Section 28 Then and Now: A Tripartite Investigation into Narratives of Sexuality, Gender, and the Role of Fiction for Children and Young People in Shaping LGBT+ Exclusion and Inclusion

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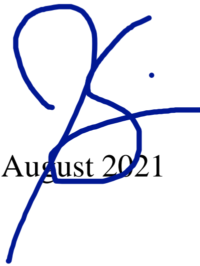
Signed: 

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary thesis is concerned with modalities of power and domination in relation to youth and sexuality in three societal discourses in the U.K. – politics, culture, and education – in the context of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. Framed by poststructuralism and queer theory, it is comprised of three qualitative studies. Study 1 is a Foucauldian genealogy of the 1986–1988 parliamentary debates surrounding Section 28's enactment. This analysis focuses on the deployment of children's literature with non-heterosexual content and the discursive political constructions of youth and sexuality. Study 2 is a directed content analysis of 16 British Young Adult novels with non-heterosexual content, engaging with the books as cultural artefacts to understand how they construct experiences of sexuality and childhood. This analysis is contextualised against the backdrop of key LGBT+ legal reforms. Finally, Study 3 is a thematic analysis of the views of eight teachers in Scotland on the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature.

Four original contributions are made. First is the contribution to theoretical and empirical understandings of Section 28, the motivations behind the legislation, and the foregrounding of sexuality in 1980s British politics. Second, the thesis contributes to understandings of British LGB children's literature published after Section 28, revealing an evolution in cultural constructions of sexuality and youth. Third, it enlarges understandings of the pedagogical affordances of LGBT+ children's literature, revealing an imperative for LGBT+ inclusive education. Finally, it identifies a framework for continuing professional development in relation to such education.

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Initialisms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DCA	Directed Content Analysis
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
GEO	Government Equalities Office
GLC	Greater London Council
HC	House of Commons
HL	House of Lords
LGB	Lesbian, gay, and bisexual
LGBT+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities
MP	Member of Parliament
NLS	National Library of Scotland
SG	Scottish Government
TA	Thematic Analysis
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.A.	United States of America
YA	Young Adult

> An elderly gentleman who had been a colonel in the Indian army told me that it was his belief that homosexuals were made if enough influence was exerted upon them. He said that in the hill country and in parts of Poona, when he was in the Indian army, drummer boys used to be sent out from England – they were often orphans – and sent up the forward areas to the regiments. He said—and I have never forgotten this—that not one of those children had a chance. They all ended up as homosexuals because of the life they were forced to lead. I find it outrageous that little children should have been perverted in that way.
>
> – Dame Jill Knight, House of Commons, 8 May 1987

Chapter 1: Introduction

For more than a decade, Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prohibited local authorities in the U.K. from 'promoting' homosexuality. The quote above, taken from a speech made by Dame Jill Knight as a Member of Parliament (MP), demonstrates the conflation of childhood and innocence, and of homosexuality and perversion, upon which the law was premised. Although technically narrow in scope, the effect of such legislation was to silence any discussion of LGBT+ perspectives in schools, libraries, and other educational institutions across the U.K. However, when the Scottish Government announced in 2018 that it had accepted the recommendations of a campaign to embed LGBT+ inclusive education in all state schools, the decision was described as 'a monumental victory' that 'finally ended'

the legacy of Section 28 (Robinson, 2018). Yet this claim is tempered by studies showing that, even years after its repeal (2000 in Scotland and 2003 in the rest of the U.K.), teachers have continued to experience the law's chilling effects, restricting both what can be taught and how educators negotiate their professional identities (see Chapter 2 for further discussion). Additionally, there are increasingly visible political, cultural, and educational debates that reflect the continued perception that sexual and gender diversity in childhood is dangerous, a perception particularly evident in relation to trans and gender nonconforming youth (for an overview of recent debates, see Gessen, 2021).[1] To date, however, scholars have not attended to constructions of children and sexuality in political, cultural, and educational spheres in tandem with, and in the context of, Section 28 and the question of its legacy.

This thesis takes up that aim and is an interdisciplinary study of certain modalities of power and domination in relation to children and children's sexuality in the U.K. Drawing on the fields of law, children's literature, and education, it is concerned with such modalities in key societal discourses – politics, culture, and education – and is thus comprised of three qualitative studies in relation to Section 28. Study 1 is a Foucauldian genealogical analysis of the 1986–1988 parliamentary debates surrounding the enactment of Section 28. Study 2 is a directed content analysis of 16 British lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) Young Adult (YA) novels published after Section 28, with primary attention given to novels published between 1999 and 2014 (this date range is explained in Chapter 3). Finally, Study 3 is a thematic analysis of the views of current teachers in Scotland on the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. Each of these studies is underpinned by a

[1] 'Gender', 'trans', and other relevant terms are defined in the next section of this chapter.

focus on children’s literature, which serves as an entry point to investigating how children and children’s sexuality have been constituted politically, culturally, and educationally. The rationale and methods are explained in Chapter 3.

Beginning with brief notes on terminology and representation, this introductory chapter discusses the background and rationale for this work, as well as how my research interests in Section 28 and LGBT+ children’s literature first developed. From there, the research questions are identified and a brief overview of the epistemological framework is presented. The structure of the thesis is then outlined, followed by the conclusion.

Definitions

This thesis uses certain initialisms to refer to a range of gender and sexual identities in different contexts. ‘LGBT+’ is used as a collective descriptor to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people, with the ‘+’ sign further denoting related identities and lived experiences, such as queer (defined and discussed below), genderqueer, and intersex. The particular order of the initials/identities is in line with prevailing or common usage rather than a suggestion that some identities are or should be prioritised or emphasised over others. Another initialism used in this thesis is ‘LGB’, which describes the novels in Study 2’s corpus and their fictional depictions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities. The focus on LGB rather than LGBT+ content is due to the fact that British children’s books only began portraying a wider range of sexual and gender diversity after the period investigated in Study 2 (see, e.g., Corbett, 2020). While the Scottish Government and the TIE Campaign that led to inclusive education have both used ‘LGBTI’ in their work, this thesis

continues to use ‘LGBT+’ for consistency and because ‘LGBTI’ is necessarily less inclusive (the absence of ‘+’ limiting the identities to which it refers).

The term ‘queer’ has different meanings. For example, it can be used pejoratively, or as a label to refer to someone whose sexual or gender identity places them outside dominant conceptions of ‘normal’ (Dilley, 1999). The term can also denote a political position, one at odds with the perceived legitimate and dominant (Halperin, 1995) – in relation not only to sexuality, but to any social norm (Butler, 1993) – and against discrimination toward marginalised groups (Dilley, 1999). Queer can also mean a method or verb: a ‘queer reading’, for example, involves reading a text ‘against the grain’ so as to expose embedded hierarchies and ideologies (Whittington, 2012; the meaning of ‘ideology’ is discussed further in Chapter 3). In this thesis, queer is used primarily in relation to the analytical lenses and methodologies adopted in its studies (such as queer theory and queer legal theory, discussed later in this chapter), which are intended to aid the identification and deconstruction of normative values in relation to sexuality, gender, and childhood (as discussed further in Chapter 3). When discussing a specific sexual or gender identity in this thesis, rather than use ‘queer’ as a catch-all, either the initialism ‘LGBT+’ or the specific sexual or gender label will be used.

Relatedly, this thesis also uses the phrase ‘interrupting heteronormativity’. ‘Heteronormativity’ is the belief that heterosexuality and traditional gender roles are the only ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ behaviours or expressions (van der Toorn et al., 2020). Such a belief would include, for example, the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and attracted to members of the opposite sex, and that gender is a binary consisting only of male/female. To ‘interrupt’ heteronormativity, then, is to

question or interrogate such thinking by deconstructing or 'troubling' the normative discourses underpinning about assumptions about sexuality and gender (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016, p. 810). It involves making those assumptions (e.g., that gender roles are immutable) visible and exploring other ways of thinking, living, and being (Reimers, 2020). In this thesis, interrupting heteronormativity is explored primarily in relation to LGBT+ children's literature in Chapter 6, although the entire thesis itself might be described as a project of disrupting assumptions about sexuality and gender in relation to young people.

In addition to heteronormativity, this thesis also focuses on other ideologies about sexuality and gender, including homophobia, heterosexism, and heteropatriarchy (the meaning of 'ideology' itself is discussed in Chapter 3). While each of these terms are related in that they all involve certain prejudiced attitudes toward non-heterosexual people, there are distinctions. Perhaps the broadest of the terms, 'homophobia' is the dislike of, or negative attitude toward, people who are LGB (Stonewall, n.d.-b). Analogous to sexism and racism, 'heterosexism' is the maintenance of prejudice against, or stigmatisation of, any identity, behaviour, community, or relationship that is non-heterosexual (Smith et al., 2012). It is the assumption that such identities, behaviours, and so on are not 'normal' precisely because they are not heterosexual, and thus 'expresses and perpetuates a set of hierarchical relations' in which 'everything homosexual is devalued and considered inferior to what is heterosexual' (Herek, 2004, p. 16). 'Heteropatriarchy' refers to multiple interconnected beliefs: that gender is either male or female and that one's gender is immutable; that gender is determined by sex; that there are behaviours, interests, abilities, and appearances distinct to males and females; and that sexual and

romantic relationships – including the rearing of children – should occur only between members of the opposite sex (Harris, 2011). The following chapters will identify the relevant ideologies that operate in the data being analysed. However, given how such beliefs and expressions are necessarily interrelated with overlapping characteristics or attributes, the identification of any particular ideology should not be taken to mean that none of the other ideologies are not also relevant or that some ideologies are more important or significant than others, but rather only that some modes of thought are perhaps more dominant in a particular discourse.

The terms 'trans' and 'gender nonconforming' are umbrella terms that refer to people whose gender identity has shifted away from, or is not fully aligned with, the gender associated with their birth sex (American Psychological Association, 2015). Often included under these two umbrellas are people who identify as non-binary (although not all non-binary people identify as trans), referring to those who do not experience a gender identity (e.g., genderqueer), whose gender is both male and female simultaneously (e.g., bigender and genderfluid), or who identify outside the male/female binary altogether (e.g., agender; Matsuno & Budge, 2017). Gender, as well as gender identity and gender expression, 'denotes the psychosocial attributes and behaviors people develop as a result of what society expects of them, depending on whether they were born female or male' (Hubbard, 1996, p. 157). 'Cisgender' or 'cis' describe individuals whose gender identity is aligned with their birth sex (Stonewall, n.d.-b). Two distinctions are important here: while gender identity and sexuality are often conflated, they are distinct facets of a person and neither is determined by the other; and identifying as trans does not necessarily mean that one

desires or intends to pursue hormones and/or gender affirmation surgery (Kuper et al., 2011).

There are two other notes to make here about terminology before moving on to the background and rationale. First, the use of identity categories in the following chapters is rooted in the understanding that while sexual and gender identities can be socially meaningful ways to organise one's experiences and sense of self, they are also relationally or socially constructed rather than essentialist or biological (see Kitzinger, 1995). This understanding reflects the poststructural epistemology that frames this thesis, as detailed in Chapter 3. Second, labels of sexuality and gender, and the differences which define them, have been shown to have less resonance amongst young people who resist or question those labels, particularly in relation to core identities or sense of self (see, e.g., Allen et al., 2021; Coleman-Fountain, 2014; Savin-Williams, 2005). But regardless of how labels are understood or what meaning they may or may not have personally, they nevertheless provide a useful means for referring to and discussing the experiences and representations to which the discourses in the following chapters are calibrated. The use of labels in this thesis is not intended to discount the meaningful resistance and questioning by young people (and others) to the labelling and categorisation of personal experiences, but to enable analysis, discussion, and, ultimately, a better understanding of how the wellbeing and development of young people can be supported.

