification by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. Furthermore, because homonegative victimisation has not been alleviated and monitored by schools in the same ways as racism, sexism and disablism, it is not seen as “bad” in the same way (Douglas *et al.*, 1997). In this way, the link between same-sex attraction and sickness, deviancy and perversion is perpetuated. The school has advanced this process of pathologisation by telling Laurie to stay at home for two months and by letting other peers know the reason for his absence. On his return to school, Christie and Laurie are immediately subjected to serious harassment and excluded from peer networks. Laurie and Christie retreat to the local park and miss lessons illustrating the correlation between high levels of homophobic victimisation and frequent absenteeism identified by Rivers (2000). By enforcing high levels of visibility, power relations are enacted which demonise and humiliate Christie and Laurie as stigmatised Others. Rutherford (1990:22) explains how compulsory heterosexuality dichotomises heterosexuality and same-sex attraction, in the process of constituting the Other:

Binarism operates in the same way as splitting and projection: the centre expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate term, filling it with the antithesis of its own identity: the Other, in its very alienness, simply mirrors and represents what is deeply familiar to that centre, but projected outside of itself.

An essential part of this process of domination, is the use of a lexicon which represents same-sex attraction by reinforcing gender atypicality as perversity (Queer; Dyke) or as a process of “doing” (sexual acts) rather than “experiencing” or “being” (Plummer, 1981:54). Analysing the ways in which power has been used linguistically to subordinate, Schulz (1975:144) demonstrates how taboo language forms part of a process of “semantic derogation” which debases, controls and dominates:

Words which are highly charged with emotion, taboo or distaste do not only reflect the culture which uses them. They teach and perpetuate the attitudes which created them.

Schulz is specifically concerned with the ways in which males, as the historical primary creators and users of the written English language, have oppressed women through misogynistic slang. The concept of “semantic derogation”, in which language is used to

humiliate, subordinate and oppress, is one which is equally applicable to homonegative hate language which has, for so long, been allowed to persist. Thurlow (2001) has demonstrated that, in the total lexicon of racist, sexist, disablist and homophobic language, *gay* is regarded by students as the worst insult to be called, when it is referring to an individual's being. Dave and Neil commented on the persistent use of *gay* as a hate-noun:

Neil: At school, the biggest insult was "You're gay". People said it a lot.

Dave: Yeah, it's a comment to get you down. To make them feel better than you. Some of them don't even know you - they just say it so that they get a buzz.

Increasingly, however, the word *gay* is being used as an adjective to refer to something pejoratively as dysfunctional, worthless, of poor quality/taste or behaviour that is deemed to be "stupid". Judy comments on the ways in which the constant use of pejorative "gay" has become normalised:

It's not as if every time I hear it I feel horrible because it's happening so often you actually come round to it, don't you? It's actually quite funny. That doesn't mean it's acceptable, though. Nothing is thought about it. It's just one of those things to say. They don't realise the connotations. They just seem completely blind to it. It's an education thing; people just don't see it.

Some LGB students at Millais College have sought to challenge the pejorative use of *gay*, however. Following the example of LGB identity politics which has sought to reclaim the one-time insult adjective "Queer" by converting it into a celebratory, transgressive noun, Trina comments on how she and other LGB friends have sought to bring about an ameliorative semantic shift of the word's meaning:

A teacher challenged me the other day because I called my calculator "gay" because it does a different type of fraction. She said "You shouldn't use that in a derogatory sense." I said "I'm not. It's fantastic - so much better than an average calculator."

Frequently, young people who are being subjected to extreme levels of abuse, feel powerless, unsupported and out of control. After being "outed" by a false friend at school, during Year Ten, and subjected to relentless physical and verbal abuse, Ed is being home-educated, during Year Eleven, on the recommendation of his school,

because of concerns for his physical and psychological welfare. He has recently, however, returned to the school to take his GCSE examinations:

As I was walking to the school to take an exam, some boys rode up to me, on their bikes, and spat at me. Then somebody shouted “gayboy” at me, in the exam, just before it started. Even when I was at home, sometimes they would gather outside the house, if they thought I was alone, and shout things at me. My family say I’m obviously a victim and in some cases they are right but in other cases I can’t stop it.

Ed’s victimisers appear to seek every opportunity to subject him to physical, verbal and psychological abuse. He is subjected to further abuse in the exam room just before a public examination: either this is not heard or left unchallenged by the teachers, confirming the findings of Rivers (2001) and Stonewall (2007) that homophobic abuse is often left unchallenged by teachers who do not feel confident about responding to it. Connell (1995:76) identifies the ways in which boys and men are defined and regulated by “hegemonic masculinities”, with painful consequences for the non-macho or “sissy” boy. “Hegemonic masculinities” refer to the dominant forms of masculinity which reinforce divisions between men and women, by legitimising privileged groups, in this case white, male and heterosexual and constituting negative portrayals of same-sex attraction, as a means of self-policing their own masculinities.

In his own home, Ed is subjected to verbal abuse, as his peers are returning home from school. Rather than reporting this sexual harassment to the Police as a hate-crime, his family seem to imply that it is his “fault”. He is beginning to believe that he has a personal problem and may be responsible for having caused the harassment (“in some cases they are right”). He may also fear that reporting an incident may make him more vulnerable to further harassment. As a victim of enforced visibility, Ed feels ashamed, embarrassed and guilty that his family and neighbours are aware of the verbal abuse to which he is being subjected. It appears that no support is being provided, by peers, family or school. Not surprisingly, Ed has very high levels of social anxiety and feels psychologically unable to leave the house when there are many other people around. He has, in effect, isolated himself - a process which, he reflects, may have started in school, during Year Ten:

There was one time when I couldn’t cope at school. I had to prove to people that I was capable of working at home on my own. I had to go through an isolation period. They organised for me to go in a room, with one other teacher at the other end of the room, and work by myself. At the time, I thought it was

one of the best things that had happened to me. That isolation period really helped me to come to terms with things – but maybe it’s made me how I am now.

For Ed, this “isolation period” appeared to be a protective refuge initially: an opportunity to reflect and try and understand what was happening to him (“One of the best things that had happened to me”). He now realises that it represented an abnegation of the school’s responsibility, which has been partly responsible for the self-imposed isolation he is now experiencing. The school has effectively confirmed, in Ed’s mind, what his family have also been implying: that there is something wrong with him.

When Christie responded to the homonegative abuse by fighting back, her school also responded by putting her in isolation. This time, however, it seemed to be a punishment:

One time I did try to deal with it and I got put in solitary for a day to try and calm me down. They could see that I was getting more and more stressed and their way of dealing with it was putting me in a room all by myself and I had to spend lunchtime and break-time in there as well. That really got to me. That was their way of dealing with it.

For Christie, school-imposed isolation was equivalent to a “solitary” confinement. The abuse had taken its toll, Christie had broken the rules by fighting (rather like Alice in Chapter Three) and her punishment has been to spend a day isolated from peers – including lunch and break-times. As Christie recalled this episode, her anger was palpable. Linn *et al.* (1992:116) have identified the direct and indirect consequences of sexual harassment. Immediate responses include anger, embarrassment, loss of self-confidence, powerlessness and cynicism about education and teachers. Indirect consequences were less tangible:

Students who felt betrayed, discredited or compromised by peers, and unsupported by school staff, seemed less trusting of people in general and less enthusiastic about pursuing their education.

To Christie, Ed and Laurie, the school has become a “toxic environment” (Stone-Fish & Harvey 2005:58) in which victimisation is allowed to persist. They have been subjected to very high levels of LGB visibility, through verbal, physical and psychological abuse and the consequent isolation has been perpetuated by school responses which have

isolated them further, albeit “for their own safety”. A common theme running through many of the narratives in this study is the notion that the “problem” (defined in several ways) is being avoided.

6.3 Avoiding the Problem

So far, a variety of reactions to LGB visibility from home, peers and school have been revealed. Schools may seek to side-step abuse and avoid discussion, families may seek to silence and render LGB identity invisible, peers may choose to terminate friendship or publicly demonise and ostracise. What could be seen as an opportunity, by school, family and peers is often seen as a challenge: a problem to be avoided where possible.

Laurie recalls a difficult moment in a whole-class tutor session when he was publicly subjected to homonegative abuse in the teacher’s presence:

I remember there was a tutor group meeting and I was called some nasty stuff and the teacher just sent me out of the room to the library. Instead of dealing with the problem, she just sent me out and took the easy way out. That really did annoy me.

This episode occurs two years after the repeal of Section 28 but still seems to be within its shadow. This teacher’s response to homonegative abuse is to take the “easy way out” by removing Laurie from the room. The school does not have a common policy and set of procedures regarding homophobic bullying which this teacher can invoke. Mac an Ghail (1994:1) demonstrates how schools operate as “masculinizing agencies” through the enactment, reinforcement and “schooling” (Epstein & Johnson, 1988) of binary heterosexist sex roles (male/female; masculine/feminine), rendering non-heterosexuality invisible. Whatley (1992:78) examines the effect that conservative trends in Education, such as Section 28, have had on teachers:

Instead of focusing on strategies to teach sexualities in the best ways to facilitate communication with students on this complex and sensitive topic, the class ends up directed towards developing strategies to avoid conflict and controversy.

Epstein (2003:114) demonstrates that fears about what parents, politicians and the media might say means that “curriculum development, lesson plans and learning

activities seem driven not by theories of education but by the fear of attack". She comments on the difficulties which beset those teachers who teach in schools where there is a lack of consistency in anti-bullying procedures for dealing with heterosexism and homophobia. If they seek to intervene, these "agents of change" are left to put out fires and will often find themselves struggling with opposition from colleagues, students, the administration and parents, in dealing with homophobia. Teachers frequently report that they lack the confidence to deliver sexuality education and to deal with homophobic abuse (Stonewall, 2007; NUT, 2009). Sadker, Sadker and Shakehaft (1989:214) demonstrate that, whilst other types of oppression are covered in teacher training, sexuality is not addressed by most Schools of Education:

Since teachers and administrators typically have little or no formal training in this hidden curriculum, they are often baffled about what to do when they confront sex and sexism in their classroom and school.

The consequence is that, too often, LGB lifestyles are not mentioned at all in school, left to external "expert" speakers during health days, or added seemingly as an after-thought to an over-crowded PSHE agenda. Neil and Dave recall their experiences of LGB "mentions" in class:

Neil: It was a no go area. Teachers didn't go there. They didn't talk about it. It might have been touched on in PSHE but not in depth because it would just have been laughed off.

Dave: Most of the teachers were too scared to teach it because they didn't want to end up losing control of the lesson. People would start making jokes about it. They would just make other people feel comfortable by not talking about it.

Same-sex attraction is not taken seriously because it has been pushed to the margins of the curriculum. Lessons on LGB lifestyle frequently become sites of disruption and resistance where the norms of compulsory heterosexuality are re-enforced. Sears (1992:13) attributes this partly to a sexuality curriculum which focuses on rational decision-making and reproduction and avoids the eroticism associated with sexuality ("de-sexualisation"). Leo, a seventeen-year-old member of a college Gay Straight Alliance, recalls the only lesson in his schooling where LGB sexuality was addressed, in Year Ten:

PSHE was mainly about sex education. Someone brought up gays and lesbians and the teacher said “We’ll be starting that next week”. Then we started looking at why people become LGB, protection, safe-sex, HIV and all that. It was better to have that than nothing at all. It was just after the rumours had been spread about me. It had a positive and a negative effect on me. As soon as it was mentioned, people turned around, stared and starting asking questions.

In accordance with the Sex and Relationship Education guidelines issued by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE, 2000:5), this lesson pathologises LGB sexuality in terms of causality (“why people become LGB”) and illness (HIV). Whilst acknowledging that slight input is better than total invisibility, the lesson becomes an extension of the enforced visibility to which Leo is being subjected elsewhere at school. He becomes an object of peer sexual curiosity (“asking questions”) and an oddity (“stared”). Sears (1992:27) recognises the very real need for sexuality education which de-constructs gender norms, as products of social ideologies, rather than making LGB sexuality “stand out” as the exception in a curriculum of compulsory heterosexism.