A Note on Representation

This thesis is primarily concerned with sexuality and gender in the context of childhood and how both subjects (childhood and sexuality) have been or are

constructed politically, culturally, and educationally, as understood through the lenses of children's literature and queer theory, including queer legal theory. The focus on sexuality and gender should not be read as disregarding intersectional identities or the ways in which the characteristics of a person intersect with one another, such that people experience forms of discrimination and interlocking systems of oppression differently (see Crenshaw, 1989). It is also not meant to suggest that sexual and gender identities are more important or that the hierarchies of identity that enable multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are somehow valid. Rather, with the foundation of this thesis being the Section 28 prohibition on the promotion of homosexuality, the focus is attentive to the themes of sexuality in the novels and what they reveal in relation to the patterns of thinking that enabled the legislation.

Background and Rationale

The impetus for this thesis, which draws on my own interdisciplinary background as a lawyer with a master's degree in creative writing, was an interest in cultural legal studies and, specifically, the relationship between law and the cultural or societal phenomenon of children's literature. What exactly constitutes children's literature is debatable (for an overview, see Rudd, 2010b), but it can be defined broadly as texts 'written primarily for children's consumption and featuring children (or perhaps talking animals or otherwise marvellous beings) as the narratives' protagonists' (Pugh, 2011, p. 2). Originally, this thesis was intended to explore whether reading and discussing children's texts could help LGBT+ young people better understand certain rights, such as the right to privacy, or the right to family

life, as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; United Nations, 1989). In other words, it would ask whether popular LGBT+ fiction helps young readers acquire information about themselves in relation to particular legal frameworks. Asked another way, what would fictional narratives with non-heterosexual content tell young LGBT+ people about who they are in the real world? And how could such fiction be understood through the prism of children's rights? While there have been such studies on these questions with young people in general (e.g., Todres & Higinbotham, 2016), none have been concerned specifically with LGBT+ youth and LGBT+ children's literature, a gap to which this thesis was originally intended to respond.

With that context in mind, a study was designed around reading the YA novel *Release* by Patrick Ness (2017) with focus groups of LGBT+ young people in Scotland. That novel is about a gay teenager in a conservative and religious family, and it was selected with the hope that the author's popularity would generate interest in participation and in discussions on the rights of young people, and that the plot itself would also help stimulate discussion and inquiry. LGBT Youth Scotland, a community support group, was engaged to help advertise the study and identify participants. The end result, however, was that no one appeared for the initial session (discussed further in Chapter 3) and it became necessary to reconsider the research strategy and design.

Retaining the broader focus on the intersection of law and children's texts, a starting point for conceptualising a different approach was to map LGBT+ children's texts with key LGBT+ legal reforms in the U.K., beginning with the 1957 Wolfenden Report and the first gay YA novel, John Donovan's *I'll Get There. It Better Be*

Worth the Trip, published in 1969. These shifts in the analytic focus of the thesis took place in 2018, and two other events which occurred that same year also helped to further reorient my work. First, the Scottish Government announced its decision to back the implementation of LGBT+ inclusive lessons in all state schools. Second, it was the 30th anniversary of Section 28 being enacted. As will be discussed, this law had been motivated, in part, by the English translation of *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* by Susanne Bösche (1981/1983), a Danish picture book about a young girl living with her father and his male partner. These events led to the consideration of how LGBT+ inclusive education and Section 28 might be productive lines of enquiry in relation to the thesis's broader focus on LGBT+ children's literature and legal frameworks.

In particular, the 1986–1988 parliamentary debates surrounding the law's enactment were identified as a key path forward for the research. From a review of the Hansard transcripts, it became evident that children's literature played an important role in enabling the legislation's enactment. Yet researchers have not given this role the same sustained and nuanced consideration as other aspects of the law. As discussed further in Chapter 2, much of the research on Section 28 has focused instead on issues with the law's imprecise language (for example, the word 'promote') and the impact of the legislation in certain contexts (discussed further in Chapter 2). These gaps seemed promising areas of research, especially given their alignment with my broader interests in law and children's literature. And, as we will see, pursuing this line of research does indeed offer new insights into the motivations behind Section 28 and the law's diminished influence today.

To pursue such an investigation, it was clear that an analysis of the 1986–1988 debates surrounding Section 28's enactment would be a foundational and critical line of enquiry. In particular, and as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, such an analysis offered the additional opportunity, also largely unexplored by scholars, to understand how children and children's sexuality, in addition to children's literature, were constituted in the discursive strategies deployed by Parliamentarians in those debates. By not examining the central question of how those subjects were constituted, existing scholarship has left an incomplete conceptualisation of Section 28 and the motivations that brought sexuality and children to the centre stage of 1980s British politics, and the extent to which the law has any continued legacy culturally and educationally today.

These lines of inquiry soon brought a number of other questions to the fore. Specifically, what do LGBT+ children's books actually say about young people and sexual diversity? Moreover, given the political claims made about the books, what does the content of those books actually look like? What do the books really say about children and sexuality? These questions will, in turn, allow us to see whether the ideologies that enabled Section 28 have found material existence in writing for the young. Understanding the content of the books, especially in comparison to the political claims about them, allows us to also ask whether the books are still considered taboo in education or are now understood to have pedagogical affordances after all. If they do have such utility, then what exactly is its nature? These lines of enquiry seemed particularly important in light of the Scottish Government's decision on LGBT+ inclusive lessons. Given this importance, they formed the basis for the subsequent studies in this thesis. In particular, these studies

will allow us to evaluate the legacy of Section 28 culturally and educationally and to see that it has been emphatically resisted by authors and educators.

Research Questions and Analytical Frameworks

On the basis of the studies described above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How were children, children's sexuality, and children's literature constituted in the 1986–1988 parliamentary debates surrounding the enactment of Section 28?
2. What role did children's literature play in those debates?
3. How has the content of British LGB YA novels published after Section 28 reproduced or resisted those constructions? And is it as depraved as Parliamentarians claimed?
4. Has the content changed in terms of its depictions of young people and sexual diversity?
5. What are the views of current educators in Scotland on the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature?

To answer these questions, three studies were conceived, each with a different approach to data analysis. Study 1 provides an analysis of the Hansard transcripts through a genealogical or Foucauldian discourse analysis, as informed by Carabine (2001). Study 2 is a directed content analysis, drawing on Hsieh and Shannon (2005), of 16 LGB YA novels published by British authors after Section 28 (published primarily between the law's enactment and 2014, as identified in Table 1, although attention is also given later in the thesis to more recently published novels and other

youth-oriented resources on sexuality and gender). Finally, Study 3 is a thematic analysis carried out in a study that adopts and adapts the read-and-response method (see B. Marshall, 2000). Each of these studies and their analyses draws upon queer theory, queer legal theory, and, in particular, Foucault (1976/1978), Butler (1990), and Sedgwick (1990), as a lens to understand the constructions of children and sexuality. This lens is discussed further in Chapter 2, and the particular processes and methodologies of the studies are detailed in Chapter 3.

Table 1

Key LGBT+ Legal Reforms in the U.K. and the Study 2 Corpus

Reforms	Novels
Fitzpatrick v. Sterling Housing Association Ltd, 1999	*Postcards From No Man's Land* by Aidan Chambers (1999)
Repeal of Section 28/2A in 2000 (Scotland)	*The Shell House* by Linda Newbery (2002)
Equal Age of Consent 2001	*Living Upside Down* by Kate Tym (2002)
Adoption and Children Act 2002 (England and Wales)	*Girl, 15: Charming but Insane* by Sue Limb (2004)
Repeal of Section 28: 2003 (England and Wales)	*Sugar Rush* by Julie Burchill (2004)
Gender Recognition Act 2004	*Pretty Things* by Sarra Manning (2005)
Civil Partnership Act 2004	*Kiss* by Jacqueline Wilson (2007)
Equality Act 2006	*My Side of the Story* by Will Davis (2007)
Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007	*The Traitor Game* by B. R. Collins (2008)
Equality Act 2010	*Boys Don't Cry* by Malorie Blackman (2010)
Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (England and Wales)	*What's Up With Jody Barton?* by Hayley Long (2012)
Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014	*Hollow Pike* by Juno[2] Dawson (2012)
	Undone by Cat Clarke (2013)
	Secret Lies by Amy Dunne (2013)
	Because of Her by K. E. Payne (2014)
	Solitaire by Alice Oseman (2014)

[2] The version of the novel used in this thesis lists Juno Dawson's former name; however, I refer to her by her current rather than former name.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. This chapter has explained the rationale and aims, identified the research questions and analytical frameworks, and provided the motivations for undertaking this work. The primary purpose of this thesis is, as stated, to investigate the Section 28 parliamentary debates and its legacy within the context of British LGB children's literature and education.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the existing research relevant to each study. It begins by outlining the key studies of Section 28, including those on the parliamentary debates surrounding its enactment, the impact of the legislation, and the law's socio-political context. This literature informed the design and aims of Study 1. Next, it discusses research on the content of LGBT+ children's literature, which informed the design and aims of Study 2. Finally, the chapter considers the research on LGBT+ children's literature in the context of education and pedagogy, which informed the design and aims of Study 3. This chapter is concluded with discussions of queer theory, queer legal theory, and the key legal reforms that underpin the analyses.

Chapter 3 describes the poststructuralist epistemological framework informing this thesis. Poststructuralism takes the view that language does not merely represent reality but constitutes and produces it through representation and other social processes (Braun & Clarke, 2013; see also Gergen, 1985). Given the analytical emphasis on how language constitutes subjects, each study is designed with a focus on certain discursive framings and articulations of children and sexual diversity. In line with this design, the data are drawn primarily from language: the discourses of the parliamentary debates in Study 1, the fictional narratives in Study 2, and the

written responses of educators in Study 3. Chapter 3 also discusses the methodologies underpinning each study. It explains that Study 1, a genealogical analysis as informed by Carabine (2001), is concerned in particular with the discursive strategies deployed in the parliamentary debates and the contingent nature of children, sexuality, and children's literature. Study 2 is a directed content analysis, as informed by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), of a corpus comprising 16 British LGB YA novels. The focus is on how children and sexuality are constructed in the narratives. The findings in Study 1 provided the initial codes or categories for this analysis. Finally, Study 3 builds on this work by adopting and adapting the read-and-response method to engage educators with thinking about the pedagogical utility and potential of LGBT+ children's literature. The findings are examined through a thematic analysis, as informed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013). As stated earlier, these analyses are further informed by queer theory and queer legal theory.

Chapter 4 is the Foucauldian genealogy of the Section 28 debates. It is concerned specifically with the debates surrounding the law's enactment, which took place from when the law's first iteration was introduced in 1986 to when the law was passed and enacted in 1988. It identifies the discursive strategies deployed by politicians in support of the legislation and the constructions of children, sexuality, and children's literature evident in those strategies. The strategies reveal that the law was predicated on, amongst other things, a presumption that children were latently or innately *homo*sexual rather than heterosexual, a significant departure from the existing literature.

Chapter 5 is a directed content analysis of British LGB YA novels published after Section 28. These novels, which were published primarily between 1999 and

2014, are the primary focus of this study, although attention is also given to more recently published LGBT+ books for young people (see also Chapter 7 in this thesis). This study contextualises the analysis by mapping the texts with key LGBT+ legal reforms (shown in Table 1 above), beginning with the 1999 case of *Fitzpatrick v. Sterling Housing Association Ltd*, which redefined 'family members' under the Rent Act 1977 to include same-sex couples. The aim of situating the novels in their contemporary legal contexts is to analyse them in relation to the discursive constructions identified in Study 1 and to understand how the writers have constructed children and sexual diversity. While there are existing studies on non-heterosexual YA novels, they are primarily studies of literature published in the U.S.A. rather than the U.K., and this study is therefore unique in its focus solely on British literature and specifically in relation to Section 28.