The “problem” of sexuality, which is so often avoided by schools, presents another “problem” for the young men and women who become victims of abuse: whether or not to report this abuse to the authorities. Lizzie, a sixteen-year-old member of the Millais Gay-Straight Alliance, told a “best friend” that she was lesbian, during Year Ten in a single-sex school. The friend told other girls and soon Lizzie became subject to gossip and rumours. When challenged, her “friend” became extremely aggressive towards her, threatening violence and invoking hate language (“dyke” “dirty queer”). Despite intolerable levels of cyber, physical, psychological and verbal abuse, Lizzie chose not to report this harassment either to the school, to her family or to the police and preferred to suffer in silence. She became a prominent member of her college Gay-Straight Alliance always preferring to remain silent when others were talking about victimisation; other students bore witness, however, that she “was always being bullied” at school. Some time after starting at Sixth Form College, Lizzie was physically attacked by the same girls who had made her life a misery at school. She was beaten up and had her personal belongings stolen. Lizzie’s other LGB friends persuaded her to report this to the police. The perpetrators were prosecuted and punished and the police identified that the ringleader was also wanted for other anti-social crimes. Asked why she did not report the bullying, when she was at school, Lizzie replied that she did not want to appear as a “weak victim” or a “tell-tale” in the eyes of her peers. Lizzie did not seek support from home, either. For two years, Lizzie maintained an invisibility of her lesbian identity, at home, until she chose to tell her family at the age of sixteen.

Although apparently self-imposed, Lizzie's invisibility was in reality the effect of peer pressure and regulation as well as the fear of parental rejection.

Families will sometimes also avoid the "problem" of disclosure by refusing to talk about it. Danny, a seventeen-year-old member of the Millais Gay-Straight Alliance, told his family when he was in Year Eleven at school. One year and a half later, there is a refusal to talk about his same-sex attraction in the family:

My Dad's not happy about it. For a month, when I first told him, he ignored me and would not even talk to me at all. Now, he just doesn't want to hear about it or meet any of my friends.

There is an enforced silence (not talking about it) and invisibility (no friends) surrounding Danny's gay identity in the house. He feels rejected and guilty that he appears to have hurt his parents in this way. In Joe's case, his disclosure was not taken seriously, initially. Once the joking had ceased, however, the next stage was an imposed silence which he is still experiencing a year later:

I told my mum first. She told my younger sister and my brother who's 24, in a gossipy way. They thought it was a big laugh. My brother thought she was joking to start with. Then she said she didn't want to talk about it anymore and that's how it is now.

Many of the young men and women who participated in this study chose to disclose to their parents between sixteen and eighteen years of age. However, earlier research (Savin-Williams, 1998b) indicates that the average age of disclosure to families in the 1990s was twenty for gay or bisexual men and twenty-four for lesbian or bisexual women. Boxer, Cook & Herdt (1991) attributes the decreasing age of disclosure to families to increased media attention, improved cultural acceptance and growing opportunities for LGB socialising. The families of Danny and Joe refuse to acknowledge their sexual identities, however, and, after many months have passed, it seems unlikely that negotiation or re-negotiation will be possible. Whilst the effects of not disclosing to families can cause strained relationships and mental health problems (Savin-Williams, 1998b:304), equally if family reactions are not affirmative and supportive, long-term negative effects on the young person's sense of self-concept are also very likely (Remafedi, 1987b:326).

In these stories, invisibility has been imposed in different ways and for different reasons by peers, families and schools. In each case, there has been a "problem" which

these socialising agents have sought to avoid, though the nature of the “problem” varies from situation to situation and depending on whose perspectives are examined. In many ways, LGB young people will feel that the regulation and control of their visibility amounts to censorship. It is to the topic of censorship that I now turn.

6.4 Censoring the Other

Foucault (1981:84) identifies three main forms through which sexuality is constrained through censorship: “affirming that such a thing is not permitted, preventing it from being said, denying that it exists”. There are general mechanisms of power, Foucault argues, which link “the in-existent, the illicit and the in-expressible”, whatever the situation, from the “agencies of social domination” to the very social structures which constitute the subject.

Michelle, a new sixteen-year-old member of the Millais Gay-Straight Alliance, remembers the shame, degradation and public humiliation which accompanied the “cycle of prohibition” (Foucault, 1981:84) when she and another girl were found to be kissing in the classroom of a single-sex Catholic school:

I was “outed” publicly. My friend and I were kissing in a room. Another girl saw us and complained to a teacher. A senior teacher came back and shouted at us. Then the Deputy Head came to find us in a lesson and shouted at us in front of all of the other girls. Then we were made to write a statement about what we had been doing and when and then sign it. I was so ashamed. After that, there wasn’t any pretending I wasn’t lesbian.

The message of “thou shalt not” is reinforced three times, here. The girls are shouted at by a teacher, exposed in front of a whole class of peers by an authority figure, and then forced to describe their “crime” in a written statement. This public “outing” has the reverse effect to the one intended by the school, however, as Michelle realises that no amount of regulation will change her sexual identity. Gender normativity is clearly policed through a “heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1990) a gender hierarchy which naturalises and links the categories of biological sex (man/woman), gender (masculinity and femininity) and sexual attraction (sexual attraction and behaviour). In order to maintain its position of power, Butler (1990:174) maintains, taboos such as same-sex attraction are needed:

Heterosexuality is cultivated through prohibitions, and these prohibitions take as one of their objects homosexual attachment.

Michelle and her friend have been subjected to a “heterosexualisation of sexual desires” which masquerades as the product of biological essences. Rich (1986:13) identifies the ways in which lesbian existence is rendered invisible, including being marginalised as “unnatural” and limiting lesbian existence to sexual behaviour and preference. Rachel, eighteen-year-old member of the Millais Gay-Straight Alliance, remembers the moral disapproval of a French teacher in Year Eleven, after she had come out to a teacher, in a single-sex school:

After I came out, I told one teacher and it got around all the teachers at school. There was one French teacher and she didn't like it at all. She told the class that she thought it was wrong and she said in French “You're a dirty girl”. I didn't understand it but some of the others in the class did and they told me afterwards.

A confidence has become public knowledge and the teacher is not expressing her disapproval in a veiled way, she is pin-pointing Rachel as the focus for her moral opprobrium. There is a linguistic attempt at regulation, as an opinion is expressed in a language which the teacher knows Rachel is unlikely to understand. She knows that other girls in the class will understand, however, and will readily translate it for Rachel after the lesson. Ellis (2007:19) demonstrates that assertions which suggest that Section 28 forced teachers to be cautious or even “silenced” teachers (Douglas *et al.*, 1998; Stonewall, 1994) “may have generalised from exclusively liberal teachers”. He continues that Section 28 appears to have actually legitimised and “authorised” the views of those teachers who were “less committed to the ideals of equality and social justice”. Two years after the repeal of Section 28, this teacher exposes and condemns Rachel in a manner that appears the very antithesis to the spirit of *Every Child Matters* (Department for Education and Science, 2003).

Several participants in this study have spoken about censorship which results from religious attitudes towards same-sex attraction. Nelson (1979:180) identifies four theological positions: (1) *a rejecting-punitive attitude* (same-sex attraction should not be accepted and should be punished) (2) *a rejecting non-punitive attitude* (same-sex attraction is seen as forbidden by scriptures but LGB people should be treated with forgiving grace) (3) *a qualified acceptance position* (same-sex attraction is tolerable if it is deemed irreversible and if the relationship is monogamous) and (4) *full acceptance* (same-sex attraction should be placed on a par with heterosexuality and the same

ethical principles should be applied to both). Andrew, a seventeen-year-old member of a college Gay-Straight Alliance, is outraged by the memory of a Religious Education teacher:

We had an RE teacher who told us it was wrong and quoted the bible at us. It would have been terrible for anybody who really was gay in that class.

This teacher is of a type described by Epstein (2000:388) as “Moral Traditionalist”. He is clearly not prepared to forfeit his beliefs in the interests of the safety of any students in his class who may identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. His *rejecting-punitive script* is delivered publicly in a manner which seems to endorse any abuse or fear of rejection which any of these young people may be experiencing. Rachel also experiences religious judgement when she is spotted in town with her girl-friend, by a member of her church:

One day, somebody from my church saw me out with my girl-friend. They asked next time in Church if I was attracted to girls and I said “Yes”. They said I had to be celibate or I had to stop going to Church so I stopped going. It made me so angry.

The congregation have obviously discussed the “problem” of Rachel’s same-sex attraction before this meeting. They have given Rachel an opportunity to deny or affirm her sexuality. They are prepared for her answer and enact a *rejecting non-punitive* script which is conditional on her agreeing to be celibate. She has the confidence to resist this control but experiences anger and frustration.

In all of these situations, the confidence, self-esteem and status of these young men and women are threatened. They are faced with personal challenges. In order to survive and move towards *identity synthesis*, they will need to develop a sense of self which reflects a congruency between their self-presentations and an understanding of their true worth. In the light of these challenges, I consider next the concept of Face.

6.5 Threatening Face

As LGB young people begin to develop their “spoiled” identities (Goffman, 1963:57), they will need to learn to negotiate these identities with the world and themselves. Goffman (1955) introduced the concept of Face as part of his dramaturgical

perspective of human interaction. According to Goffman (1955:213), face is a mask which changes according to the audience situation and functions of the interaction:

The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the lines other assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes.

Face is an important aspect of everyday self-presentation and involves taking two points of view: “a defensive orientation towards saving one’s own face and a protective orientation towards saving other’s faces” (Goffman, 1955:216). It is, therefore, not only about how you present yourself but also how you respond to others. There are various aspects of face-work which individuals will employ in order to maintain a successful interaction: one can “lose face”, by slipping-up in interaction and repair this gaffe by “getting face” or by “giving face” to others. Equally, one can “threaten the face” of another, either intentionally or unintentionally. Brown and Levinson (1978:66) have refined Goffman’s original definition:

Face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people co-operate (and assume each other’s co-operation) in maintaining face in interaction, such co-operation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face.

Brown and Levinson (1987:10) identify two aspects of face-work in self-presentation: *positive face*, defined as “the positive consistent self-image” or “the wants of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” and *negative face*, defined as “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others”. Negative face will often be enacted by a speaker if his or her face is being threatened by another.

As LGB young people are moving from a *discreditable* (not publicly known but could be found out) to a *discredited* (publicly known) identity (Goffman, 1963:57), they will often find that the normal rules of face-work do not apply to their interactions. In particular, their *positive faces* are threatened by others who express judgements. At Sixth Form College, Ayisha finds herself challenged by another Asian female student who displays a rejecting- punitive attitude towards her bisexual identity:

One girl told me she that thought it was wrong and that I should do something about it. I asked if she found me attractive – if she wanted to go for me. I said “come on, then – let’s go for it”. She was blushing and really embarrassed. Then she said “Can we just stop talking about this, please?”

This student threatens Ayisha’s *positive face* with moral and religious disapproval (her sexual identity is “wrong”). Her bisexual identity is pathologised (“do something about it”) implying that she should seek professional help, presumably medical or psychiatric, and that her sexual identity is either a matter of choice or something that can be “treated”. Ayisha replies with a retaliatory speech act which, in return, *threatens* the *positive face* of the other person (“let’s go for it”) demonstrating that she has nothing to be ashamed of. Ayisha has produced a “reverse discourse” (Foucault 1981:101) to counteract the other student’s medical discourse. Through her response, Ayisha’s sexual identity speaks on its own behalf, demanding that its “naturalness” be acknowledged. Through these “networks of power” Ayisha retains a positive self-concept, thereby maintaining an effective *negative face* (avoiding imposition).

Often the *faces* of young people will feel threatened if they know an LGB identifying young person and fear that the social stigma attached to that person will spread and affect them, a phenomenon identified by Goffman (1963:46) as “courtesy stigma”. Following rumours around school or college, this will often take the form of an intrusive question, requiring affirmation or denial of the rumours. Dina recalls what happened when it became known that she was identifying as bi-sexual:

When I was at school, it got around that I was Bi and girls would come and ask me “Are you a Dyke?” They would tell me to stay away from them and not touch them. I would shrug it off and laugh at them. I had other girl friends that supported me and they were the ones who mattered.

It is the same-sex attraction which concerns these girls, rather than Dina’s bi-sexuality (“Are you a Dyke?”). Disapproval is immediately apparent when the hate label “Dyke” is used. Buoyed by the support which she is getting from her friends, Dina has the confidence to reply in the affirmative. The *face-threatening act* which follows confirms rejection as she is now ostracised as a dangerous Other whose association is seen as contaminating (“stay away” and “not touch them”). Dina enacts *negative face* (“shrug it off and laugh at them”) to demonstrate that their stigmatisation has no effect.

The *face-threatening acts* which are directed at LGB young people who have just come out are connected with sexual curiosity. Peers are fascinated and intrigued by non-

normative sexual identity and keen to find out more. Questions are often connected with causality (“What makes you gay/lesbian/bisexual?”), age of discovery (“When did you first you know you were gay/lesbian/bisexual?”) and intrusive requests for specific information about sexual behaviour. For young people who are still in the confusing process of LGB identity formation, these questions are most unwelcome. Dave, Laurie and Neil discuss strategies for maintaining an effective negative face:

Dave: They ask rude, bad questions like “How long have you been gay? And “Why are you gay?” You think “Well, I don’t know so you why should you get to know?”

Neil: I don’t know whether it’s people trying to be nosey or trying to understand. I don’t think they really get it so they try to probe and find out.

Laurie: I just laugh and say “My mum made me a homosexual. If you give her the wool maybe she’ll make you one, too”.

Dave: You just ask “Why are you straight? When did you first know you were heterosexual?”

These young men have all developed strategies for exerting negative face, and thereby maintaining their own positive self-concepts when subjected to such personal questions. Their strategies often involve a riposte which directs further questions back to those who asked the original question, thereby promoting reflection and perhaps some understanding of what it is like to be on the receiving end of such intrusive questioning.

For Christie, this face-threatening sexual curiosity can often seem to fulfil male heterosexual sexual fantasies:

Me and my girlfriend were getting really dodgy comments from boys we didn’t know like “Can we video-tape you?” and stuff like that, which we really didn’t appreciate.

Rich (1986:26) comments on the assumption that “most women are innately heterosexual” and considers that male control and regulation of female sexuality is maintained, either through male heterosexual constructions of lesbian eroticism or “taboos against homosexuality”:

the enforcement of heterosexuality for women as a means of assuring male right of physical, economic and emotional access.

Rich (1986:26) comments on the “rendering invisible of the lesbian possibility” Here, however, Christie and her friend have been made highly visible, as they are subjected to an invasion of their private lives which suggests that these males feel a heterosexual voyeuristic entitlement to become spectators. After being subjected to comments like these from the boys, along with verbal and psychological abuse from the girls, it is little wonder, perhaps, that Christie “fights back” and is consequently punished with a school-imposed day in the isolation room.

The *face-threatening* of these LGB young men and women is not confined to school, of course. Many have part-time jobs, which they attend during week-day evenings or during week-ends. Workplaces can also become sites of heterosexist regulation and control. Tim works part-time in a clothes shop and comments on the “jokes” which he has been subjected to:

I’ve had trouble with my boss, recently. I’ve had a word with him about some of the things that he’s been saying. Sometimes he says them in front of me and sometimes he says them behind my back. It’s really weird because he’s about thirty but makes all these snidey comments and tries to make out that he’s clever.

Having suffered mental health problems due to negative experiences at school, Tim has decided that he will no longer be rendered invisible, as a young gay man. He is proudly out to peers, family, teachers and work colleagues: all of the socialising agents who can control, organise and regulate his life. Other work colleagues are fully accepting but his boss persists in making “clever” jokes at his expense which continue to marginalise him as a non-heterosexual Other. Although this practice masquerades as “humour” it is, in fact, yet another example of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1995:81), operating within a power relation. Tim realises this and has made a decision not to collude with the Othering process but to challenge his manager. Foucault (1981:102), comments on the pattern of “force relations” which exists within power relations, allowing “different and even contradictory discourses even within the same strategy”:

a multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching, but never completely stable, effects of domination are produced.

By creating a “reverse discourse”, in this way, Tim is running the risk of further recriminations. Stonewall (2007b) conducted a survey of gay and lesbian people’s experiences in the workplace, as part of a wider survey of politics, schools, families, criminal justice, health, home and media representations. One quarter of the two thousand people who took part in this survey reported being bullied by their manager, and half of the participants reported having been bullied by colleagues in their team. Stonewall conclude that a third of the lesbian and gay participants in their study feel that they are more productive in the workplace because they are open about their sexuality, though they also fear the risk of bullying if they do come out. How to manage visibility in the workplace is yet enough situation that the young LGB person will need to consider.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that LGB visibility has been managed by peers, family, teachers and managers in a variety of ways, including guilt (shaming and disgracing), isolation, censorship and face-threatening acts LGB students have been pathologised, abused, harassed and minoritised using a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies. In this way, the forces of pathologisation, compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity have been examined. Unsurprisingly, there have been victims of terrible hate-crimes but there have also been examples of confident, resilient young men and women, identified by Savin-Williams (2005) as “The New Gay Teenager”. Chapter 7 consolidates these ideas about how LGB visibility is managed by the self and others in a Constructivist theory of LGB youth identity development.

Chapter 7: Generating a Theory

In this chapter, I generate a theory of LGB Identity development which maps the strategies used by the LGB teenagers in this study for self-presentation and the management of homonegative pressures. In doing so, I will chart the main processes through which LGB young people move, from initial self-realisation (Coming In) to the eventual synthesis of private and public selves (Integration), grounded in my data.

7.1 Constructing a Theory

At the end of Chapter 3, I outlined the process of analytical coding which enabled me to move from initial coding to focused coding and eventual theory generation. In March 2008, I facilitated the last of the seven focus groups which formed the basis for qualitative data collection. Using this data, I continued the process of constant data comparison for a further period of six months until I found that key concepts were emerging again and again and realised that I was reaching theoretical saturation (Charmaz 2006:96). My categorisation of codes now incorporated the ideas of Jon Lasser, concerning LGB Visibility Management. Key concepts such as Face (Goffman:1963) and Reverse Discourses (Foucault: 1981) earned their way into this analysis as I sought to extend Lasser's ideas on the Visibility Management of Texan LGB youth into my own theory of LGB identity development in a British context. In order to weave the fractured concepts into a coherent and cohesive model of LGB identity development, I used diagramming extensively to map the various social processes which sought to constrain and regulate LGB visibility as well as the strategies employed by LGB youth to circumnavigate these pressures.

Like Glaser (1978:10) and Charmaz (2003:251) I employed the following criteria when developing and evaluating a grounded theory for LGB identity development: fit, work, relevance and modifiability. By returning to the data, I have endeavoured to ensure that this theoretical model accurately maps the actions, processes, thoughts and feelings of the young people who have constructed their narrative accounts of *coming in* to the self and *coming out* to others, thereby fitting the model to the data. This model has been shared with teachers, LGB youth workers and a group of young LGB men and women, to ensure that the model has a practical application and is relevant for the professionals who support LGB young people as well as for the young people themselves. I have also aimed to ensure that this model can be adapted to the different individual experiences of the young men and women who have narrated their

experiences in this data, thereby ensuring that it is adaptive, flexible and “modifiable” (Glaser, 1978:10).

One of the main ways in which I have tried to ensure flexibility is by taking account of the multiple perspectives which emerge when participants narrate aspects of their personal experiences such as self-presentation, disclosure to others and heterosexist control of visibility. Like Bradley (1996:25) I believe that individual identity development needs to be considered in the context of multiple identities (“lived relationships”) and this is reflected in the first section of my model (“Coming In”). In constructing this theory, I also acknowledge a debt to developmental stage models, such as those of Cass (1979), Troiden, (1990) and Coleman. However, like Savin-Williams (2005:157), I recognise that, although these theories have significantly increased our understanding of LGB identity development, they often present this process as fixed and linear, subscribing to a “one theory fits all” approach. These models tend to regard LGB people as a homogenous group, suggesting that the identity trajectories of gay males can be equally applied to lesbian and bisexual people. Plummer (1981), has identified some of the problems which often accompany essentialist identity labels (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual), including generalisation. The young LGB participants in my study use these labels but are not limited by heterosexist interpretations of their sexual identity. Some of the young women in my data, for example, have interpreted their sexual identity fluidly, more in accordance with the continuum of lesbian existence identified by Rich (1986:71) ranging from emotional to full romantic attraction. I have tried to avoid the dangers of generalisation by moving away from particularisations regarding LGB identity development, instead focussing on the ways in which the LGB youth in my data have presented the self and managed homonegative barriers through a repertoire of verbal, non-verbal and social strategies.

In addition to avoiding the potential traps associated with labelling, I have also avoided a temporal stage approach. Instead of trying to reproduce a linear developmental stage theory, it became apparent that these young men and women who are developing a spoiled identity will often move backwards and forwards on a scale of LGB visibility, ranging from least visible to most visible. I have constructed my theory on the premise that the management of LGB visibility for these young people will be a dynamic life-long process. For those who appear to have reached the final integration of private and public selves, there remain times when LGB invisibility or partial visibility will be preferred. This model also acknowledges that some LGB youth are not in control of their visibility by acknowledging that many young people have their visibility imposed by others.

7.2 Adopting a Constructivist approach

Charmaz (2003:274) identifies two very different Grounded Theory approaches: Objectivist and Constructivist. She claims that many Grounded Theory studies have moved away from the avowed intentions of Glaser and Strauss (1967): instead of employing a flexible inductive method of qualitative data analysis and theory generation many studies have become bound by rules, regulations and scientific terms which are prescriptive and positivistic (“objectivist”):

As grounded theory methods become more articulated, categorised and elaborated, they seem to take on a life of their own. Guidelines turn into procedures and are reified into immutable rules, unlike Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) original flexible strategies. By taking grounded theory methods as prescriptive scientific rules, proponents further the positivist cast to objectivist grounded theory.

According to Charmaz (2003), objectivist grounded theorists such as Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Glaser (1978) seek to “discover” a reality which is assumed to be “true”, testable and verifiable. In their search for a rigorous systematic method which answers the positivistic call for reliability and validity, grounded theorists often assume that their interpretations will be shared by other professionals and the respondents themselves:

Objectivist grounded theory accepts the positivistic assumptions of an external world that can be described, analysed, explained and predicted: truth, but with a small *t*. That is, objectivist grounded theory is modifiable as conditions change. (Charmaz, 2003:274)

Constructivist Grounded Theory, on the other hand, does not seek to “discover” the verifiable “truth” of an external world. Instead, meaning is constructed by examining the process of interaction between the *viewers* (the researcher/s and other consumers of the research) and the *viewed* (participants). A “reality” is constructed by embedding this interactive process in cultural, structural and temporal contexts. In this way, the interpretive nature of Grounded Theory Method is acknowledged: the analysis is filtered through the attitudes and ideological values of the researcher. Charmaz (2006:132) claims that this is actually the case for all research, including quantitative research, arguing that it is not possible to separate data from the researcher’s interpretations. A Constructivist Grounded Theory Method seeks to examine the

attitude, thoughts and feelings of the participants, therefore, as well as structures and contexts. Charmaz (2003:273) demonstrates that notions of causality, which emerge in a Constructivist Grounded Theory, are likely to be “suggestive, incomplete and indeterminate” rather than certain, fixed and final. Even though the conclusions of a Constructivist Grounded Theory are conditional and not generalisable, she believes that these conclusions will nonetheless posit concepts and ideas which other researchers may be able to transport to other substantive fields.

In my own model of LGB youth identity development, I have sought to construct the participants’ stories using their own terms, thereby seeking to avoid “a partial sanitized view of experience, cleaned up for public discourse” (Charmaz, 2003:275). Having collected data over a twelve-month period, I have gradually refined the data collection process as my analytical impressions have developed. These impressions were enriched, halfway through the data-collection process, by a literature review of key sociological and psychological concepts. This was an important part of the process, I believe, as it has ensured that key themes and concepts have emerged naturally from the data rather than being imposed externally from an initial deductive literature review.

Theoretical saturation is a vital part of the generation of a Grounded Theory, as demonstrated by Glaser (1978: 116), Strauss and Corbin (1990:263) and Charmaz (2006:113). Strauss and Corbin (1990:263) define theoretical saturation as follows:

The point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions, and variations. Further data gathering and analysis add little new to the conceptualization, though variations can always be discovered.