Chapter 6 is a thematic analysis of responses to a qualitative study that engaged teachers in Scotland with thinking about the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature and perspectives. This analysis reveals that sexual diversity is no longer considered 'inappropriate' knowledge that corrupts children, in sharp contrast to how the literature was portrayed in the parliamentary debates. Even more striking is the fact all eight participants, across a range of teacher identities and backgrounds, agreed that sexual diversity and its representations in literature are valuable such that failing to implement LGBT+ perspectives and texts into classroom practices actually risks harming young people. This finding is a significant departure from research showing that Section 28 still affects educators and education today (e.g., Lee, 2019) and, critically, it is the antithesis of very premise of Section 28.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the implications of the studies' findings are identified and discussed. The results of the three studies reveal, when considered together, that there has been a shift in how sexual diversity is viewed in relation to young people culturally and educationally since Section 28's enactment over 30 years ago. Specifically, there has been a movement away from conflations of sexual diversity with abuse and disease and the belief that it harms young people. Children's literature and the views of current educators posit that sexual diversity instead benefits young people and enhances their lives. This shift has significantly eroded the legacy of Section 28, such that none of the educators in Study 3 even mentioned the law. This chapter also discusses the findings' practical implications for the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers, the value of children's literature as a vehicle for social and cultural change, and the benefits of interdisciplinary research. The conclusion discusses the relevance of the research to current debates, particularly those surrounding trans youth.

Conclusion

This thesis contributes to the theoretical and empirical understandings of Section 28, including the motivations behind that legislation and the foregrounding of sexuality in 1980s British politics. In doing so, it also contributes to understandings of British LGB children's literature published after Section 28, revealing a progressive evolution in British cultural constructions of sexual diversity and young people. Another significant contribution is to how we understand the pedagogical affordances of LGBT+ perspectives and literature, revealing an imperative for education that is inclusive of sexual and gender diversity. In

identifying particular areas of training to better enable educators to deliver LGBT+ inclusive content, implications for practical applications for CPD are discussed. Those implications are timely in light of, and indeed they justify, the Scottish Government's decision to mandate LGBT+ inclusive content in state schools and to provide additional training to educators.

Finally, before turning to Chapter 2, I want to briefly consider here a final point about the research discussed in the following pages. There is, of course, much to be said about the vulnerability of LGBT+ young people, such that researchers often cite various statistics of suicide, harassment, and other negative factors as justification for their work (e.g., Lester, 2014). Such statistics are clearly important in demonstrating the value of research that centres LGBT+ young people to better understand their experiences and systems of support. Many of the deficit constructions of sexual diversity are discussed in this thesis given that virtually all of the political discourse in support of Section 28 constituted sexual diversity itself as being inherently destructive to young people.

However, we will also see, particularly in Studies 2 and 3, that other discourses have emerged to resist such constructions and to argue instead that sexual and gender diversity can actually be of substantial benefit to young people. My hope is that, by the time its conclusion is read, this thesis as a whole will be received not as one more argument framing LGBT+ young people as vulnerable and at risk (arguments which certainly have their place in the research), but as an acknowledgement of the joy that sexual and gender diversity can bring young people and as a contribution to discourses of affirmation, pride, and, most of all, hope.

Chapter 2: What the Literature Does (and Does Not) Tell Us

The previous chapter provided the introduction to this thesis, setting out its motivation, rationale, and aims. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this work and the range of research it draws upon, this chapter, which presents the relevant literature, is systematically divided by topics that contextualise the thesis and demonstrate the research gaps to which it responds. The discussion begins with the literature on Section 28 and the socio-political context surrounding its enactment. This literature, which is relatively more extensive and thus takes up a larger portion of the chapter, is followed by the research on the content of LGBT+ children's books and the implementation of such books into classroom practices. The final sections provide a brief note on the key legal reforms underpinning this thesis and reiterate the research questions.

Background and Context of Section 28

The 1980s saw growing support for lesbians and gays in the U.K., which included Labour-controlled local authorities adopting equal-opportunities policies (Weeks, 2016, p. 239). These policies were pioneered primarily by the Greater London Council (GLC), which included, for example, establishing a Gay Working Party in 1982, adopting a range of anti-discrimination measures, and awarding grants to gay and lesbian groups, including £750,000 to establish the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 203; Weeks, 2016, p. 239). Significantly, the GLC's charter for lesbian and gay rights called for the school curriculum to reflect 'the richness and diversity of homosexual experiences and not just negative images' (GLC, 1985, as cited in Weeks, 2016, p. 239). Other London boroughs eventually

followed this lead by outlawing discrimination and creating equal opportunities in, for example, housing and employment for lesbians and gays (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 204). Haringey established its Lesbian and Gay Unit, which wrote to all local teachers with a reminder of Labour's manifesto commitment to, amongst other things, funding 'positive images of lesbians and gays' (Petley, 2019, p. 85), echoing the GLC charter. There was thus 'a new assertion of community rights' (Weeks, 1991, p. 105) for sexual minorities, which met with growing local government support, including recognition in education. Through these efforts, local government had increasingly become 'a counterweight to central government' (A. M. Smith, 1994a, p. 185).

In response, Margaret Thatcher's Government took measures to centralise power and curb local government measures and spending (Curran, 2019; Weeks, 2016). The reassertion of central control, when met with the moral panic over Aids in the 1980s, resulted in a political climate with deep opposition to homosexuality (Wise, 2000). As Petley (2019) demonstrated, allegations in the press about Labour-controlled councils 'promoting' homosexuality in schools were mobilised by Conservative politicians to garner support in the 1986 London local elections and the 1987 general election. At the 1987 party conference, Thatcher directly repudiated gay equality with her claim that 'children who need to be taught to respect traditional values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay' (Evans, 1989, p. 74). This repudiation seemed a direct response to the calls for education to better reflect lesbian and gay experiences. The 1987 Local Government Bill, which was aimed at forcing local authorities to abandon contract compliance schemes designed

to increase the employment of minorities (S. Sanders & Spraggs, 1989, p. 100; A. M. Smith, 1994a, p. 184), became the vehicle for Section 28.

Although Stacey (1991) drew on feminist thought to conclude that the legislation was ‘an implicit response to many feminist ideas and practices’ (p. 296; see also Curran, 2019; S. Sanders & Spraggs, 1989), campaigners for Section 28 more directly positioned themselves as protectors of the young and defenders of parents’ rights to decide the nature of their children’s education (Durham, 1991). It is fitting, then, that the law followed on other legislation purportedly aimed at protecting children, efforts which complemented the Government’s efforts to curb local power and public spending. The Video Recordings Bill, introduced in 1983, ‘imposed a draconian system of censorship on all video recordings in order to prevent children from seeing “video nasties”’ (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 200). Similarly, a 1986 Bill sought to extend the Obscene Publications Act ‘to protect children from sex and violence on television’ (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 200). The press, meanwhile, used trials of members of the Paedophile Information Exchange to circulate ‘old myths about homosexuals being child molesters’ (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 200). Section 28 was thus part of a larger political project that, in addition to limiting local government, also sought to preserve the myth of childhood innocence. These themes of childhood innocence and perversion, which surface in all three studies, are explored in detail throughout Chapters 4 through 7.

The first iteration of the law was a Private Member’s Bill introduced by Lord Halsbury in 1986 to restrain local authorities from ‘promoting’ homosexuality as a ‘pretended family relationship’ (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 210). It failed when the 1987 general election was called, but a substantially similar amendment was

introduced by MP David Wilshire in the House of Commons in 1987, also as an amendment to the Local Government Act (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 218). Enacted in 1988, it stated, in pertinent part, that a local authority shall not 'intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality' or 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'.

In discussing the parliamentary debates surrounding the law's enactment, A. M. Smith (1990) focused on 'truth claims', which she defined as statements that relied upon faulty evidence or no evidence at all, but which, through repeated circulation in the news media and in parliament, gained the appearance of 'truth'. For example, politicians 'misattributed, misquoted, discussed out of context, and quoted selectively' from certain texts, such as 'children's sex education materials' (A. M. Smith, 1990, p. 43), and made other erroneous claims, such as the publisher of *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* being grant-aided by the GLC. These claims became 'self-perpetuating fallacies' (A. M. Smith, 1990, p. 44), all in the name of justifying Section 28. Similar strategies have been developed in 'othering' discourses of, for example, race and nationality, where the 'other' is positioned as an invader who threatens 'whiteness, Britishness, and heterosexuality' (A. M. Smith, 1990, p. 51; see also A. M. Smith, 1994b). These findings are echoed in those of Study 1, as discussed further in Chapter 4.

The literature has also focused on the legislation's weaknesses, including its narrow scope and vague language. As Evans (1989) argued, not only was the law rendered rather toothless given that responsibility for sex education had shifted from local authorities to school governors with the Education (No. 2) Act two years

previously in 1986, but it was further undermined by the prohibitive costs of bringing a court action for alleged violations. The law's vague language has also been criticised (e.g., Colvin & Hawksley, 1989; Macnair, 1989), with attention given primarily to the use of 'promotion', 'intentional', and 'pretended family'. D. Epstein and Johnson (1998), for example, considered the meanings of 'promotion', while Evans (1989, 1993) focused on the phrase 'homosexuality as a pretended family relationship' – described by him as the core of Section 28 – to explore the law's complexities and weaknesses. Evans (1989) also argued that 'homosexual' and 'family' as constructed by the law were mythic: the family was constituted as being in moral decline and homosexuality as a disease of lifestyle.

Similarly, Weeks (1991) used the language of 'pretended family relationship' to explore alternative family structures. His analysis focused not only on how the notion of pretended families was deployed in the parliamentary debates, but also on a 'defence' of different patterns of relationships maligned by that language (Weeks, 1991, p. 156). Weeks concluded that what was at stake in Section 28 was the extent to which the state had the right to intervene 'in personal moral and sexual choices' (Weeks, 1991, pp. 155–156). This conclusion is consistent with the findings of this thesis, which show that Section 28 was the result of the state deeming children's literature, and innately homosexual children, as so threatening that intervention into family matters was necessary.

Like Weeks and Evans, Reinhold (1994b) explored Section 28 in relation to meanings of 'the family' in British politics. Her focus included the 1986 local election of Haringey and the Conservative backlash to the call of the local Labour Party in that area for the use of 'positive images' of homosexuality in schools. Some

parliamentary debates are referenced, including the Commons debates on sex education in relation to the Lords' 1986 Education (No. 2) Bill. Through her analysis, Reinhold (1994b) exposed the 'tenuous' and 'ideological logic' in Conservative political constructions of the family that conflated the family with 'the strength—or potential weakness—of the nation' itself (pp. 70, 76). This analysis revealed that discourses of the family were constituted by discourses of 'society, nation and freedom' in constructing homosexuality as a threat (Reinhold, 1994b, p. 77).

The Impacts of Section 28

The existing literature has also focused on the impacts of the legislation in different contexts. The year following the law's enactment, Colvin and Hawksley (1989) published a guide setting out guidance on the implications of Section 28 for local authorities, voluntary organisations, and educational institutions. Acknowledging the confusion that surrounded the law due to its poor drafting (as discussed), the guide stated that Section 28 did not alter the duty of local authorities to provide equal treatment when providing services (such as housing and counselling services). For voluntary organisations, the law was most directly relevant in terms of funding, as it prohibited local authorities from funding organisations if doing so could be perceived as promoting homosexuality. This, in turn, fostered an atmosphere of excessive caution and self-censorship amongst voluntary groups so as to avoid placing local authorities in potentially illegal positions. Finally, with respect to education, the duty of teachers toward the welfare of their students was not changed and there continued to be a duty to confront discrimination. Perhaps echoing

the confidence of the 1989 guide, Abbott and Wallace (1992), writing just a few years later, argued that the impact was actually minimal – 'small victories' for the New Right (p. 121). Those victories included *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* being removed from the Wolverhampton library and the decision of one council to not provide a grant to a lesbian group.

Such views, however, were in the minority, with most researchers arguing that the effects were much more extensive. Most often, those effects were the result of misunderstandings about what the law actually entailed, which primarily was due to the vague language discussed above. One such common misperception was that Section 28 directly regulated schools, including school employees (Greenland & Nunney, 2008), whereas it actually applied only to local authorities (Colvin & Hawksley, 1989). Despite the assurances published in the guide by Colvin and Hawksley (1989), this misconception resulted in a 'return to the closet' (Weeks, 2016, p. 242) as educators effectively self-censored their own identities (D. Epstein, 2000). Specifically, there were fears of reprisal and job loss if educators were perceived as non-heterosexual. Such fears were present both during Section 28 (e.g., G. Clarke, 2002) and long after its repeal (e.g., Edwards et al., 2016; Greenland & Nunney, 2008; S. Sanders & Sullivan, 2014), such that teachers who grew up under Section 28 were less likely to be open about their sexuality at school and to participate in school activities, especially with their partner (Lee, 2019). As a result, many educators engaged in strategies, such as self-censorship, to manage or altogether conceal their identity. These strategies were perceived as necessary even in schools that maintained or projected an 'emancipatory stance encouraged by official documents and policy statements' (Nixon & Givens, 2007, p. 457).

There is a consensus in the literature that the law created confusion as to what could or could not be said, taught, or performed in schools. This uncertainty created a challenging atmosphere that restricted the ability of teachers to meet the needs of their LGBT+ pupils (Warwick et al., 2001). Such uncertainty led teachers to avoid any mention of LGBT+ issues, including during sex and relationship education (Buston & Hart, 2001; D. Epstein et al., 2003; Thomson, 1993), so as to avoid being perceived as 'promoting' homosexuality (D. Epstein, 2000; D. Epstein et al., 2003; Evans, 1989). This impact was also felt in terms of school productions and library stocks, thus having wider implications in terms of censorship (see Freshwater, 2009). For example, a tutor at a North Bristol performing arts college rewrote a play with a happy ending for a lesbian couple so that the couple instead split up, while the School Head at a secondary school altogether banned a play in which one character comes out to his friends (Ashford, 2011). In a similar vein, school libraries refused to offer literature or films portraying lesbian or gay identities (D. Epstein, 2000).

In sum, while the law was narrow in scope, its effect was not. Resulting in the widespread silencing of LGBT+ perspectives in institutions, including schools, across the U.K., the law both symbolised and legitimised intolerance and hostility toward non-heterosexual people (Colvin & Hawksley, 1989) and literature with non-heterosexual content. Despite these effects, however, the law also acted as a catalyst for collectivist lesbian and gay politics. Similar to how the Oscar Wilde trials helped foster the development of 'a new sense of identity among homosexuals' (Weeks, 1989, p. 103), Section 28 served as a catalyst, a common cause, that contributed to a growing sense of community and identity amongst lesbians and gays (Bristow & Wilson, 1993; D. Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Evans, 1989, 1993; Weeks, 1991, 2016).

The law and subsequent unprecedented solidarity amongst gay and lesbian people have even been described as the British equivalent to the Stonewall riot (Jeffery-Poulter, 1991, p. 234). Framing Section 28 in this way, as a catalyst, recalls Foucault's (1976/1978) arguments that even within dominant discourses of legitimacy and normality, reverse discourses are present, such that attempts to suppress an identity actually incite and constitute that very identity. These arguments are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Gaps in the Section 28 Literature

As is evident from the discussion so far, what is largely absent from the existing literature is any sustained consideration of how children and children's sexuality were constructed in the parliamentary debates, beyond brief references to children as vulnerable. Weeks' (1991) analysis, for example, ignored the subjects of children and children's sexuality even while discussing family structures. Study 1 responds to these gaps, while the intervention by the state into personal matters is a thread surfacing in the conclusion of this thesis. The only study that has looked at children in some depth is Reinhold's (1994a) unpublished doctoral thesis, in which she 'concentrate[d] on the qualities of childhood' evident in the parliamentary debates (p. 432). The analysis found that those qualities included innocence, impressionability, and vulnerability. While the findings of Study 1 are consistent with these findings, underlying Reinhold's (1994a) argument is the presumption that children were politically constituted as naturally or essentially heterosexual. This thesis is a significant departure in that Study 1 demonstrates how Section 28 was

actually premised on an inverted understanding that constructed children as innately homosexual. This finding is discussed further in Chapter 4.

To the brief extent that existing research has mentioned children's literature, it has primarily been only in reference to Bösche's (1981/1983) *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin*. Evans (1989), for example, mentioned the picture book but not as a central part of his analysis. He did argue that changing the school curriculum to 'reveal homosexual themes' in history, English studies, and libraries would 'have an effect on all participants' (Evans, 1989, p. 91), but the argument is developed no further, leaving unclear the nature of that 'effect'. This thesis picks up on that thread by considering, in Study 3, the particular effects that LGBT+ children's literature might have on young people, as understood through the views of current educators.

Similarly, Petley (2019) mentioned the 'totemic significance' (p. 83) of Bösche's book, briefly discussing certain claims made about it by the news media and including passing references to *The Playbook for Kids About Sex* and *The Milkman's on his Way*. There is also some discussion of the parliamentary debates on Lord Halsbury's and Wilshire's Bills. However, the overall focus is on the influences of the news media rather than on how children, children's literature, and sexuality were constituted by politicians. Consideration of the content of the children's books cited in the debates is also absent, leaving open the question of whether the ideologies that enabled Section 28 have found material existence in fictional writing for the young.

In sum, the literature on the Section 28 parliamentary debates surrounding the law's enactment, while wide-ranging, is more limited in the context of children's literature and the political constructions of children and children's sexuality, even

though ‘family’ is a theme often taken up by that literature. Study 1, in its examination of how those specific subjects were constituted in the debates, responds to these gaps. Additionally, the constructions identified in Study 1 subsequently formed the basis for research into British LGB YA novels and how those narratives depict young people and sexual diversity – a pathway unexplored by any other research on Section 28.

Why Study Section 28?

There are a number of reasons why studying Section 28 and its influence culturally and educationally is important. Although some researchers have shown, as discussed, that the law continues to have a chilling effect today (e.g., Lee, 2019), others have declared the legacy to be over. For example, in 2018, when the Scottish Government announced its decisions about LGBT+ inclusive education, Jordan Daly, the co-founder of the organisation that lobbied for the change, claimed ‘the “destructive legacy” of Section 28 had come to an end’ (L. Brooks, 2018, para. 3). As discussed, the aim of this thesis is to better understand the effects of Section 28 since its enactment over 30 years ago, looking in particular at culture (writing for the young) and education (the views of educators).

Furthermore, there are gaps in the existing literature on Section 28’s enactment. These have been discussed, but to reiterate, researchers have not been attentive how children were constructed in the debates, particularly in relation to sexuality; and the central role of children’s literature in building support for the legislation. The analytical emphases have instead focused on discourses of homosexuality, identity, and family while eliding sustained consideration of those

discourses as they relate specifically to children and children's literature. This is not to say that that there is a complete lack of any reference to children or children's literature whatsoever; rather, as we have seen, the references to those subjects have not been given the same due consideration and nuanced analysis as the discourses of homosexuality and the family. There also has been no consideration of the actual content of those texts beyond broader references to the story of *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin*.

Addressing these absences is a significant opportunity to examine the legislation and the socio-political context that gave rise to it. Through Study 1, this thesis exposes a more nuanced understanding of how children and children's sexuality were constructed in the political debates, including the premise that children were innately *homo*sexual rather than heterosexual – a significant departure from the existing literature that posits the law as being implicitly premised on the understanding that children are 'naturally' heterosexual and that this nature must be protected from harmful influences. From there, further questions are raised: what does non-heterosexual children's literature published after Section 28 have to say about children and sexuality? And what are the views of educators today on the pedagogical affordances of such literature? These questions are answered in Studies 2 and 3 in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively. This thesis also considers the content of the children's books cited in the debates, providing for a richer analysis of the ideologies circulated by Parliamentarians in support of Section 28, and considers further how children's literature has implicitly operated as an example of reverse discourse, or the resistance to hegemonic norms, identified by Foucault (1976/1978).

Finally, it should be noted that this thesis is consistent with the presumption, dominant in the existing literature, that sexuality is socially constructed. As discussed further in Chapter 3, poststructuralism is the epistemological paradigm informing this thesis, and it rejects the notion of subjectivity as unmediated by human experience, arguing that 'reality' is socially produced (Weedon, 1997). It thus challenges essentialist arguments that sexuality is innate and permanent (Kitzinger, 1995). The social production of sexuality is what concerns much of the Section 28 literature. As we have seen, the literature has primarily considered the political production or construction of sexuality in, amongst other contexts, the British news media and election campaigns. This thesis continues and extends that work by considering the social, political, and pedagogical constructions of sexuality in relation to children and children's literature.

Why Study LGBT+ Children's Literature?

Before discussing the literature on LGBT+ children's books, it will be helpful to first consider the value of studying children's literature, beginning with a brief recapitulation of the link with innocence. From there, this section will discuss the benefits that children's books offer young readers and present an overview of the relevant research on the content and pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's books.

As discussed, there was an apparent concern behind Section 28 to safeguard perceived childhood innocence, which situated the law alongside other legislative efforts to protect children from perversion. Such efforts recall the days of Locke and Rousseau, when Romanticism constructed the child as existing in 'a state of natural innocence' requiring protection 'from contamination by adult issues' (Grenby, 2003,

p. 8). During that period, this framing of childhood resulted in literature for young people that was largely didactic and intended to impart moral values (Demers, 2008; Thwaite, 1972). Although the Romantic period has of course long since ended, notions of childhood innocence, and the ever-present threat of 'perverse' adult matters, continue to be influential in terms of the content deemed suitable for young readers, thus shaping the literature produced for them (Pugh, 2011). For much of the 20th century, this influence constrained or regulated children's writing with 'an unwritten code of practice: no sex, no violence, and no "bad" language', such that the 'writing should refrain from swearing, slang, and most aspects of colloquial or idiomatic use, and be grammatically correct' (Reynolds, 2007, p. 4). There is thus the persistent belief that children's literature, and by extension children themselves, should be protected from the contamination of 'inappropriate' knowledge, subjects, and content.

While much has been written to describe the shifting development of children's literature away from its didactic roots (e.g., Knowles & Malmkjær, 1996; Thwaite, 1972), key to this thesis is an awareness that the boundaries defining and constituting appropriateness are contingent and in flux. Such shifts occur 'at particular historical moments', the result of 'changing attitudes over time' (Reynolds, 2007, p. 4). Significantly, YA novels in particular are a 'useful index to changing attitudes towards homosexuality' (Kidd, 1998, p. 114). While the primary aim of Study 2 is to understand the fictional constructions of children and sexual diversity against the backdrop of Section 28 and key legal reforms, such an investigation will necessarily also reveal whether and how narratives about youth and sexual diversity

have changed over time, and the extent to which they reflect, in turn, wider shifting perceptions of sexual (if not gender) diversity in society.

Children's literature is thus a productive line of enquiry for this thesis, one that is further legitimated by the literature's potential to shape the minds of young readers (a central premise of Section 28). It is therefore worth giving brief attention to how that influence operates. It has long been argued that children's books can serve as 'windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors' (Bishop, 1990), which is to say that children's literature can be a means for readers to see their own life experiences reflected and, further, to experience new worlds and perspectives that might be otherwise unavailable to them. In other words, through engagement with children's books, young readers are able to 'develop a very particular social self' (K. Bell, 2011, p. 23). Through such influence, books have the 'powerful capacity for shaping audience attitudes' (Stephens, 1992, p. 3). In terms of sexuality, they can dispel myths about homosexuality (see Athanases, 1996); prompt conversations 'about sexual identity, gender expression, gender creativity, and gender independence' (Blackburn et al., 2016, p. 801); and help young LGBT+ young people grapple with the very issues they are confronting in their own lives (Day, 2000). It is clear, then, that children's books, including those with non-heterosexual content, can have a positive influence in a young person's life; therefore, understanding the messages or ideologies that the books contain about non-heterosexuality is essential work (B. J. Epstein, 2014).

Underpinning this thesis, then, is the necessary aim of analysing the messages conveyed by the corpus about sexual diversity and young people. Indeed, in this thesis, the position is taken that such messages are a measure or reflection of what

British society values and promotes. As Kunze (2015) argued, examining literature's ideas of the child allows us to 'see what society holds most important as we attempt to protect the child from certain knowledges, especially sexuality' (p. 73). Examining children's books, in other words, allows us to see which values have had or continue to have currency in the U.K. This thesis therefore examines the values, information, and beliefs about sexual diversity that young readers are exposed to, implicitly or explicitly, through the corpus of fictional British YA narratives with LGB content.