Theoretical saturation is achieved through detailed line-by-line and incident-by-incident analysis in order to raise categories to an abstract and general level “while preserving their specific connections to the data from which you constructed these categories” (Charmaz, 2006:113). As I analysed my focus group data, I found that similar theoretical patterns were appearing again and again: cognitive dissonance, compulsory heterosexuality, breaking the rules, in/visibility, gender normativity, identity synthesis (integration), reverse discourses, sexual curiosity and the interactional concept of Face. Where appropriate, I had adopted some of these conceptual categories from the work of others: cognitive dissonance (Floyd and Stein) compulsory heterosexuality (Rich), identity synthesis (Cass; Troiden), reverse discourses (Foucault) and Facework theory (Goffman; Brown and Levinson). True to the spirit of Grounded Theory Method (Glaser, 1978: 9), I took great pains to ensure that these concepts earned their way into my

data analysis and, ultimately, my theoretical model. Other concepts also emerged during analysis: breaking the rules, sexual curiosity, in/visibility, gender normativity, telling and showing. By integrating established and new concepts, in this way, I sought to weave key theoretical ideas into a map of cognitive, social, verbal and non-verbal actions and processes

I have also attempted to capture the realisation of multiple identities (old, spoiled and new; passive, active and politicised) which permeates the experiences of these young people. Although it identifies five key components of the LGB identity process, my Constructivist model of identity development is not fixed, linear or sequential. It recognises that some people will not progress beyond the initial stages of the first phase (Coming In) and that others may move backwards and forwards between the other stages (Disclosing the Self; Managing Pressures; Integrating Private and Public Selves) or that two or more stages may occur simultaneously. This model seeks to resolve a tension. On the one hand, it recognises that people are *individuals* and will seek to manage their lives in their own ways, in a variety of different contexts. On the other hand, by examining similarities and differences across the data, it demonstrates that, in the lives of these young men and women at least, there are patterns and trends emerging which accurately describe the formations of their LGB identities. I have sought to capture these actions and processes by using gerunds and abstract concepts, following the advice of Glaser (1978:133) and Charmaz (2006:136). In this way, I have tried to capture the *reciprocal determinism* (Lasser and Tharinger, 2003: 241) which is an inherent part of the LGB identity formation process: LGB people are “simultaneously shaping their world and being shaped by the world.” Figure 7.1 (below) presents my own Constructivist model of LGB youth identity development. Each category will then be examined separately, in figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, and 7.5. Commentaries on each of these categories will accordingly follow each figure. Where existing extant ideas have been incorporated into my theoretical model, such as Bradley’s concept of “lived relationships” and Rich’s concept of “compulsory heterosexuality”, I have acknowledged these clearly.

7.3 A CONSTRUCTIVIST MODEL OF LGB YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

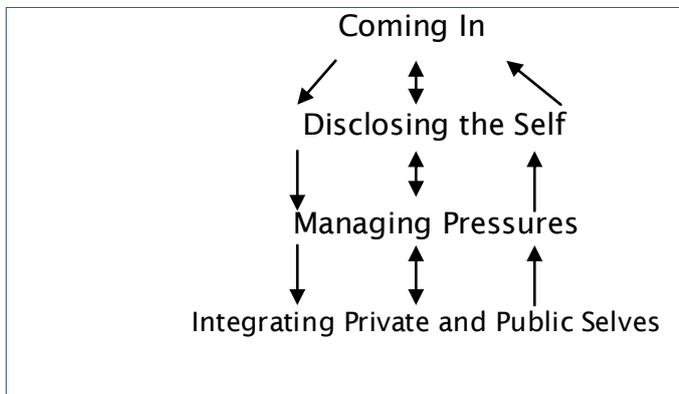


Figure 7.1: A constructivist model of LGB youth identity development

This model relies heavily on a conception of Visibility Management which departs in several ways from the work of Lasser *et al.* (2003; 2005; 2007; 2010). Lasser, Ryser and Price (2010:416) identify the goal of LGB Visibility Management as being “to regulate disclosure for the purposes of maintaining privacy and minimising stigma, harm or marginalisation”. Visibility Management is seen here as a means of regulating the exposure of an individual’s sexual orientation and is a sub-set of Impression Management (Schlenker, 2003), which is primarily concerned with making a positive impression on others. Lasser and Wicker (2007) identify some of the non-verbal strategies which are employed by LGB youth in order to achieve this. I have expanded this concept of Visibility Management to include verbal strategies, such as language reclamation and reverse discourses, and social skills such as establishing new friendships and support networks (Managing Pressures). Lasser and Wicker (2007:112) begin to consider the ways in which LGB Visibility Management is imposed by others but this is not a chief interest because they are primarily interested in self-regulation. My study, however, takes account of the ways in which peers, family, schools and other community members seek to control and regulate LGB Visibility and the responses of LGB young people to this Visibility Management by Others (Managing Pressures).

Lasser *et al.* (2010:415) have developed what they see as “a valid and reliable measure of visibility management” which they believe will be of value to psychological researchers and counsellors or therapists involved in the assessment and treatment planning for LGB clients. Lasser *et al.* believe that The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Visibility Management Scale (LGBVMS) will also enable such professionals to co-manage a young person’s LGB visibility, if requested to do so by the young man or woman concerned, by working with families, teachers and other individuals who might be involved in the

LGB VM process. Their small scale study of 86 female and 36 male LGB adults employed a range of psychometric and statistical approaches to identify correlations and differences between active (facilitating disclosure) and inhibitive (limiting disclosure). Following the grounded theory method approach for data coding and analysis identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990), Lasser *et al.* (2007; 2010) have evolved an approach which Charmaz (2003) would classify as Objectivist: a positivistic attempt to discover a “truth” about LGB identity development which can be subjected to rigorous scientific testing and is therefore deemed to be “valid” and “reliable”. Unlike the LGBVMS, the Constructivist model I have developed does not seek to *measure* LGB Visibility Management in a quantifiable manner. Instead, this model charts the main verbal, non-verbal and social processes which participants have used when constructing their LGB identities. This model will be of particular benefit to professionals who work with LGB young people and their parents or caregivers in educational settings: teachers, counsellors, social-workers and other multi-agency professionals. In order to identify the ways in which this model can provide opportunities for insight and self-discovery amongst LGB young people, as well as promote greater understanding amongst those who work and live with young people, each phase of this model will now be examined in some detail, beginning with *Coming In* (Figure 7.2).

- **Fragmentation of Self developmental trajectory**
- **Fragmentation of family developmental trajectory**
- **Self-realisation of “spoiled” identity**
(Goffman 1963:14)
- **Realisation of multiple identities:**
 - **Lived relationships**
(Bradley 1995:25)
 - ❖ **Old (“Unspoilt”)**
 - ❖ **Present (“discreditable”)**
 - ❖ **Future (“discredited” and “spoiled”)**
(Goffman 1963)

Figure 7.2: Coming In

Stone-Fish and Harvey (2005:54) have described the process of **Coming In** as a “dual individuation” process which involves self-realisation when a young person realises that they are not heterosexual, seeks to develop an autonomous, individual self, self-labels as LGB and begins to learn how to negotiate the attitudes and feelings of peers, family and community, whilst at the same time seeking to remain connected to them.

Typically, this process begins at around ten years of age (Newman and Mozzonigro, 1993) and can continue for several years before the young LGB person tells others.

Figure 7.2 charts this process of exploration:

Many of the participants in my study describe this period of self-realisation as a period of personal confusion and crisis, a de-railment of the personal identity process, which I have referred to as **fragmentation of the self development trajectory**. This corresponds with the stage identified by Cass (1979) as *identity confusion* which is caused by the realisation that they are attracted to a lifestyle which is not culturally prescribed as ideal. The majority of young people in this study are still living at home and there may be a corresponding disruption of the family infrastructure, which I have referred to as **fragmentation of the family's developmental trajectory**, if a young person realises that s/he is going to be different to the family, does not feel that family members will be understanding and decides not to involve the family in this phase of the developmental trajectory. The process of *coming into oneself* is the first part of a dual process of self individuation (the corollary being *coming out to others*) which often involves the realisation that they are LGB even before the first crush on another person (Newman and Muzzonigro, 1993:213). During this fragmentary period, there may be a **self-realisation of a spoiled identity** (Goffman, 1963:14) and they may well choose to adopt stigma-management strategies such as *hiding* behind an apparent heterosexual (old) identity, *denial* and *repair* of the emergent "spoiled" identity (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979). The young person may also internalise homonegative feelings leading to self-loathing. Rowen and Malcom (2002) have established that LGB people often experience high levels of internalised homophobia during this stage of LGB identity formation. The process is complicated further if the young person has already been labelled as LGB by others, such as peers at school, even before his or her own full self-realisation that they are same-sex attracted.

The process of Coming In will be contextualised as a **realisation** of other emergent **multiple identities**, some of which may also be stigmatised. These "**lived relationships**" (Bradley, 1995:25), may include aspects such as ethnicity, disability, gender and social economic status. Some of these will be established elements of an "old" identity but some (such as socio-economic status) may be new, alongside a newly recognised non-heterosexual sexual identity. Unlike LGB status, some of these "**lived relationships**", such as some disabilities or ethnicities, may not be "concealable", (Frost and Bastone, 2007:27) and the young person may well have in place a well-developed support network of family and friends. In this case, the young person may have access to a repertoire of anti-harassment coping strategies. Unless there are LGB relations in the family network, however, it is unlikely that he or she will be aware of

anti-homophobic coping strategies. If other “lived relationships”, such as ethnicity, are tied in with heterosexual cultural/family expectations, the young person could experience multiple stigmas which are linked to the newly emerging non-normative sexual identity. For example, in my study a young Asian woman (Ayisha) who identifies as bisexual may feel guilt and shame because she is not meeting the biological and cultural expectations of her family, which I have referred to as *shaming the family*. She may also feel stigmatised because she identifies as attracted to women (lesbian) and she may feel rejected by lesbian and gay peers who feel that she is denying her “true” sexual identity (lesbian). A young person’s identity is likely to be very fragile, during this stage, as he or she internally works out the past and present elements of his or her fractured identity and contemplates the future. Here, once again, I have found utility in the identity concepts of Goffman: *old* (“unspoiled”) identity, *present* (“discreditable”) identity and *future* (“discredited” and “spoiled”) identity.

The next stage (Disclosing the Self) involves negotiating the feelings of others and learning how to respond to a variety of possible reactions. This process, familiarly known as “Coming Out” is represented by Figure 7.3 of my Constructivist model.

- **Preparing for adulthood**
- **Reconciling private and public selves**
- **Selecting individuals and groups for disclosure**
- **Performing multiple disclosures**
- **Employing stigma-management strategies**
(Cass 1979:219) (Troiden 1979:363)
- **Managing non-verbal disclosure of LGB status**
- **Managing verbal disclosure of LGB status**

Figure 7.3: Disclosing the Self

Most of the respondents in my study began to try out their new identities with the people they were close to, a process I have called *preparing for adulthood*. Most chose a best friend or a family member, such as a mother or sister, to practise the roles they thought they were likely to adopt in their future adult lives. Several participants described a psychological turmoil resulting from the need to *reconcile their private self* (innermost desires, feelings and thoughts) *with their public selves* (societal expectations) a process described by Wright and Perry (2006) as “sexual identity disorder”. Unlike their heterosexual counterparts, many of my participants have had difficult decisions to make regarding how and when to disclose their sexual

status. Here, I have identified the need to carefully ***select individuals and/or groups for disclosure***. Most respondents were unsure about how different people would react and some reactions were surprising. Some participants were going through the process of *Coming In* themselves, and found that friends and family need to go through a similar process of adjustment. My study has identified that some respondents were unsure about their sexual identities resulting in a process of ***multiple disclosures*** to the same people: for example, a male may tell his friends that he is attracted to the same sex and then realise, some months later, that he is also attracted to the opposite sex and feel the need to disclose bisexuality.

For all participants in this study, the two most important aspects of their lives were school and family. In order to “survive” at school without being bullied and stigmatised some chose to ***employ a range of stigma-management strategies*** such as those identified by Cass (1979) and Troiden (1979). This included continuing to *pass* as heterosexual, if they were able to do so. At home, some participants struggled to balance their basic needs such as housing, food, protection and love with the very real need to achieve individuation: to be honest about themselves with the people that they loved and cared for.