The Changing Content of LGBT+ Children's Literature

As discussed, the boundaries that define appropriate content for children's fiction are contingent and shifting. There are two key chronology studies to consider in regard to the changing shape of LGBT+ children's literature, albeit primarily in the context of books published in the U.S.A. rather than the U.K. Jenkins and Cart (2018) chronicled changes in LGBT+ YA novels published from 1969 to 2016, beginning with the first gay novel marketed specifically for young people, John Donovan's (1969) novel, *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip*. Organised by decades, this study showed the ways that LGBT+ fiction evolved from stereotypical and tragic portrayals to positive, affirming representations. In particular, earlier narratives consisted typically involved an isolated gay character (the character was usually gay rather than lesbian) and the process of coming out (i.e., disclosing one's sexuality), while later narratives depicted characters as less isolated and, to some extent, as part of a larger LGBT+ community. Recent novels have also begun to show the diversity of that community beyond lesbian and gay identities, including gender expression in particular.

B. J. Epstein's (2013) survey was wider in scope, considering not just YA novels but also books for younger readers, including picture books. Instead of organising the chronicle by decade, this work was divided according to topics, such as 'Diversity' and 'Sex and Marriage', and subtopics, such as 'Transgender' and 'Masturbation'. This chronicle is the one most similar to Study 2 in this thesis, in that it is concerned with how LGBT+ children's literature 'challenges or confirms ideas about gender and sexuality' (Epstein, 2013, p. 1). However, like Jenkins and Cart, she has focused primarily on American LGBT+ literature, with only about one page devoted to British books and the context of marriage rather than children's sexuality.

While the findings of these chronologies are consistent with those of Study 2, this thesis is distinct in a number of ways that underscore its contributions. First, as mentioned, Study 2 focuses on a corpus of British texts, and its analysis is therefore situated within a British, rather than American, context. The reason often cited for the US-centric focus in the existing literature is the much larger number of texts published in the U.S.A. versus here in the U.K. (e.g., Jenkins & Cart, 2018), the implicit belief being that the wider range of narratives offers more productive grounds for analysis. While such work is important, focusing on British LGBT+ novels and a British, rather than American, context provides an opportunity to reflect on what the literature reveals about society in the U.K. Second, the study's analysis is rooted in certain political constructions of children and children's sexuality and is concerned with comparing how those subjects were constituted in the Section 28 parliamentary debates. The term 'politics' is used here to refer to the organised political power exercised by a state to govern its population and territory (see Hindess, 2005; Huff, 2020). Such organised power is distinct to Foucault's

(1976/1978) conceptualisation of power in relation to discourse: rather than the exercise of authority by a central administration, Foucault argued that power is deployed in and through legitimated forms of knowledge, and therefore is social or relational rather than executed only from the state in a top-down, unidirectional flow. Foucault signified this intertwined relationship as ‘power/knowledge’, a concept discussed later in this chapter.

Third, as is evident in the above review of the Section 28 literature, no other researcher has considered the subjects of children’s literature and the debates in tandem as part of one larger project. This thesis thus has unique aims as a cross-pollination of Section 28 and LGBT+ children’s literature. Finally, it demonstrates the shifting boundaries referred to by Reynolds (2007), in that Studies 2 and 3 will show not only that sexual diversity is no longer considered ‘inappropriate’ knowledge (consistent with the chronology studies discussed above), but that it is now understood to have significant pedagogical utility. This finding is the very antithesis of Section 28 and is not reflected in any of the existing literature.

The above factors distinguish Study 2 from the existing research, but, significantly, there also have been no studies comparing the constructions of children and children’s sexuality in British LGBT+ literature to those that were deployed and circulated in the Section 28 parliamentary debates. This particular area of research is important given the claims that politicians made about the content of such literature. Their claims raised the question of whether the literature is as depraved as they said or whether there is a different story to be told about its value. In other words, do the political constructions of young people and sexuality differ from certain material and cultural representations of those same subjects? Study 2 answers this question.

LGBT+ Children's Literature and Pedagogy

While there is, as mentioned, no literature directly on pedagogy and LGBT+ children's books specifically within the context of Section 28, there are studies on the general implementation of LGBT+ books into classroom practices. A significant number of these studies focus on one of two areas: the utility of using LGBT+ texts to interrupt homonormative narratives, in which same-sex relationships are legible only within heteronormative structures of marriage and family; and the level to which teachers are resistant to working with those texts and including LGBT+ perspectives in their lessons.

In this research, there are three presumptions that often surface. The first is that LGBT+ books actually have pedagogical utility in the first place (e.g., Clark & Blackburn, 2009). The presumption of utility is the apparent motivation for inquiry into educators and their use of, and comfort levels with, LGBT+ texts. However, it leaves open the more foundational question of the extent to which might educators agree or disagree on the existence of the literature's utility. Second, this presupposed utility often centres on the texts as tools useful for interrupting heteronormativity and, to a lesser extent, supporting LGBT+ students (e.g., DePalma, 2016; Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016). Even in research framed as investigating the seemingly broad question of how teachers might best deploy the texts, the analysis nevertheless focused on challenging heteronormativity and homophobia, while other research operated from the presumption that LGBT+ texts can help LGBT+ students learn about their own identities (e.g., A. M. Sanders & Mathis, 2013). The benefits of LGBT+ literature, which demonstrate the

literature's pedagogical efficacy, are of course important and justify these particular areas of research to inform professional practice.

This brings us to the third presumption, which is that educators already agree on what those benefits are and, further, that the texts have narrow or limited pedagogical purposes or potential. Such presumptions foreclose, in turn, the question of what other pedagogical benefits the literature might have or serve. As a result, further analysis is needed to better understand LGBT+ children's books in the context of education. As Möller (2020) noted, in addition to research on teachers who are resistant to the use of such books, and on the practices that aid in overcoming challenges faced by educators, 'more work across all aspects of [LGBT+] literature inclusion is needed' (p. 247). Therefore, a key aim of Study 3 is to explore what those aspects might be, as educators in Scotland understand them. The study thus prompts its participants to share their views on the particular utility or utilities of LGBT+ children's literature, rather than presume from the outset that there is already agreement on what that utility does or does not look like.

Also common in this literature in enquiry into teachers' resistance to implementing LGBT+ perspectives and texts into classroom practices. The most commonly cited reason for such resistance was the desire to avoid criticisms or backlash from parents, school administrators, and the wider community (e.g., Flores, 2014; Puchner & Klein, 2011). Some teachers also cited a lack of training and resources (e.g., Clark, 2010; Page, 2017). Clearly stemming from the lack of training and knowledge, other teachers believed LGBT+ books to be sexually explicit and therefore inappropriate for school-aged children (Caillouet, 2008), while some conflated teaching about LGBT+ perspectives with teaching about sex (e.g., Thein,

2013). Other factors impacting teacher comfort levels included school size, an urban versus rural location, and the presence (or lack) of an active gay-student club (Page, 2017). What these findings suggest is that resistance to teaching LGBT+ perspectives and texts is linked to a desire on the part of the teacher to avoid personal and professional conflict and vulnerability. Such a desire necessarily centres the teacher at the expense of young people and their access to information.

The emphasis of the research on LGBT+ literature's pedagogical utility brings the research in this thesis full circle, drawing a linearity over the three decades spanned by the three studies. In summary, we will begin in Study 1 with the law that effectively barred LGBT+ perspectives and literature from being included and discussed in schools, and which framed such perspectives and literature as having the potential to corrupt the young. Study 2 will continue our journey by examining the content of LGB YA novels to understand the accuracy of the rhetoric that framed it during the parliamentary debates. Finally, Study 3 will bring us to the views of educators in Scotland today to understand whether LGBT+ children's literature is as devoid of pedagogical utility as politicians had claimed. We will see that these educators argue such literature actually has rather significant pedagogical utility and value for all students and for a range of reasons. While much has been written about Section 28 and there is increasing scholarship on LGBT+ children's literature in terms of content and pedagogy, there has yet to be any research that considers these subjects in tandem as part of one larger project on the constructions of children and sexual diversity politically, culturally, and educationally. The implications of this multifaceted research are identified and discussed in the concluding chapter.

Key LGBT+ Legal Reforms

Since Section 28's enactment in 1988, there have been a number of key LGBT+ legal reforms in the U.K. The first such reform, the 1999 case of *Fitzpatrick v. Sterling Housing Association Ltd*, stands in sharp contrast to Section 28's definition of same-sex families as merely 'pretended' by defining 'family members' under the Rent Act 1977 to include same-sex partners. Under that Act, tenants could, upon their death, pass on their tenancy to spouses or other family members. In *Fitzpatrick*, Martin Fitzpatrick, retired from service in the Royal Navy, had lived with his partner, Thompson, for 18 years. Thompson was the 'official tenant' of their flat. When he died, Fitzpatrick was denied the right of tenancy under the Act. On appeal, the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords found that the definition of 'family' did indeed include the same-sex partner of a deceased tenant. As Lord Nicholls wrote:

> A man and woman living together in a stable and permanent sexual relationship are capable of being members of a family for this purpose. Once this is accepted, there can be no rational or other basis on which the like conclusion can be withheld from a similarly stable and permanent sexual relationship between two men or between two women. […] Where sexual partners are involved, whether heterosexual or homosexual, there is scope for the intimate mutual love and affection and long-term commitment that typically characterise the relationship of husband and wife. This love and affection and commitment can exist in same-sex relationships as in heterosexual relationships. (*Fitzpatrick*, 1999, p. 720)

This acknowledgement of a same-sex relationship as stable and permanent, as being essentially equal to the relationship between a man and a woman (at least within the context of the Rent Act), indicates an evolving legal conceptualisation of ‘the family’, one that, to use Rubin’s (1999) words, perhaps positions same-sex couples as ‘verging on respectability’ (p. 151) when contrasted with the political notion of same-sex families as ‘pretended’.

A number of significant reforms followed, as summarised in Weeks (2016, pp. 260–261), including, of course, the repeal of Section 28 in 2000 in Scotland and 2003 in the rest of the U.K. The age of consent was equalised in 2001 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 allows same-sex couples in England and Wales to adopt children, with similar legislation enacted in Scotland in 2007. The year 2004 saw three additional reforms: the enactment of the Gender Recognition Act providing a means for those with gender dysphoria to change their legal gender; the Civil Partnership Act, granting same-sex couples rights and responsibilities similar to marriage; and the Sexual Offences Act, abolishing the defence of gross indecency and, with it, the ancient crime of buggery. The Equality Act 2010 (and previously 2006) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of homosexuality. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (England and Wales) brought equal marriage to England and Wales, followed by similar legislation in Scotland in the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014. This range of legislation reflects greater recognition of the rights of LGBT+ people in the U.K. These reforms are made even more significant by the fact that it was Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron who led the introduction of same-sex marriage in England and Wales (Weeks, 2016, p. 261), as his was the same party that led the enactment of Section 28.

But while these reforms are significant and inform this thesis, I want to avoid framing them as the result of an inevitable and unrelenting march toward equality, as doing so would erase the many challenges that still exist for LGBT+ people. As Lawrence and Taylor (2019) have argued, ‘manifestations of enduring stasis’ are woven through such narratives of progress (p. 588), wherein advancement is threatened or altogether absent. As Valdes (1998) argued, ‘abolition of sexual orientation discrimination would not terminate social injustice against sexual minorities based on’ other factors, including ‘race/ethnicity, class, dis/ability, [and] sex/gender’ (p. 1424). Adler (2018) and others have highlighted such challenges, including the experiences of LGBT+ people seeking asylum and access to medical care for trans youth. Additionally, some within the LGBT+ community have criticised official or state recognition of same-sex marriage and parenting ‘as a betrayal of the founding ideas of gay liberation, for privileging marriage, reinforcing inequality between gay people, creating new divides between the respectable homosexual and the dissident queer, and for upholding an exclusive and heteronormative idea of love’ (Weeks, 2016, p. 262; see also Adler, 2018). Regardless of such criticisms and the progress still to be made, however, these legal reforms remain key moments of greater visibility and recognition for LGBT+ people. They represent, as Weeks (2016) noted, ‘public recognition to what barely a generation earlier had been deemed in law a “pretended” relationship’ (p. 262). Given this polarity to Section 28, the legal advances form an essential contextual backdrop against which this thesis demonstrates greater recognition, both culturally and educationally, of LGBT+ identities and subjectivities, in particular amongst young people, today.