Some (but by no means all) young people quickly became skilful in the process of disclosure and ***employ a range of verbal and non-verbal Visibility Management (VM) strategies*** to facilitate this. Lasser *et al.* (2003) have examined the non-verbal self-presentational aspects of LGB Visibility Management in detail and some aspects of the verbal and social skills employed in self-presentation. In the next section (Table 7.4 Managing Pressures), I will demonstrate how my research has sought to extend this concept to include a more detailed examination of the social and verbal aspects of VM as well as the mechanisms by which others seek to control and regulate LGB Visibility Management. There has been an increased media attention to same-sex attraction and popular television programmes, films, posters and clothing items frequently provide opportunities for LGB young people to fully or partially disclose their new sexual identities. Of the skilful users of LGB Visibility Management, many will prefer to partially disclose their identity by giving verbal and non-verbal clues to see who will respond. It is to be remembered, however, that many LGB people will experience negative reactions to their disclosures and this is especially the case for LGB young people who are not equipped with verbal, non-verbal and social Visibility Management skills and who are not able to remain invisible behind an old “heterosexual” identity because of apparent non-gender conformity. These young people may be “Othered” by peers or family members before they are ready to begin disclosure, possibly before they have even fully realised their new identity for themselves. Figure 7.4 details many

of the pressures which LGB youth will encounter whilst they are learning about how to respond to the reactions of others and the skills which are employed to effectively manage LGB visibility in the face of these pressures.

Pressures	Visibility Management skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory Heterosexuality (Rich: 1986:23) • Homonegative labelling • Homonegative abuse • False friends • Face-threatening Acts (Goffman 1955: 216) • Sexual Curiosity • Censorship • Isolation • Avoidance • Castigation • Rejection • Multiple Losses (Griffin, Wirth and Wirth 1986) • Guilt (shaming the family) • Confusion of sexual identity with sexual practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-verbal skills (Lasser et al. 2003:233) • Understanding VM • Telling and Showing • Understanding positive and negative Facework principles. (Goffman 1955:213) ▪ Fighting back ▪ Breaking the Rules • Withdrawing • Resilience (Rutter 1987:316) <p><i>Verbal skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective disclosure ▪ Reverse discourse (Foucault 1981:101) ▪ Language reclamation <p><i>Social skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making new friendships • True Friends • Maintaining homosocial and heterosocial networks

Figure 7.4: Managing Pressures

All of the LGB participants in this study, experienced pressures to conform to culturally prescribed roles and most of these pressures were implicitly or explicitly tied to the conventional notions of masculinity and femininity identified by Butler (1990:187) as “gender norms”. The participants frequently found themselves *breaking the rules*, when the pressures of *compulsory heterosexuality* (Rich, 1986) become oppressive.

Frequently, they were avoided and betrayed by a **false “best” friend**, in whom they had confided as a confidante, and subjected to ***censorship*** and ***isolation*** by schools (even when governed by apparent concerns about their safety and well-being). Furthermore, some respondents found themselves ***castigated*** and ***rejected*** by family members who were experiencing one or more of the ***multiple losses*** identified by Griffin, Wirth and Wirth (1996): emotional, biological, spiritual or status loss. The last of these, status loss, had a profound effect on the emotional well-being of several participants who were made to feel the consequent ***guilt*** attached to ***shaming the family***. When attempting disclosure to peers, family members or teachers a familiar response was one which confused ***sexual identity*** with ***sexual practice***. Faced with challenges such as these, LGB young people may resort, once again, to hiding behind an old “heterosexual” identity, they might ***withdraw*** from the family environment or they might resist the pressures to conform by rejoining with their own rebuttals identified by Foucault (1981) as “***reverse discourses***”.

Those participants who ***understood Visibility Management*** (VM) had become ***skilful*** users of ***verbal and non-verbal aspects*** of communication and, in this way, deliberately flouted culturally determined “gender scripts” (Gagnon and Simon, 1967:177) Lasser et al. (2003) have demonstrated how some LGB youth use ***non-verbal*** aspects including hair, clothes, cultural symbols (such as badges, rings and flags) and make-up, as a message-board to constitute “gender deviance” (Lasser and Wicker, 2007:110). Rutter (1987) has described the qualities associated with resilience (symbolical armour-plating) which are exhibited by some of the LGB participants in my study. The latter experimented with ways of ***showing*** their new identities rather than merely ***telling***. My study also examined the ***verbal strategies*** used by these young LGB people when faced with examples of ***homonegative abuse***, including ***homonegative labeling***. These young people exhibited the confidence to ***fight back***, verbally or physically. Very often, they had already disclosed to others and received support from peers and/or family members. They usually have a strong sense of self-concept which comes from the support that they have gained, particularly from other peers. These students usually have strong interactional, ***social skills*** which enable them to veer between ***homosocial*** (such as LGBT youth groups) and ***heterosocial*** friendship groups.

The LGB participants in my study who are the most resilient to the various pressures that they face, are very skilled in both non-verbal and verbal aspects of LGB Visibility Management. In addition to a sophisticated awareness of non-verbal communication, they are also able to use ***language*** effectively to rebut abuse and to assert their new-found identities with conviction. They have a very good implicit understanding of the

concept of **positive and negative Face** (Goffman, 1955; Brown and Levinson, 1978) which enables them to present themselves in a positive light, and avoid verbal impositions, such as intrusive questions about their sexuality (*sexual curiosity*) and negative labels such as **face-threatening acts** (Goffman, 1955). Their linguistic armoury often enables them to use humour, including in-jokes, when faced with challenges, and *language reclamations* where one-time terms of abuse, such as *queer* and the pejorative use of *gay*, are used in a positive manner to celebrate LGB identity.

The consequences for those participants who lacked the effective Visibility Management skills needed to manage these pressures were often considerable. Those LGB young people who were not receiving support from family or peers were likely to be the most vulnerable. They often lacked the verbal, non-verbal and social skills which their more resilient peers possessed. The most vulnerable participants had a *homonegative label* attached, even before they had fully realised their own “spoiled” identity (Goffman 1963:14) and frequently these young people evidenced mental health problems such as low self-esteem, depression and/or feelings of suicidality. Because levels of self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence are low, in these young people, they are unaware of self-presentational devices such as positive and negative face. LGB young people like these are likely to be in the “*passive*” stage of social identity (Bradley, 1996:25). As they seek to locate themselves in the society in which they live and make sense of the variable “lived relationships” which have an impact on their lives, they are probably not yet ready to acknowledge or recognise the positive impact that same-sex attraction can have on their lives. It is likely to take much longer for these people to develop an “*active*” LGB identity (Bradley 1996:25) which will enable them to become well-adjusted and happy individuals. Figure 7.5 details the integration of private and public selves, which will enable LGB young people to move towards developing an “*active*” and, eventually” a “*politicised*” LGB identity (Bradley, 1996:25). However, it should be remembered that this model is founded on a conception of LGB identity development which is fluid and changeable: at various stages in an LGB person’s lifetime it is likely that s/he will demonstrate more passive aspects of their LGB social identities.

Developed understanding of Visibility Management
Developed understanding of multiple identities
Resolution of conflict between Private and Public Selves
Ability to move between Active and Political Selves
Ability to subvert heteronormative gender expectations
Advancing LGB human rights
Becoming part of an LGB Community

Figure 7.5: Integration of Private and Public Selves

The LGB identity becomes “*active*” (Bradley 1996:25) when the sexual identity is recognised as a positive element of the individual’s self-identification. Many of the participants in this study were members of a Gay Straight Alliance at their college and demonstrated that they were very aware of their sexual minority status. For most participants, the development of an LGB identity had been a difficult one and, at this point in their lives, their sexual minority status seemed to take a prominent place, if not precedence, in the set of “lived relationships” (Bradley, 1996:25) which constituted their identities.

Some of the participants had fully accepted their LGB status and this seemed to bring with it a *resolution* of the psychological conflict between the *private* (internal) and *public* (external) selves as he or she was beginning to see her or himself as *part of a wider LGB community*. These participants seemed to be developing a “politicised” social identity: they were consciously using their identity as the basis for action such as mentoring others or raising awareness and understanding of same-sex attraction by promoting the work of the Gay Straight Alliance to other students in the college. A few participants chose to “trouble” (Butler, 1990) the heterosexual signifying practices which had naturalised the distinction between sex and gender for so long, by dressing in gender-atypical apparel, such as drag.

However, the LGB identity development for these young people is not a static process, of course. Some of the participants in this research may never reach full “active” or “politicised” ideation. Those individuals who do, may feel the need, on occasion, to hide their LGB identities, once again, until they feel safe from the effects of moral disapproval or possible rejection, once again. It is likely that the young LGB participants in this research will continue to draw on a developing panoply of personal verbal and non-verbal VM techniques throughout their lives, in order to regulate the disclosure of LGB status, and thereby minimise the effects of harm, stigmatisation and isolation.

In the final chapter, the implications and limitations of the study will be considered and recommendations made concerning the ways in which schools and colleges can play a vital part in assisting the process of LGB identity development.

Chapter 8:

Limitations, implications and recommendations for British secondary schools and Further Education colleges

Chapter 8 will begin with a consideration of the limitations of this study. Following this, the implications of the study will be considered in the light of the challenges I have encountered, the ways in which I have sought to address these challenges and the findings of this study resulting from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected during this research. Recommendations for secondary schools and colleges of further education will also be made alongside recommendations for further research.

8.1 Limitations

It should be recognised that this is a small-scale study which has been completed in a specific cultural and educational context: South-East Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The attitudes, values and experiences of the participants should all be understood as operating within this context. Furthermore, the main part of this study does not seek to systematize knowledge by seeking to treat concepts as variables and generating hypotheses in a positivistic quantitative manner. It does not, therefore, lay claim to “reliability” and “validity”, following any of the precise or rigorous coding approaches advocated by Glaser (1978) or Strauss and Corbin (1990). With the exception of a positivist approach to contextualize the study, demonstrated in the survey findings analysed in Chapter 4, a Social Constructionist interpretive approach (Charmaz, 2006) has been adopted which acknowledges the research as jointly constructed by researcher and participants. I do not claim to generalise or universalise the findings beyond the experiences and attitudes of the research participants though patterns and trends are identified within the various narrative accounts contained within the data. The theoretical model contained in Chapter 7 should be understood in this light.

8.2 Implications

In this study, I have faced many challenges, as a teacher-researcher working in an early twenty-first century British context. In Chapter 3, I have examined a familiar challenge for any researcher who chooses to study LGB identity development: gaining access to young men and women who will willingly discuss sexuality and, in particular, same-sex attraction. There were structural barriers to gaining access to young LGB people: schools that were unwilling to open their doors, in a world that had only recently emerged from the constraints of legislation (Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act). Even in a less constrained post-16 context, young LGB-identifying people were not easy to access for a variety of reasons including victimisation and concerns about impaired relationships with peers and family members. In contexts like these, those LGB young people who do step forwards to talk about significant moments in their lives are often troubled and deeply unhappy and may not provide a representative sample of same-sex attracted young people. At the beginning of my research, I was aware of what appeared to be a tension between divergent research traditions. On the one hand, there was an American and British research tradition in which the lives of young LGB men and women were often characterised by bullying, family rejection and mental health problems (Remafedi, 1987 (a) (b); Pascoe, 2007; Rivers, 1996, 2000, 2001; Stonewall, 2007). On the other hand, I became aware of a confident, resilient “new gay teenager” identified by Savin-Williams (2006) who was writing in an American context. The challenge for an LGB researcher-teacher, such as myself, is to find ethical, innovative, and non-threatening ways of accessing this hidden population in order to find out what life is like for British LGB teenagers in the schools and colleges where they work.

There are many challenges for schools too. There are clear implications that schools and colleges may need to re-consider their policies and procedures concerning LGB harassment and victimisation. The findings of this study indicate that LGB teenagers are still experiencing high levels of homophobic abuse and these incidents often happen inside the school unlike other forms of abuse which usually happen outside the school. Respondents report that psychological and verbal abuse often happens in the presence of teachers who feel unable to challenge it (Chapter Four). These findings confirm the findings of other studies (Stonewall, 2007a; NUT, 2009) that teachers and multi-agency professionals need training to enable them to challenge homophobia and assist LGB students in the development of their visibility management.

The findings of this study suggest that further research is needed to enable teachers, students and multi-agency professionals to monitor progress and improve the quality of LGB inclusion in schools and colleges. Participants in this study reported that they

lacked confidence in reporting homonegative abuse because of concerns about further stigmatisation and harassment. An important part of the alleviation and monitoring of LGB discrimination will be to develop tracking and monitoring quality assurance procedures which enable teachers and managers to alleviate and monitor homonegative bullying. Therefore, schools and colleges may need to consider innovative ways of collecting data from students, including anonymous reporting procedures, as well as to measure the impact of school improvement measures on the achievements, retention and progression of young LGB students.

An important way of facilitating the emotional well-being of LGB students is through LGB school support mechanisms, such as Gay Straight Alliances and trained professionals who are available to help young LGB people to consider different ways of Visibility Management and to facilitate interventions, such as family disclosure, if this is deemed to be appropriate. This study demonstrates a clear need for school support mechanisms for students who are developing an LGB identity or who wish to support a friend or family member who is developing an LGB identity. LGB students report that they feel excluded from the curriculum, with few mentions even in PSHE, and that this creates a culture of invisibility which only perpetuates the harassment of non-gender conformity. Schools may need to consider the design and implementation of a whole school curriculum which does not limit sexual identity to discussions in Personal Social Health Education, thereby reinforcing the notion that sexual identity should be interpreted as sexual practice.

At the time of writing, equality legislation in the United Kingdom has, for the first time, clearly stated the expectation that schools and further education colleges will alleviate and monitor discrimination and victimisation relating to “sexual orientation”, which explicitly includes same-sex attraction. The new Equality Act (2010), which took effect from April 2011, states that schools and colleges will be expected to address eight “protected characteristics”, in terms of equality and diversity monitoring. Two of these (pregnancy/maternity; marriage/civil partnerships) are of relevance to employers for Human Resources purposes. The other seven “protected characteristics” will be monitored during school inspections by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted), the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools. Of these, three categories are well established from previous legislation (the Single Equality Act 2007): race, disability and gender. To these have been added four new “characteristics”: gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation, religion and beliefs. In addition, schools are “encouraged” to include socio-economic status. It is expected, therefore, that secondary schools and further education colleges in the United Kingdom will alleviate and monitor forms of

discrimination in these areas and this will be reflected in the grades that are awarded during school inspections by Ofsted. It is to be noted, however, that faith schools are exempt from the nationwide Ofsted inspection programme and will be self-regulated by a separate faith school inspection scheme.

With the above in mind, the following recommendations are made for British secondary schools and further education colleges. They are partly based on the findings of previous British studies, such as Rivers (2000, 2001), Warwick *et al.* (2004), Stonewall (2007), which are concerned with causes, frequency, locations and types of homophobic bullying and correlations between absenteeism, progression to further education and homophobic bullying. These recommendations are also based on the findings of this current study concerning school responses to homophobic bullying and the visibility management of LGB youth.

8.3 Recommendations

8.3.1. School policies and procedures

In 2001, whilst Section 28 of the 1988 Education Act was still in force, a survey of 307 British secondary schools head-teachers found that only 6% had anti-bullying school policies which specifically mentioned same-sex attraction (Warwick, *et al.*, 2004). Since then, with the repeal of Section 28 and the introduction of the Every Child Matters agenda, it is hoped that more schools will have included same-sex attraction, even though there has been no legal requirement to do so. Schools now need to re-examine their anti-bullying policies, to ensure that they are LGB-inclusive. Some school anti-bullying policies will still reflect the main agenda of the Single Equality Duty (2007) which privileges three main areas of discrimination: disability, gender and racism. If school anti-bullying policies do include same-sex attraction, my findings indicate that schools might benefit from considering whether anti-bullying procedures take into account more recent forms of abuse such as cyber-bullying.

If specific aspects of discrimination are highlighted by student questionnaire surveys, focus groups and other means of student feedback (see *Quality Assurance: 8.3.2*), my findings indicate that the school will find merit in the implementation of Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of the abuse and then consider ways of tackling it. For example, if the school discovers that the use of “gay” as a pejorative adjective is extensive, it could consider putting in place a zero-tolerance policy of the pejorative use of “gay”. As my findings indicate that this example will probably be indicative of a wider problem, schools might like to consider whole-staff training which provides specific strategies for challenging homophobia when it occurs. Staff could

then be encouraged to recount personal experiences of homophobia in the classroom and collaboratively devise strategies for ensuring that their school fosters a more-LGBT inclusive ethos. This training could be supplemented with a resource, such as the DVD produced by Stonewall entitled “FIT”, dramatising scenarios which seek to challenge homophobic attitudes (including the use of the pejorative “gay”). Since “FIT” was produced for teenagers, schools may well find it beneficial to use this resource as a means of advancing classroom discussions about same-sex attraction.

My findings suggest that there would be some merit in Schools looking closely at their policies and procedures concerning Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding, in the light of the Equality Act (2010). These should stretch beyond anti-bullying policies to include some of the other recommendations for LGBT inclusion which are made in this chapter: quality assurance, reporting mechanisms, whole school curriculum and LGB support mechanisms. Where measures are in place, they should be regularly monitored and reviewed using impact assessments and modifications made where appropriate. These impact assessments and recommendations for change could be made by an Equality and Diversity committee consisting of students and cross-college staff (academic and support) representing the school population. Where necessary, staff, managers and governors might benefit from receiving training in LGBT inclusion.

8.3.2. Quality assurance

Mitchell *et al.* (2008) identify the heterosexist assumptions which have governed LGB data collection, in the past. In particular, they are concerned about the lack of statistical evidence which prevents schools from making informed decisions about challenging homophobia and becoming more LGB-inclusive. For example, Rivers’ (2001) study indicates that 80% of British LGB teenagers did not continue into post-compulsory education, at that time, because of high levels of homophobia and this lack of progression was linked to high levels of absenteeism during the last two years of compulsory secondary education. Findings such as this indicate that it is vitally important that schools are able to determine levels of homophobic abuse statistically, so that procedural action can be taken. Quinlivan (2002), however, has demonstrated the dangers of unwittingly pathologising LGB students, by placing these students in an “at risk” category.

It is, of course, very difficult to monitor the achievement and progression rates of young people who may be unwilling to identify themselves due to stigmatisation or who may be unsure of their identities and it may be unwise to ask these students to identify themselves at a delicate stage of their identity developmental processes. On

the other hand, it would not be difficult to obtain such information, anonymously, in the form of exit questionnaires. Volunteers (LGB or heterosexual) could also be invited to participate in lunch-time focus group discussions about experiences of homophobic abuse in the school, perhaps using sort cards to facilitate discussion, such as the ones I have employed in my own study (Chapter Four). Questionnaires can also be used, which students are encouraged to complete at home and return anonymously to their tutors in sealed envelopes (similar to my own survey methodology detailed in Chapter Four). If these data collection methods are fore-grounded with lessons about LGB sexual identity, perhaps using resources such as the Stonewall (FIT) DVD mentioned above, this data collection will be contextualised, as an inclusive attempt to ensure physical and emotional safety for all students. My findings indicate that there would also be some merit in schools considering the impact that teaching and learning can have on LGBT students. When lesson observations are conducted, observers could look for examples of best practice, concerning LGBT inclusion, alongside other examples of Equality and Diversity best practice, which should be disseminated to the academic staff. It is timely for schools to consider innovative ways in which such data can be collected.

8.3.3. Reporting Mechanisms

For a variety of reasons, young people are often reluctant to report homophobic abuse. These include social stigmatisation, concerns that others will find out about their minority sexual status and perceptions that they will be labelled as “weak victims” in need of “support”. My findings indicate that school will find it beneficial to employ a variety of reporting mechanisms to encourage students to reports abuse. These might include traditional mechanisms such as the “bully box”, in which students can post anonymous accounts of harassment, and an e-mail harassment complaints mechanism. A staff-led system of peer-mentoring could also be employed, in which young people are encouraged to report abuse electronically, perhaps anonymously in the first instance. They will then gain an electronic response from a trained peer mentor and the offer of a meeting, if they so wish. Trained staff could then be involved, if appropriate, to address specific cases of abuse, perhaps using a restorative justice approach.

8.3.4. Whole school curriculum

Studies frequently demonstrate that curriculum mentions of same-sex attraction are often limited to Personal Social Health Education and Biology classes and that these mentions are often negative, scientific and linked to the control of sexually transmitted

diseases (Sears, 1992; Epstein, 2003; Ellis, 2004). These findings have been confirmed in the current study (Chapter Four). Kumashiro (2000:25) has commented on a “partial curriculum” which distorts and renders invisible non-heterosexual identities. There is an obvious place for discussions about same-sex attraction, in Personal Social Health Education, but my findings demonstrate that there would be some merit in schools critically appraising the whole curricula. In particular, the ways in which hetero-normative cultural and social messages are constructed through various representations, including political and media representations, might be considered. Epstein (2003:66) makes a plea for a reconceptualisation of sexuality education which encompasses a wider cross-college examination of how norms of sex, gender and sexuality are naturalised through social values. Students could be introduced to the ideas of sexuality researchers such as Freud and Foucault in order to raise questions and interrogate default assumptions. They could also be encouraged to consider the ways in which social values construct normative notions of gender identity expression. A rich resource bank of teaching materials can be found in the popular media texts which students will be familiar with (magazine articles, agony aunt columns, soap opera television programmes) but these must be seen as a starting point for deconstructing and interrogating heteronormative constructions and great care should be taken to ensure that teaching which uses these accessible resources does not collude with and reinforce the heteronormativity it is seeking to deconstruct.

My findings indicate that schools might also find it beneficial to conduct Impact assessments at Departmental level to ensure that heteronormativity is challenged. Departments could be asked to consider their course schemes of work and identify opportunities where LGB mentions could be made. For example, an English class could be told that Carol Ann Duffy’s sexual status as lesbian will have probably affected her poetry, a Maths class could be told about the circumstances surrounding the death of Alan Turing and a PE class could be told about the coming out of rugby player Gareth Thomas. If the school has a particular strength, such as performing arts, this, too, could be used to create an anti-homophobic ethos where variation from gender norm enforcement becomes acceptable. Posters of famous LGB people, including celebrities, should be posted around the school during LGB History month (February) and a display mounted in the library. By creating a culture of LGB visibility, in this way, the school will begin to create a culture which is LGB-inclusive.

8.3.5. LGB support mechanisms

Support mechanisms which enable LGB students to develop an awareness of LGB stigma-management and visibility management strategies, learning from each other as

well as from the facilitators, are an invaluable means of facilitating the emotional well-being of LGB students, enabling a smoother transition between passive-active-politicised social identities (Bradley, 1996) than might otherwise be the case. An extensive network of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) has been developing in American high schools since the mid 1980s (Uribe, 1995) and the current study demonstrates that, with the repeal of Section 28, this is now starting to happen in England (Chapter Four). Griffin *et al.* (2005:170) have demonstrated four main functions of the Gay-Straight Alliance: counselling and support; providing a safe space; becoming a primary vehicle for increasing awareness and increasing LGB visibility in the school; playing a significant part in the broader school efforts for raising awareness and providing education to make schools safe for LGB school students. In the first instance, the school could advertise the Gay-Straight Alliance, in the context of a lesson, and invite interested students to contact an e-mail address. An emphasis will be placed on the fact that anybody who is LGB-friendly is welcome to join and that many people will know someone who is LGB, even if that person has not fully identified yet. Any students who choose to contact the e-mail address will then be supplied with a venue and meeting time.

Another important LGB support mechanism will be the school counsellor. This person might be the first person to whom the young LGB person discloses their new identity. It is very possible that the LGB person is in the early stages of Coming In (identity confusion) and could well be exhibiting signs of sexual identity distress and/or internalised homophobia. A training in LGB visibility management will enable the professional to discuss verbal and non-verbal visibility management strategies with the young person, facilitating reflection on who he or she should disclose to, as well as how and when they should manage the disclosure. The counsellor can help the young LGB person to co-manage their visibility, in this way, and possibly act as a facilitator for disclosure to the family, if the student so wishes. The counsellor can also assist the family to adjust, in the same way (Stone-Fish & Harvey, 2005). Another important support function that the counsellor can provide is to effect an introduction to LGB peer mentoring, possibly through the school's Gay-Straight Alliance, as well as an introduction to external social groups, such as local LGBT youth groups. In this way, the school counsellor can play a vital part in facilitating the integration of a young person's LGB identity. They cannot do it in isolation, however; to ensure that every child *does* matter, all teaching staff will need to know how to respond to a young person in distress and how to respond to a young person's disclosure.