Research Questions

Before discussing the methodology in the next chapter, I want to reiterate here the research questions and rationale guiding this thesis. As the literature review in this chapter has demonstrated, there are gaps in the research on Section 28 as well as on the content and pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. Given that no other researcher has considered these topics in tandem as part of one larger project, this thesis is unique in its scope and aims and in addressing the following research questions:

1. How were children, children's sexuality, and children's literature constituted in the debates surrounding the enactment of Section 28?
2. What role did children's literature play in those debates?
3. How has the content of British LGB YA novels published after Section 28 reproduced or resisted those constructions? And is it as depraved as Parliamentarians claimed?
4. Has the content changed in terms of its depictions of young people and sexual diversity?
5. What are the views of current educators in Scotland on the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature?

Having reviewed literature relevant to these questions, I turn now to discussing the epistemology, methodology, and ethical considerations underpinning this work.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

The previous chapter discussed existing research in relation to the studies that comprise this thesis. This chapter discusses the methods and methodology underpinning the studies. It begins with discussions of the thesis's interdisciplinary approach and the epistemological position that guided the methods. Finally, the particular methods for each study are described: the Foucauldian genealogy of the Section 28 debates, the directed content analysis of British LGB Young Adult (YA) novels, and the thematic analysis of a study on teacher perceptions of the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's fiction.

Epistemology and Queer Theory

As discussed in the introductory chapter, this thesis was originally conceptualised to investigate reader-responses to LGBT+ children's literature but grew into a multifaceted study of Section 28 and its legacy in relation to that literature. It begins with a study of the political ideas and beliefs – 'clusters of meaning' (Freeden, 2006, p. 15) – about children, sexuality, and children's literature that enabled Section 28 to be passed into law. These political ideas or beliefs can be understood as ideology (Freeden, 2006), A fuller definition of ideology, particularly in relation to discourse, will be explored later in this thesis, but at this stage, the thesis can be understood as, broadly stated, a study of the ideologies – the patterns of thought – that enabled Section 28 and, further, how those ideas have been either resisted or reproduced and circulated in society culturally and educationally.

As Leader-Maynard noted (2013), any study of ideology is necessarily interdisciplinary. In such studies, the research question often 'require[s] multiple

methods that adequately reflect this complexity' (Newman et al., 2003, p. 168). The methods in this thesis were thus adopted with the understanding that it would be beneficial to draw on the insights and perspectives of multiple disciplines in these investigations, namely, the fields of children's literature, education, and law to achieve the aims discussed in the previous chapters. The benefits of this interdisciplinary approach are the added and integrated layers of perspectives that were synthesised for an understanding deeper and more nuanced than any that might be yielded by a mono- or even dual-discipline approach.

Such research can be conducted from many different epistemological perspectives (i.e., the underlying values concerning the nature of knowledge and how one is able to create and acquire new knowledge). Positivism, for example, 'assumes a straightforward relationship between the world and our perceptions of it', and a research approach from that perspective would seek to observe the world by obtaining 'objective' or 'unbiased' data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 29). In other words, the foundation of positivism is the existence of one 'truth' that a detached, value-free researcher can reveal through 'neutral' scientific methods. In comparison, constructionism questions the understanding of knowledge as an objective reflection of truth and the idea that there is one monolithic truth; instead, knowledge is understood as being situated in social and cultural contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and a qualitative approach adopting that view would focus on how people make sense of the world around them. As these examples demonstrate, paradigms are assumptions about the nature of data and what it represents about reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a result, the particular paradigm that guides the research will influence the methodological methods.

Poststructuralism

The epistemology framing of this thesis is poststructuralism, which is rooted in the view that reality is constructed and produced through language, representation, and other social processes (Braun & Clarke, 2013; see also Gergen, 1985). Fundamental to poststructuralism is Saussure's (1974) structural linguistics, his theorisation of language as a chain of signs (Weedon, 1997), and the subsequent application of his work to understanding cultural phenomena. The shift from structuralism to poststructuralism will now be discussed to better understand the epistemology that informed the design of each study comprising this thesis.

Structuralism, a French intellectual movement that began in the 1950s (Lundy et al., 2013), drew on Saussure's (1974) argument that each sign within a language is made up of the thing referred to (the signified) and the sound pattern – the psychological image or impression of a sound – that refers to it (the signifier). Crucially, signs are arbitrary in that there is no natural or essential connection between the signified and the signifier. The meaning of a sign is instead derived not from some intrinsic or essential meaning but from the sign's differences to all other signs; for example, 'whore' is not an intrinsic signifier but derives its meaning as being different to 'virgin' (Weedon, 1997). In this way, language is 'a self-contained whole' or 'system' (structure) of differences (Saussure, 1974, pp. 9, 10). Furthermore, while the signifier/signified relationship was arbitrary, it was also 'fixed' or 'immutable' (1974, p. 71; see also Weedon, 1997, p. 60).

These insights were subsequently drawn upon and extended by key theorists in the study of other phenomena. Lévi-Strauss (1963) argued that structural linguistics 'must welcome psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists eager to

learn from modern linguistics the road which leads to the empirical knowledge of social phenomena' (p. 31). In other words, he argued that the same Saussurean structural techniques applied to language could also be applied to the study of society to explain 'unapparent and unconscious' relationships; and analyses began examining the structural relationships underlying social institutions (Lundy et al., 2013, p. 73). Barthes, for example, subjected everyday objects to structural analysis, arguing that 'signs' encompassed not just relationships but everything with any meaning (Lundy et al., 2013, p. 75). With the extension of structuralist or Saussurean thinking to broader cultural phenomena, analyses began to shift away from 'controlled phonetic parameters' to how meaning is imbued (Lundy et al., 2013, p. 75; see also McHoul & Grace, 1993).

Eventually, structuralism came to be subjected to criticism. For example, although Barthes had himself engaged in structural analyses in his work, he came to question those who would 'see all the world's stories […] within a single structure' (Barthes, 1973/1974, p. 3). Criticism was also aimed at the structural notion of fixed meaning (Weedon, 1997), with theorists arguing that meaning is variable and contingent rather than fixed, and thus that the signifier (or text) is a site of potential conflict, contested assumptions, and, ultimately, power relations (Burr, 2015; Weedon, 1997). Derrida (1978) in particular critiqued the notion of a stable link between signified and signifier by arguing that a signifier can actually have a surplus of meaning, with no guarantee that any one particular meaning will be evoked. This argument shifted the focus to the social production of meaning. For Saussure, language existed as a system prior to its actual use, and he had regarded its use as purely an individual matter rather than a social one (Fairclough, 2001). But because

signification is always relational, structures can only consist of relational elements with no 'natural' center that limits the meaning behind significations (Derrida, 1978). Therefore, the speaker or writer (and thus the signifier) is not 'the source and guarantee of meaning' (Weedon, 1997, p. 159). In other words, in addition to there being no stable, harmonious, or essential meaning, there is actually a multiplicity of possible interpretations that are necessarily culturally and socially dependent (or, in Derridean terms, always deferred).

Poststructuralism thus called into question ideas of established meanings and unchanging, internally coherent systems (Rasiński, 2011) and, by extension, how those systems are produced, including the cultural and historical specificity of their production (Burr, 2015). As Gergen (1985) wrote, 'the terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people' (p. 267). In other words, there came to be an emphasis on deconstruction, or the examination of a structure's genealogy (Derrida, 1978). This focus arose, in part, from structuralism's emphasis on dichotomies or binaries: whereas all signs were understood only in terms of their difference to other signs, such as man/woman or culture/nature, poststructural thought intervened to ask how those effects are achieved (Weedon, 1997), thereby enlarging the analytical focus to not only the identification of underlying systems of social institutions, but also the ambiguities and gaps inherent in those systems (Crick, 2016). As we will see in the coming chapters, this thesis is concerned to investigate the ambiguities and gaps in the construction of children and sexuality in parliament, children's literature, and education.

Discourse and Ideology

This section defines 'discourse' and 'ideology', and discusses the relationship between those terms, as this may aid in better understanding the scope of this thesis. According to van Dijk (2016), 'ideology' can be understood as systems of belief that are shared by members of a collectivity or group, such as professions, churches, and political bodies. This definition refers not to just any shared set of ideas, but to fundamental or core beliefs that control and organise the group's social attitudes. For example, 'a racist ideology may control attitudes about immigration' and 'a feminist ideology may control attitudes about abortion' (van Dijk, 2006, p. 116). The power of ideology is found not only in its shaping of such beliefs, but in the projection of them as being 'universal and commonsensical', such that people draw upon them without thinking and thus unwittingly legitimate dominant or existing power relations (Fairclough, 2001, p. 27). This power of legitimation brings us to the concept of discourse, for it is through discourse that such power is exercised.

In particular, 'discourse' can be understood as the means through which ideology is 'expressed, acquired and reproduced' (van Dijk, 2006, p. 133). In other words, discourse is 'language as a form of social practice' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 26): it is constitutive in nature, shaping and defining beliefs rather than merely expressing or (re)presenting them. Gee (2015) referred to this as 'big D Discourse', or 'the ways in which language melds with bodies and things to create society and history' (Gee, 2015, p. 2). How does such a relationship between discourse and ideology operate? Discourses, in establishing and reproducing the meanings and concepts used to organise our experiences, constitute the very subjects of which they speak (Burr, 2015; Butler, 1990; Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 1976/1978). In other words,

subjectivity, like language, is not innate but socially produced (Weedon, 1997). Contrary to the structuralist view discussed earlier, language and thought cannot be separated but are mutually constituted (Burr, 2015), and discourses thus have implications for what we can say and think, shaping, in turn, how we interpret the world and who we are as subjects (Harcourt, 2007). Discourse functions ideologically when it operates to maintain unequal power relations (Fairclough, 2001, p. 27). This relationship between discourse and ideology is described as 'relations of domination' and the 'interplay of meaning and power' (Thompson, 1990, pp. 7, 9). In this thesis, the focus will include the interplay of meaning and power in particular discourses – legal/political, cultural, and educational – that has maintained or perpetuated dominate norms of sexuality and gender. In other words, it will examine how certain ideologies – those ideas that are deemed 'common sense about gender and sexuality' (N. Govender & Andrews, 2021, p. 88), such as heteronormativity – have been or are deployed specifically in relation to young people.

To accomplish such an analysis, Thompson's (1990) five general modes will be used to identify how ideology operates in a particular discourse. Those five modes are: legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation, and reification. 'Legitimation' refers to the representation of dominate relations as legitimate. The argument for legitimacy may stem from notions of it being rational, traditional, or universal. In other words, domination may be rationalised as the way things should be or always have been, or in the interests of all, and therefore must continue to be. 'Dissimulation' refers to power relations that are concealed or obscured in some way, and thus deflect attention. 'Unification' argues that relations of domination

form a collective unity, uniting individuals rather than separating them – for example, the way in which a particular language might be standardised as the national language or a flag used to symbolise national unity. 'Fragmentation' is the opposite: instead of unifying a collectivity, differences and divisions are emphasised, often by constructing an enemy that is then portrayed as threatening or harmful. Finally, 'reification' treats a particular state of affairs as being permanent or natural, an inevitable outcome rather than as a social construct (such as labour divisions based on gender being the result of physiological differences). As we will see, although particular methods are employed in the three studies comprising this thesis (as discussed below), Thompson's schema – and in particular the modes of legitimation and fragmentation – surface in those analyses to underscore how norms of sexuality and gender may operate more broadly in the discourse at issue.