8.3.6. Teacher training

Teacher-training in LGB identity development needs to happen at four main levels: at *national level*, with government organisations such as the Learning Skills Improvement Services and professional organisation such as Stonewall providing on-going training and electronic resources; at *Local Education Authority (LEA) level*, with LEAs assimilating anti-homophobia and VM training and resources into the wider context of anti-bullying education and training; at *Higher Education level*, with Universities including LGB training as an essential component of the Post Graduate Certificate of Education, expanding trainee awareness of emotional literacy, developing strategies to enable LGB students to feel safe and giving LGB teacher-trainees a voice; at *local school level*, as part of a broader strategy to increase LGB visibility, reduce levels of homophobia and facilitate the emotional and physical well-being of in-service LGB students and staff. My findings indicate that teachers would benefit from training which includes guidance in coaching students if they choose to disclose their sexual minority status, privately to a teacher or publicly in class, as well as training in the verbal, non-verbal and social skills of effective visibility management. In this way, teachers could be encouraged to think of the vital role that all school staff, academic and support staff, can play in ensuring that a school becomes LGB inclusive.

8.3.7 Research

The introduction of new legislation (Equality Act 2010) which acknowledges sexual orientation as a key equality strand and enshrines the rights of LGB people, provides a major impetus for the future direction of educational research. British studies which seek to capture the experiences of LGB youth, as opposed to adults in retrospective studies, are relatively recent. As schools work to become more LGB inclusive, researchers (including teacher-researchers) will play their part, as agents of change, as they carry this work forwards. Statistical and qualitative data are needed to monitor the types of homonegative abuse, frequency of abuse and locations where abuse takes place. Such data need to be linked to the achievements, absenteeism and progression rates of LGB students in order to provide contemporary data on the educational experiences of LGB youth in Britain. Studies such as these will play a vital role in enabling schools to evaluate the success of policies and procedures and determine the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms.

Further research concerning the strategies employed by LGB youth for disclosure, stigma-management and visibility management will enable teachers, counsellors and other multi-agency professionals who work with LGB youth to facilitate LGB identity

development. In addition, the LGB-inclusive training of these professionals, which is provided at various levels (national, local authority, and higher education) needs to be evaluated and improved to ensure that LGB staff and students are able to achieve, develop and stay safe. Research will play an invaluable role in giving a population of people, which has been long been disenfranchised, invisible and voiceless, a powerful voice to effect change.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Millais Sixth Form College – Student Questionnaire

Please tick all boxes that apply

ABOUT YOU AND YOUR EDUCATION

Please tell us:

1. Are you male or female? (Tick the box)

- Male
- Female

2. How old are you ?

- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19 and older

3. Was the school you attended between the ages of eleven and sixteen a

(Please tick all that apply)

- Beacon school
- Catholic school
- City Academy School
- City Technology College
- Comprehensive school
- Faith school
- Grammar school
- Independent school
- Secondary school
- None of the above
- Don't know

4. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- I am attracted to the opposite sex
- I am attracted to the same-sex
- I am attracted to the opposite sex and to the same-sex
- I am not sure
- None of the above (please explain)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL YOU ATTENDED BETWEEN 11 AND 16:

5. Did your school ever said that anti-gay/lesbian bullying was wrong ?
- No
 - Yes
 - Don't know
6. Did your school do anything about anti-gay bullying if it occurred?
- No
 - Yes
 - Don't know
7. During years 10 and 11, how often did you hear or use the expression "That's so gay" or "You're so gay" in school ?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Frequently
8. During years 10 and 11, how often did you hear other anti-gay remarks used in school (such as "poof", "dyke", "queer", "bender") in an insulting way?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Frequently
9. Would you say that anti-gay remarks were made by:
- Most of the pupils
 - Some of the pupils
 - A few of the pupils
 - None of the pupils
10. If you heard anti-gay remarks at school, how often was a teacher or other member of staff present?
- Always
 - Most of the time
 - Some of the time
 - Never
 - Not Applicable
11. If a teacher or other member of staff was present during the speaking of anti-gay remarks at school, how often did they intervene?
- Always

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Never
- Not Applicable

12. How often did you hear anti-gay remarks from teachers or school staff ?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Never
- Not Applicable

13. Did your school have a lesbian, gay or bisexual club or another type of club that supports these issues?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

14. Did your school library contain books or information about lesbian, gay or bisexual issues?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

15. Was it possible to use school computers to access websites which provided information about lesbian, gay or bisexual issues?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

16. Which of the following applied to your secondary school?

- Mixed sex
- Other (please explain)

17. Was same-sex attraction mentioned in any of the following subjects while you were at school between the ages of 11 and 16? (Please tick all that apply.)

- Art and Design
- Biology
- Sociology
- English
- PE
- PSHE
- RSE
- Religious Education
- General Studies

Other (please specify)

18. If same-sex attraction was mentioned in any of these subjects, were the mentions positive, negative or are you not sure? (please tick if positive, negative or unsure)

Subject	Positive mentions	Negative mentions	Unsure
Art and Design			
Biology			
Sociology			
English			
PE			
PSHE			
RSE			
Religious Education			
General Studies			
Other (please specify)			

BULLYING AT SCHOOL BETWEEN THE AGES OF 11 AND 16

19. Have you ever been bullied at school because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual or because someone thought you might be (anti-gay bullying)?

No

Yes

20. Have you ever seen anyone else experience anti-gay bullying?

No

Yes

21. If you have experienced anti-gay bullying or seen somebody else experiencing anti-gay bullying, what form did it take?

(Please tick all that apply)

- Verbal (e.g. taunts, teasing)
- Intimidating looks
- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking)
- Being ignored or isolated
- Threatened with a weapon
- Malicious gossip (telling others about your [or somebody else's] sexuality)

- Sexual assault
- Vandalism or theft of property
- Death threats
- Phone bullying via text
- Internet bullying via postings or websites
- Chat forums (e.g. MSN Messenger)
- E-mails
- Blogs
- Not Applicable
- Other (please explain)

22. If you experienced anti-gay bullying did you tell anybody?

- No
- Yes

23. If you experienced anti-gay bullying, did you ever miss a day at school because of it?

- No
- Yes - Once
- Yes - 2 or 3 times
- Yes - 4 or 5 times
- Yes - 6 or more times
- Not applicable

24. If you experienced or saw homophobic bullying taking place, when you were at school, where did it take place? (Please tick all that apply)

- Travelling to/from school on the bus
- Walking to school

- School corridors
- School social areas
- Classrooms
- Changing rooms
- Other (please explain)

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

25. Do you consider yourself:

- Buddhist
- Christian (including denominations)
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- None
- Any other religion

26. Please select your ethnic origin:

- White British
- Any other White background
- White and Black
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background
- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background
- Chinese
- Any other

27. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- No
- Yes

If you have any further comments to make about any of the following please write these in the space below:

Homophobic bullying

School responses to lesbian, gay or bisexual issues

Experiences of people coming out as gay, lesbian or bisexual at school

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Please place it in the envelope provided

Appendix B: Palmerston Secondary School: Senior Management Interview schedule

Could you tell me about the ethos of your school concerning equal opportunities?

How has the school sought to develop this ethos

Do you wish to develop the school ethos any further?

In what ways does the school attempt to support students who may be LGBT or have parents who are LGBT?

Are LGBT issues covered in PSHE/Citizenship? If so, can you tell me how?

Are LGBT issues touched on by other curriculum areas, to your knowledge? If so, can you tell me which subject areas?

Does your school represent LGBT issues in any other ways, besides the main curriculum?

How does the school deal with bullying, especially homophobic bullying?

What happens if a student discloses that they may be LGBT, to a teacher?

How would you respond to the parents of children who wish to self-identify themselves as LGBT?

How would you respond to parents and/or governors who might have reservations about the school promoting pro-gay/lesbian messages?

Do you get any support from the LEA concerning the ways in which you represent LGBT issues in your school?

Do you believe that the LEA could provide more support regarding LGBT issues in Hampshire schools?

Do you think that it is possible to gather quantitative (“quality”) data on LGBT students in the same way as data is collected for teaching and learning and students from different ethnic minorities?

Appendix C: Palmerston Secondary School: Senior Management Focus schedule

Can you tell me about the ways in which your school seeks to support students who are LGBT or who have parents who may be LGBT?

Homophobic abuse

Have you encountered examples of any of the following in school? Please add any others which have not been mentioned:

- The use of “gay” to mean something that is dysfunctional or rubbish (“that’s so gay”)
- Other anti-gay/lesbian remarks (such as “poof” “dyke” “bender”)
- Anti-gay/lesbian verbal taunts (teasing)

Have you encountered examples of any of the following being used in school towards students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or who are labelled by others as LGBT?

- Intimidating looks
- Physical abuse e.g. hitting, kicking)
- Social exclusion (ignoring or isolating students)
- Vandalism or theft of property
- Malicious gossip (rumours spread about a student’s sexuality)
- Threatening physical abuse
- Sexual assault
- Death threats
- Phone bullying via text
- Internet bullying via postings or websites
- Bullying via instant message, private message or e-mail
- Bullying via blogs
- Any other types of homophobic bullying

If you have encountered any of the above, how have you responded to the perpetrators and the victims?

Have you encountered any of the above forms of abuse being used to students whose parents are believed to be LGBT?

Have you encountered any of the above forms of abuse being used to students who have relatives who are believed to be LGBT?

Absenteeism, truancy and aggression

Have you come across examples of absenteeism or truancy that you think could be related to homophobic victimisation?

Have you come across examples of students becoming aggressive allegedly because of homophobic provocation (e.g. fighting; physical violence)

Disclosure of sexual status (“coming out”)

If a student tells you that they think they may be LGBT and wishes to tell others (“come out.”) What advice do you give them? How comfortable do you feel about giving students advice on disclosure?

Have you encountered examples of students who have “come out” at school or at home? If so, what were their experiences?

Curriculum

In which subjects do you think issues relating to same-sex attraction may have been discussed over the last twelve months? Please explain the contexts if you are able.

Can you think of any other curriculum contexts where LGBT issues could be discussed?

Achievements and progression

Do you think it is possible to measure the achievements of students who identify as LGBT?

Do you think it is possible to measure the progression rate to further education of students who identify as LGBT?

Other issues

Are there any other issues relating to same-sex attraction in school which you would like to mention?

Appendix D: Palmerston Secondary School: The educative experiences of 14-16 year old same-sex attracted students in Hampshire secondary schools and sixth form colleges.

This teacher survey is part of a wider doctoral survey which is concerned with the nature of homophobic bullying in schools and colleges and the responses of schools and colleges to a range of lesbian, gay and/or bisexual issues including disclosure (“coming out”) and discussions in the classroom. This questionnaire is about your experiences at secondary school and it would be very much appreciated if you would take a few minutes to complete and return it to the box in the staffroom. If you would like to add any comments, on the form, please do.

The information gained from this survey is for research purposes only. The material from this interview will be mainly used for a PhD thesis but it may also be used for conference presentations and/or written publications. At all times, the anonymity of the participants will be assured.

Please tell us:

1. Are you male or female? (Tick the box)

* Male

* Female

2. Which subject/s do you teach ? (Please state)

3. To the best of your knowledge, have any of the following types of anti gay/lesbian bullying taken place in school ?

(Please tick all that apply)

* Verbal (e.g. taunts, teasing)

* Intimidating looks

- * Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking)
- * Being ignored or isolated
- * Threatened with a weapon
- * Malicious gossip (telling others about your [or somebody else's] sexuality)
- * Sexual assault
- * Vandalism or theft of property
- * Death threats
- * Phone bullying via text
- * Internet bullying via postings or websites
- * Chat forums (e.g. MSN Messenger)
- * E-mails
- * Blogs
- * Other (please explain)

4. To the best of your knowledge, have any of the following types of anti gay/lesbian bullying taken place amongst students outside school?