Drawing on these understandings of discourse and ideology, we can see that a poststructural analytic is concerned with how individuals are constituted by the social world and its significations (Taylor & Ussher, 2001) and the ideologies embedded therein. It is evident that such an analytic has influenced other poststructural interrogations – for example, of gender (Butler, 1990) – intended to understand how certain values and meanings – or ideologies – have come to be legitimated within particular discursive frameworks. Jagose (1996) provided a succinct summary of poststructuralist links to the thinking of Althusser, who argued that people do not 'pre-exist' as subjects but instead are constituted by ideology (see also Althusser, 1970/1971); the Freudian theorisation of the unconscious, which disrupted the idea of subjectivity as coherent and stable; and the Lacanian argument that subjectivity, rather than being an essential property of a person, is instead

learned. Foucault in particular drew on poststructural principles to examine the institutional effects of discourse in constituting sexuality and, in doing so, conceptualised discourse as a system or body of knowledge rather than a linguistic system (McHoul & Grace, 1993; McNamara, 2012). This particular theorisation of discourse is central to Study 1 and will be discussed later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 4.

Attentiveness analytically to the shifting social constructions of subjects is aligned with the purposes of the studies comprising this thesis, each of which takes children's literature as its point of analytical entry. Study 1 undertakes a Foucauldian discourse analysis known as 'genealogy' to examine the parliamentary debates surrounding Section 28's enactment. It is an investigation of the political constructions of children, sexuality, and children's literature, the aim being to reveal the ideologies implicit in those constructions. Study 2 is a directed content analysis (DCA) of British LGB YA novels. It focuses on how children and sexuality are constituted by the authors, the purpose being to understand whether books consumed by young people are as depraved as the politicians made them out to be and whether the narratives resist or reproduce the ideologies revealed in Study 1. In other words, Study 2 looks at whether the political ideologies have found material existence in fiction for young people. Finally, study 3 is a thematic analysis (TA) of the views of eight educators on LGBT+ texts as pedagogical tools. To that end, B. Marshall's read-and-response method is adopted and adapted. The research questions and their methodology are summarised in Table 2, which shows the central research question and the related research questions that arose in the course of investigation.

Table 2

Research Questions, Methods, and Tools

Research Questions	Methods	Data-Collection Tools
Study 1: How were children, children's sexuality, and children's literature constituted in the 1986–1988 parliamentary debates surrounding the enactment of Section 28? What role did children's literature play in those debates?	Genealogy	Hansard transcripts of parliamentary debates
Study 2: How has the content of British LGB YA novels published after Section 28 reproduced or resisted those constructions? Is it as depraved as Parliamentarians claimed? Has the content changed in terms of its depictions of young people and sexual diversity?	DCA	British LGB YA fiction, as identified through database searches
Study 3: What are the views of current educators in Scotland on the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature?	TA	Participant responses to read-and-response study

As discussed below, each of the methods is consistent with a poststructuralist paradigm by centring language as the pertinent data for analysis. Furthermore, because these analyses are attentive to sexual diversity, they are aided by the use of queer theory and queer legal theory as analytical lenses, which will now be discussed.

Queer Theory and Queer Legal Theory

This thesis uses queer theory and queer legal theory as critical lenses through which to analyse how children and sexuality are constituted in the political, cultural, and educational contexts revealed in Studies 1, 2, and 3, respectively. It is not the intention to analyse the theories or offer new insights in relation to them, but instead to use the lenses to aid data interpretation. This section provides an overview of the key foundational literature relevant to queer theory, as chiefly represented by Foucault, Butler, and Sedgwick, and queer legal theory.

Queer theory, which emerged in the 1990s (Jagose, 1996), is not one particular method or framework but encompasses a range of critical practices that explore the relationships between sex, gender, and desire. According to Halperin (2000), the theory emerged in the 1990s as an attempt to move away from binary constructions of sexuality and gender. It is not intended to simply challenge heterosexuality with homosexuality, since that would only argue for replacing one restrictive category with another; instead, the theory constructs sexuality, gender, and even time as fluid and unstable categories. By examining the instability of categories, queer theory is a means to unsettle what we think we know about the subjects that those categories seek to contain. As an analytical strategy, it is calibrated to examining the normal and the deviant as constituted by dominant or hegemonic discourses (Blaise & Taylor, 2012).

The foundations of this theory are found in the works of Foucault, Butler, and Sedgwick, although it can also be traced back to structuralist and poststructuralist thought, as discussed previously. Foucault (1976/1978) showed how discourse has

been deployed to control sexuality since the 17th century, revealing that heterosexuality is not some inevitable, natural state or phenomenon but rather has been installed as the norm through discourse. He exposed, in other words, the artificiality of sexuality, which opened up possibilities of articulating alternative positions – what he called reverse discourses – that understand heterosexuality as no more the norm or natural than homosexuality. A queer approach to sexuality rejects the binary of hetero/homosexual as oppressive to individuals who locate themselves along the spectrum of sexual identities and expressions.

Building on Foucault's work, the locus of Butler's (1990) enquiry was the artificiality of gendered bodies. Butler extended Foucault's work on the contingent nature of sexuality by arguing that the body itself is cultural. She showed that gender, like sexuality, is artificial and socially constructed. In particular, Butler examined research in anthropology and psychiatry, such as the work of Lacan and Kristeva, to show that gender is actually relational and the product of a heterosexist framework. She challenged, for example, the notion of 'women' as a stable, universal identity and argued that it is instead the product of a system of control (the discourse of patriarchy) just as homosexuality is a product of a system of control (the discourse of heteronormativity). Her examination of drag performances, amongst other things, framed gender as performatively constituted and unstable. In other words, she argued that 'supposedly natural attributes of masculinity and femininity are the result of repetitions sedimenting over time' (Freeman, 2007, p. 161). A key insight is that, if sex is an anatomical fact but gender is socially constructed, then one is not bound up in the other and gender does not necessarily follow sex. In opposition to the hegemonic binary system that does tie one to the other, Butler suggested gender is

merely a cultural interpretation of sex, not an inevitable predisposition or identity. As de Beauvoir (1949/2011) suggested in *The Second Sex*, ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, woman’ (p. 295). Foucault might understand this framing as a reverse discourse and it indeed opened up new imaginings for understanding, experiencing, and constructing gender differently.

Foucault has also been developed by Sedgwick (1985), who used the notion of an ‘erotic triangle’ to argue that the bond between two fictional male rivals in English literature was as intense as their bond to the female object desired by them both. The presence of a female between the two rivals gave a socially acceptable veneer to their own bond with each other. English literature, Sedgwick argued, has perpetuated this erotic trainable so as to disrupt the potential of homosexuality. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick widened her critical scope to argue that the existence of heterosexuality depends on the existence of a subordinated homosexuality – in other words, that sexuality is constructed relationally. This work was not a question of whether categories have meaning but how they have any meaning at all. Sedgwick linked the hetero/homosexual categories with other universal definitions and binaries, such as private/public, knowledge/ignorance, and new/old, showing that homosexuality is not just something which affects a small portion of the population, but is the foundation of modern culture in the West. Furthermore, each of these binaries is conceptually intertwined and mutually dependent – one does not exist without the other. Ignorance, for example, sets the terms of knowledge, just as conceptions of homosexuality set the terms for heterosexuality. Whereas Butler argued that sexuality and gender are performative, Sedgwick (1990) was interested in a specifically sexuality-based framework and, in

particular, what she perceived as an impasse 'between "essentialist" and "constructivist" understandings of homosexuality' (p. 91) Her work argued for a deeper analysis of the production of sexuality, key to which was the understanding that essentialist understandings of sexuality (that gay people, for example, are 'born this way') reconstitutes binary categories (e.g., gay/not gay, normal/queer) that ignore the mutually-constitutive relationship between hetero/homosexuality.

These canonical works have continued to be developed in queer theory. Halperin (2000), for example, has argued that the core issue for historical analyses of sexuality is that they begin with a modern conception of 'homosexuality'. He argued there is no such thing as a single history of male homosexuality but instead four different categories pertaining to how we now define homosexuality, each having separate but interrelated histories. These four 'prehomosexual models' are effeminacy, pederasty or active sodomy (the desire to penetrate and to be penetrated), friendship or male love, and passivity or inversion (which is about gender – i.e., a wholesale rejection of masculinity – rather than sexual acts) (Halperin, 2000, pp. 92–103).

Other subsequent developments have included Edelman (2004), Freeman (2007), and Halberstam (2005). Halberstam (2005) described 'queer time' or the queering of heteronormative perceptions of time. Higher suicide rates, for example, shorten the lives of many LGBT+ people, while 'queer subcultures' produce 'alternative temporalities' in which LGBT+ people imagine futures outside the 'paradigmatic markers of life experience - namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death' (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2). In other words, queer time, like sexuality and gender, is fluid and often self-defined. But this more recent work, while important, is

not as directly relevant to the aims of this thesis than the earlier foundational arguments of Foucault, Butler, and Sedgwick. The parliamentary debates analysed in Study 1, for example, dealt very much with the modern conception of homosexuality rather than the models identified by Halperin. Studies 2 and 3 both draw on Study 1 to investigate the legacy of Section 28 in cultural and educational contexts. They aim to understand how children are constructed in those contexts as compared to the political debates, where understandings of queer time are less relevant. Rather, this thesis is informed by the foundational or seminal work that identifies sexuality and gender as socially constructed.

Queer theory has also been attentive to thinking about childhood and tends to be concerned less with actual children than with 'the child' as an image and what it signifies. Edelman (2004) argued, for example, that the child is emblematic of the future and foundational to the social order or politics intended to transmit that future. In that context, queer people, perceived as 'a threat to children—either because they are accused of recruitment tactics, sexual abuse, or not being able to have children' (Cobb, 2005, p. 123), are positioned in opposition to that futurity. Rather than argue how queer people are not actually a threat (for example, that some do have children), Edelman called for embracing the stagnant present (recalling Halberstam's concept of queer time, above), challenging the idea that politics should be oriented to the future.

Following Edelman, two other key volumes have considered queer theory and children: *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (Bruhm & Hurley, 2004) and *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Stockton, 2009). In the first volume, *Curiouser* (a title drawn from Lewis Carroll's *Alice*), Sedgwick,

Halberstam, and other notable queer theorists considered cultural investments in the perceived innocence of children, often highlighting in particular the paradoxical presumption that children are both asexual and heterosexual. The essays tracked how childhood is marked by sexuality rather than innocence, which resonates with Stockton's (2009) argument in the second volume, *The Queer Child*, that all children are queer, either because they have same-sex desires or are 'just plain strange' (p. 1). Even the Romantic child (discussed previously) was queer by virtue of being estranged from adult experience. Through analyses of books and films, Stockton demonstrated that although children and their development are controlled and delayed by adults – being unable to 'advance to adulthood until we [adults] say it's time' – they nevertheless find ways to grow, if not up in the future, then 'sideways' in the present (Stockton, 2009, pp. 4, 6; see also Stockton, 2004). In response to notions of childhood innocence, the argument is made that children's innocence never really existed.

As these examples show, queer theory has foregrounded interrogations of dominant conceptualisations not only of childhood (Ariès, 1960/1962), but also of sexuality, innocence, and queerness itself in relation to children. Attuned to the question of Section 28's legacy, this thesis is underwritten by similar concerns regarding manifestations of children and sexuality in different contexts, but it is concerned with the potential impact of those shifting boundaries on the lives of young LGBT+ people rather than how conceptualisations of childhood might inform queer theory. There is the examination in Study 2, for example, of the implicit messages young LGBT+ people are exposed to in fictional texts intended to represent them and their experiences, as well as Study 3's analysis of how young

people can be supported through pedagogy inclusive of LGBT+ perspectives and children's literature. These aims are motivated by the desire to understand what certain political, cultural, and educational institutions tell us about young people as actual human beings rather than as rhetorical objects.