- * Verbal (e.g. taunts, teasing)
- * Intimidating looks
- * Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking)
- * Being ignored or isolated
- * Threatened with a weapon
- * Malicious gossip (telling others about your [or somebody else's] sexuality)
- * Sexual assault
- * Vandalism or theft of property
- * Death threats
- * Phone bullying via text
- * Internet bullying via postings or websites
- * Chat forums (e.g. MSN Messenger)
- * E-mails
- * Blogs
- * Other (please explain)

5. If you have heard about or seen homophobic bullying taking place, where did it take place ? (Please tick all that apply)

- * Travelling to/from school on the bus
- * Walking to school
- * School corridors

- * School social areas
- * Classrooms
- * Changing rooms
- * Other (please explain)

6(a) Do you know of any students, at school, who chose to “come out” as lesbian, gay or bisexual whilst at school?

- * Yes
- * No
- * Not sure (please comment)

6(b) If you do know of any students who chose to “come out” as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and you would like to add any further comments about what happened, please do so, here. Otherwise, please go to question 7.

7. Do you think that discussions about same-sex attraction should be included in PSHE?

Please add a comment if you wish.

- * Yes
- * No
- * Not sure

8. Do you think that discussions about same-sex attraction should be included elsewhere in the school curriculum? Please add a comment about where in the curriculum, if you wish.

- * Yes
- * No
- * Not sure

9. Have you received any INSET training which has been concerned with any of the following aspects of same-sex attraction (please tick all that apply):

- * Homophobic bullying
- * "Coming out"
- * Support for parents or families of children who "come out" as gay, lesbian or bisexual
- * Discussions in the classroom
- * Lesbian, gay or bisexual support youth groups
- * None of the above
- * Any other aspects of same-sex attraction (please comment)

10. Do you believe that schools should provide the facility of a support group for students who may identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual? Please comment if you wish:

- * Yes
- * No
- * Not sure

11. Do you believe that more should be done to increase student awareness of issues concerning same-sex attraction in schools? Please comment if you wish.

- * Yes
- * No
- * Not sure

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. Please return the completed questionnaire to the box in the staffroom. If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this questionnaire, please e-mail Roger Jones at the following address :

Appendix E: Focus Group Q Cards: Palmerston Secondary School and Millais Sixth Form College

Q Cards of bullying types used to facilitate focus group discussion

Types of homonegative abuse

Verbal abuse (e.g. taunts, teasing)

Intimidating looks

Physical abuse (e.g. hitting, kicking)

Being ignored or isolated

Threatened with a weapon

Malicious gossip (telling others about you {or somebody else's} sexuality)

Sexual assault

Vandalism or theft of property

Death threats

Phone bullying via text

Internet bullying via postings or websites

Chat forums (e.g. MSN Messenger)

e-mails

Blogs

Frequency

Happens very often

Happens quite often

Happens some of the time

Does not happen at all

Reporting

Reported very often

Reported quite often

Not reported at all

Don't know if it's reported or not

Appendix F: Millais Sixth Form College: Focus Group schedule (early version)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group discussion. If at any time, during the discussion, you would like to withdraw, please feel free to do so. If you would like to say something with the tape switched off, please ask. During transcription and analysis of this discussion, personal names and school names will be anonymised.

Please use the following headings for your discussion:

What's it like for LGBT students in schools?

What's it like for LGBT students in sixth form colleges?

How old were you when you first thought you might be LGBT?

Who did you tell? How did you tell them ? How did they react?

SCHOOL

At school, did you receive any sessions on LGBT issues, during Personal, Health and Sexuality Education or Relationship and Sexuality Education sessions? If so, what was discussed?

At school, in which other subjects did you discuss LGBT issues? Were these discussions positive or negative experiences?

Did you see any presentations from visitors or teachers concerning LGBT issues?

Did you, or any people you know of experience homophobic bullying, at school?

If so, did you tell any of the teachers and how did they respond?

Did you know of a school policy concerning bullying, in general ? If so, what was the anti-bullying policy, to the best of your knowledge? What actually happened?

What else could the school have done for LGBT students?

COLLEGE

At college, in which subjects have you discussed LGBT issues? Were these discussion positive or negative experiences?

Did you see any presentations from visitors or teachers concerning LGBT issues?

Did you, or any people you know of experience homophobic bullying, at college?

If so, have you told any of the teachers and how have they responded?

Do you know of a school policy concerning bullying, in general ? If so, what is the anti-bullying policy, to the best of your knowledge? What actually happens?

What else could your college do for LGBT students?

Appendix G: Millais Sixth Form College: Focus Group schedule (revised version)

Tell who you are, what you studying at Millais College and what you like doing when you are not in College

When you hear the words “homophobic bullying” what comes to mind?

What is it like for LGBT students in schools?

What is it like for LGBT students in sixth form colleges?

How old were you when you first thought you might be LGBT?

Have you told anybody? How did you tell them? How did they react?

Think back to when you were at school.....

Tell me about any examples of homophobic bullying which you experienced at school.

Tell me about whether or not issues to do with an LGB lifestyle were discussed in lessons at school.

Tell me about any experiences you had when you chose to come out as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

SUMMARY:

Is this an adequate summary?

Did I correctly describe what was said?

How well does that capture what was said here?

Is this summary complete?

Does this summary sound ok to you?

Have we missed anything?

Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't? e sort cards:

Appendix H: Introductory Letter of Consent for Research Participants

Dear,

Firstly, thanks very much for agreeing to be involved in my research and for agreeing to participate in a focus group which will be discussing what it is like to Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

The focus group discussion is likely to last for one hour. I would like to record the discussion using audiotape, if you don't mind. This will avoid me having to scribble notes during the discussion. If you agree to this, after I have transcribed the tape-recording, I will make sure you get a copy for your records/comments/additions or deletions.

Can I assure you that the content of this interview and the information gained is for research purposes only. Your real name will not be used, place names will be changed and any other details altered accordingly so as not to reveal your identity.

The material from this interview will be mainly used for my research thesis but it may also be used for conference presentations and/or written publications. At all times, I guarantee that you will remain anonymous.

I am including a draft schedule for the issues which I would like the focus group to discuss. Please sign the consent form (below) to confirm that you are happy to take part in this research and return one copy of this letter to me.

Many thanks, once again, for agreeing to participate in this research.

I am very happy to participate in a focus group discussion for research purposes. I understand that my name will be changed and that this data may be used in academic publications, such as Journals, or for conference presentations.

Name:

Signature:

Appendix I: Participant consent form

Dear

Thank you very much for participating in a focus group in February.

I have enclosed a copy of the transcript of your contributions to the focus group. You will see that I have grouped your main contributions according to the themes that are emerging.

I would be very grateful if you would check the transcript for any corrections that you think necessary. If you would like anything changed, please annotate the transcript and let me have it back, through (name). If you are happy with the transcript, please sign one copy of this letter and return to me, again through (name)

This data may be used in a research thesis. It may also be used in academic publications, such as Journals, or conference presentations. In each case, your name will be changed to disguise your identity.

Once again, thank you very much for participating in my research. You have helped to make this research possible!

Best wishes

Roger Jones

I am very happy for Roger Jones to use the transcript of my contribution to the February 2007 focus group discussion for research purposes. I understand that my name will be changed and that this data may be used in academic publications, such as Journals, or for conference presentations.

Name:

Signature:

Appendix J: Indicative Pen Portraits:

Janet : profile

Interview

Ethnicity:

White

Home background:

Lived at home with mother (no brothers or sisters) until 17 years of age. Lived independently during last year at Millais College.

Age at interview:

18 years old

Sexual identification:

Bisexual.

Age of Disclosure:

Identified as attracted to females and males at 16 years of age.

School experiences:

She has been a student at Millais College for four years. She left secondary school at 12 years of age after suffering high levels of harassment from boys and girls, some of which was homophobic. She was home educated for two years and then started at Taunton's at 14 years of age.

Sixth Form experiences:

Her time at Millais College has been blighted by a nervous breakdown that she had at 16 years of age. Janet continues to suffer mental health problems such as thoughts of suicide and bouts of depression. She has regular appointments with a Psychiatrist.

Janet chose not to come to the Millais LGBT society during 2005-6, despite knowing of its existence and, indeed, knowing some of the regular students during the 2005-6 academic year. She did have a romantic relationship with one of the GSA group members and this might have been the main reason for her non-attendance of the GSA at Millais College. She did attend a City 14-19 year

old gay/lesbian youth group.

She became very angry and agitated during an English Literature lesson, where students were studying D.H. Lawrence's covert depiction of Lesbian attraction in *The Fox* and two female students made homophobic comments to convey their repulsion ("That's disgusting!" "I don't want to read anymore. It's horrible"). Janet stated very clearly that she was very offended by these comments, as she felt lesbian attractions. The students concerned were very apologetic, after the lesson, and asked Willow not to take it personally. She found the whole incident very distressing, however, and asked to speak with Roger about it.

Lauren

Focus Group C and Interview

Ethnicity:

White

Home background:

Lived at home with mother, father and younger sister

Age at interview:

17 years of age

Sexual identification:

Lesbian

Age of Disclosure:

14 years of age - told a best friend she was lesbian. Friend told other girls and victimisation started (gossip and rumours.) When she challenged the best friend, her friend became aggressive towards her (threatened violence) and called her names ("dyke" "dirty queer")

Educational achievements:

Lauren gained three GCSE grade Cs (English Language, RE and History) at school. GCSE Maths and BTEC Public Services programme of study at Millais College. Progressed to study BTEC Public Services Advanced. At Millais College for three years.

School experiences:

Type of secondary school : single sex

Frequent verbal abuse

Some physical abuse

College experiences:

Denied the pattern of abuse in the 2005-6 focus groups, when in the company of other lesbian

and gay fellow students - even when they were being very honest about victimisation.

Reticent and quiet in the company of other LGBT students

R: "How were things at school, for you, Lauren

L: "They were okay."

R: "You didn't get much trouble from other students at school"

L: "Not really no. A little bit."

In another interview, at the same time, another lesbian student, who had attended Lauren's school and who did not come out at school commented:

"Lauren had a lot of trouble at school, she was always being bullied."
The perpetrators of homophobic physical abuse were frequently being punished for other misdemeanours : "they were always in internal suspension."
At school, did not report the victimisation because she did not want to appear "weak" to others. She denied to herself the extent of the victimisation
Victim of a mugging in Feb 2006, whilst at sixth form college, by the old school perpetrator of homophobic violence (females.) Physically (beaten up) and had personal belongings stolen. Reported to the police. Perpetrators were prosecuted and punished (main ringleader wanted for other anti-social crimes)
Lauren had a poor record of academic achievement at school and did not achieve high AS grades at college in 2006
September 2006: enrolled on a BTEC Public Services course. Has ambitions of going into the Police service. Lauren had an in-depth conversation with a Lesbian and Gay Liaison Officer from the local Police Constabulary after a talk was given at Millais College in 2006.
Lauren has always been keen to ensure that a support organisation exists for LGBT students at Millais College.
Lauren is keen to take an active part in the LGBT support group and to provide help for other LGBT students - on hearing that another lesbian student, at another local city Sixth Form College, was having trouble after coming out to her parents, Lauren offered to contact the student, by text and/or e-mail, to provide support.

Luke

Focus Group A:

Ethnicity:

White

Home background:

Lived at home with Mother and Father

Age during focus group:

17 years

Sexual identification:

Gay

Age of disclosure:

14 years of age

Educational achievements:

Luke obtained six GCSE subjects with grades A-D. He started AS courses in Sociology, Psychology, English Literature and History, in September 2005. He was asked to leave College in March 2006, due to persistent rudeness to teachers. He was not allowed to return to Millais College in September 2006.

School experiences:

Luke had been heavily victimised at school (physical and verbal)

College experiences:

At sixth form college, Luke was in constant trouble for “rudeness” to teachers and students : appeared to be showing a total lack of respect for teachers and other students. Frequent Warnings (all levels), case-conference with tutor, final disciplinary meeting with GGA and father (student contract issued)

Luke frequently brought about conflict with teachers and/or other students by talking gratuitously and graphically about sexual acts using inappropriate language

Luke stood for student president: poster campaign contained an inappropriate image of gay sex along with the slogan “cheer for queer” and had to be removed from display.

Luke had difficulty adjusting to the transition from school to sixth form college

Luke did attend a few LGBT support meetings and was generally respectful to other students, during these meetings

However, Luke was not convinced that LGBT support groups were necessarily a good thing : “lesbian and gay students just want to blend in. We don’t want to stick out. An LGBT club just draws attention to us.”

On canvassing the teachers’ opinions the Assistant Principal at Millais College decided that Luke should not be allowed to return to Millais College in Sept 2006 to continue his studies to A2.