One criticism of queer theory generally is that, in interrogating identity categories, there is the potential to deny difference altogether. As K. Browne and Nash (2010) highlighted, resisting stable notions of the subject has been critiqued by many as 'undercut[ing] the ground on which political activism is built' (p. 6). In other words, if fixed identity is the basis of political power, then the argument that identity and categories of identity are not stable results in diminished, and perhaps even destroyed, collective political power. But the adoption of queer theory as a lens in this thesis is not intended to question or deny the existence of children and young people as political subjects, but to understand how they and the subject of sexuality have been constituted politically, culturally, and educationally. In other words, it is not the existence of LGBT+ identities or categories that is central to the analyses but *how* those subjects are constructed in relation to children and children's literature, which in turn is intended to reveal the extent to which Section 28 has lingering effects today.

This brings us to another criticism of queer theory in relation to discourse analysis and cultural critique, which is that such work is far removed 'from the blood, bricks and mortar of everyday life' and does not engage with LGBT+ people themselves or their struggles (K. Browne & Nash, 2010, p. 6). As discussed in the introduction chapter, it was originally intended that this work would indeed engage with LGBT+ young people and their reader responses to a YA novel, but efforts to

identify participants for a focus group were unsuccessful. It does not follow, however, that this thesis has no relevance to LGBT+ young people's lived experiences, as confirmed by the research's implications. The implications are discussed in the final chapter, but the research forms, for example, the foundation for future work that justifies and calls for involving young people and suggestions are made in reference to policies that directly impact students. Furthermore, young people today may 'disdain sexual categories' (Savin-Williams, 2005, p. 222) and reject divisions of desire as central to their own identities (Coleman-Fountain, 2014). As Dilley (2010) argued, while there is the desire amongst some young people to 'recognize and acknowledge their non-heterosexual feelings, experiences, and social connections as not heterosexual', there is also the wish to 'consciously refute […] the primacy of those aspects of their identity in their overall sense of self' (p. 191). These findings suggest that sexual identities may have less salience to the advancement of the rights of those who experience sexual diversity but refuse to define their experience or interpret it as a core part of their identity. If that is the case, then research interrogating how sexual difference and young people are constituted – as this thesis does – seems particularly relevant to expose constructions that may in fact be at odds with young people's lived experiences and their personal interpretations of desire.

Despite these criticisms, queer theory remains a productive lens for the aims of this thesis, which includes examining constructions of children and sexuality in relation to the legacy of Section 28. In particular, the theory

> is primarily concerned with unmaking and undoing of the subject, often via genealogical approaches, considering the various social and contextual

elements that have contributed to the categorisation of the subject in the first instance. (McCann, 2016, p. 232)

Given this, the theory is a particularly apt approach for the genealogical analysis of the Section 28 parliamentary debates presented in Study 1. Before considering that study further, however, it is important, given the LGBT+ legal reforms that contextualise this thesis, to first consider queer theory specifically as it relates to legal frameworks – an approach known as queer legal theory (QLT).

As the name might imply, QLT, first coined by Stychin (1995), takes the concerns of queer theory and applies them to analyses of the law. Drawing on the foundations of queer theory (as discussed above), QLT is concerned in particular with norms of gender and sexuality as constructed in and by legal frameworks. As Thomas (2019) argued, the theory is a call 'to attend to the emergence, or better yet, the *institution* of [sexual and gender] identities in and through government and the art of governing' (p. 15). In other words, QLT is alert to how the law regulates normative sexuality and gender, including the legal conflation of sex, gender, and sexuality, and foregrounds an awareness that such a conflation is 'socially contrived' (i.e., constructed) rather than 'natural' or essential (Valdes, 1995, p. 366–367). It thus emphasises the ways in which laws and legal reforms 'feed back into LGBT+ identity' (Adler, 2018, p. 8) and 'voices and pursues the interests of sexual minorities as its particular contribution toward the end of sex/gender subordination' (Valdes, 1995, p. 349). Such emphases align QLT with the aims of this thesis, discussed previously.

Furthermore, focusing on how the law regulates and produces LGBT+ identity, or what we might call legal discourses of identity, aligns not only with the

aims of this thesis but its broader poststructural framing as well, making it a productive lens for the analyses that will be presented in the following chapters. Indeed, as a means 'to study law and legal power' (Thomas, 2019, p. 14), QLT is a particularly apt lens in Study 1's investigation of the Section 28 parliamentary debates, the legislation's normative legal constructions in relation to young people's sexuality, and the ways in which Parliamentarians sought to define 'normal' and 'deviant' sexuality, childhood, and literature. Furthermore, given the LGBT+ legal reforms that provide a contextual backdrop for Study 2's analysis of the corpus of LGB YA novels, it also provides a means for engaging with how those reforms relate to certain fictional constructions of young people, sexuality, and gender.

Having discussed the foundations of the theoretical frameworks that inform this thesis, the following section presents an overview of each of the studies and their methods.

Study 1: Genealogical Analysis of the Parliamentary Debates

Study 1 is a genealogical analysis, as informed by Carabine (2001), of the Section 28 parliamentary debates. The debates, which took place in the House of Commons and House of Lords from 1986–1988, were formal discussions and controlled exchanges of opinion 'intended to facilitate the [particular] chamber's informed collective decision-making on specific issues' (Ilie, 2015, p. 4). Stated more particularly, the debates

> are an opportunity for MPs and Lords to discuss government policy, proposed new laws and current issues. It allows MPs to voice the concerns and interests

> of their constituents, and Members of the House of Lords can speak about issues brought to their attention by the public. (U.K. Parliament, n.d.-a)

Debates are designed to reach an informed decision on a subject, often expressed in a vote.

Most parliaments have established an online presence, making their ‘proceedings more transparent and subject to public scrutiny’ with searchable databases containing ‘committee reports, records, hearings, votes, and other parliamentary documents’ (Ilie, 2015, p. 2). In the U.K., the proceedings are recorded and the transcripts are then made available via the Hansard website (https://hansard.parliament.uk). The website contains a Google-like search bar that allows a user to search dates, word terms, and either or both houses. Through this tool, the transcripts relevant to each stage of Section 28’s movements through parliament were identified and accessed by searching the particular years (1986–1988) and ‘Local Government Bill’. For the committee stage, however, transcripts are only maintained online from 1997 onward, which required obtaining a paper copy of the committee for Wilshire’s Bill, held in 1987, through the University of Strathclyde’s library. Confirmation that the transcripts for all relevant debates had been obtained was done through the transcripts themselves: the second reading stated in the transcript’s opening that it was the second reading, the third reading stated in its opening that it was the third reading, and so on, such that receipt of transcripts for all stages could be verified. As stated previously, the compilation included the debates held on the Earl of Halsbury’s Bill, the first iteration of Section 28. Even though that Bill was unsuccessful, its debates still contained data relevant to the research aims (i.e., to understanding the political beliefs that constituted children,

sexuality, and children's literature) and they thus comprised an essential part of the analysis in Study 1.

Approach to Data Analysis: Genealogy

A number of methods were available for analysing the transcripts as data. As 'democratically constituted forums for political deliberation, problem-solving, and decision-making' (Ilie, 2015, p. 1), parliaments are institutions of language and interaction, and are particularly well-suited to a range of methods under critical discourse analysis (CDA). As van Dijk (2013) noted, 'CDA is *not a method of critical discourse analysis*', but a methodologically diverse field of study (as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 3). It is a label for methods that examine text and talk and there are many such methods. Other researchers have, for example, studied parliamentary debates using quantitative, corpus-based methods, such as Baker's (2004) study of the 1998–2000 House of Lords debates on the age of consent, which relied on a corpus-based keyword analysis (see also Love & Baker, 2015); and Atkinson's (2011) analysis of a 2005 speech made in the Spanish parliament using a combination of Wodak's socio-historical method and van Dijk's socio-cognitive orientation.

For Study 1, genealogy was deemed the best method because of its emphasis not only on the relationships between language and power but also the contingent nature of subjects. Contingent in this sense refers to the nature of certain forces as being true by virtue of how things have come to be rather than as a result of logical necessity. In other words, genealogy seeks not to uncover some hidden 'true' meaning but is instead 'an historical critique that traces the forgotten origins of our

present' (Clifford, 2018, p. 3) and asks how certain hegemonic 'truths' have been produced and sustained. What counts as 'truth' is a function of power (for example, the power invested in scientific disciplines) and truth then fortifies that power (Feder, 2007, p. 34) – a mutually constitutive process of circular reinforcement. This process solidifies knowledge and has powerful effects by determining the type of knowledge that counts as legitimate. The boundaries of how and what can be said define a particular discourse and determine what is established or not established as 'truth' or norms within that discourse. Similar to the definition of 'discourse' discussed previously in this thesis, Carabine (2001) defined discourse not only as the way in which a topic is spoken of but as being itself constitutive. In other words, discourse constructs a particular version of a subject, and this version is defined and established as the 'truth' at particular moments. In other words, discourse – the recognised and thus legitimised ways of speaking about subjects – constitutes norms and hegemonic knowledge and is thus the means through which ideology is deployed, as discussed previously. This knowledge, in turn, delimits what can be said about the subjects. This is the intimate relationship of power and knowledge, which Foucault (1976/1978) signified as 'power/knowledge', discussed further in Chapter 4.

Genealogy is a method for examining and deconstructing the discursive process. It traces the history of an issue or topic by examining the discourses about it at a particular time (Carabine, 2001). In doing so, it problematises what would otherwise seem to be self-evident or natural. It is this emphasis on understanding how subjects are constituted by discourse that led to the conclusion that genealogy is the best method for Study 1's aims of revealing and examining the political

constitution of children, children's literature, and sexuality. Study 1 is therefore concerned with the discourses about these subjects that were deployed by politicians to garner support for Section 28.

There are criticisms of genealogy. As van Dijk (2006) argued, 'theoretically we need both intentions and interpretations as part of ideological communication' to be able to explain ideological interactions (p. 128). In other words, interpretation must also include a consideration of the intentions behind the discourse being studied. This limitation is not an issue in the analysis of the Section 28 debates given that proponents of that law had the evident intention of drumming up support for the legislation. Thus, while the intentions behind very specific word choices themselves are perhaps not as readily discernible, one can be certain that the goal of the political speech was to state a case in favour of the legislation. Another risk is one of 'overinterpretation' and the potential to read ideologies into what are actually only passive words and sentences. This risk is minimised in Study 1 by ensuring the data and findings are contextualised rather than described in isolation (van Dijk, 2006).

One might also criticise Carabine's guide (discussed below) to genealogy as the very sort of prescription or imposition of a rigid methodology opposed by Foucault. As Foucault himself explained it: 'I don't construct a general method of definitive value for myself or for others. What I write does not prescribe anything, neither to myself nor to others' (Foucault, 1981/1991, p. 29). However, the actual methods he adopted would not be particularly new to any researcher:

> In the course of my works, I utilize methods that are part of the classic repertory: demonstration, proof by means of historical documentation, quoting other texts, referral to authoritative comments, the relationship

> between ideas and facts, the proposal of explanatory patterns, etc. There's nothing original in that. (Foucault, 1981/1991, pp. 32–33)

Carabine's approach, then, is consistent with Foucault's own critical inquiry, which was to use 'classic' or existing methods to examine discourse – methods which are adopted in this thesis. Foucault (1980) said that 'if one or two of these "gadgets" of approach or method that I've tried to employ [...] can be of service to you, then I shall be delighted' (p. 65). Carabine offers just such a toolbox of methods for examining the fields of power relations, including resistance, in discourse.

Carabine's Approach to Genealogy

Carabine's (2001) approach identifies 11 steps to guide the application of Foucauldian genealogy: (1) select the topic; (2) know your data; (3) identify themes; (4) look for evidence of inter-relationships between discourses; (5) identify the discourse strategies and techniques; (6) look for absences and silences; (7) look for resistances and counter-discourses; (8) identify the effects of the discourse; (9) outline the background of the issue: (10) contextualise the material in the power/knowledge networks of the period; and (11) identify the limitations of the research, data, and sources. The first step was, unsurprisingly, the easiest given that the topic – how the discourses of the parliamentary debates constituted children, children's literature, and sexuality – had already been selected.

The second step was to become familiar with the data, the Hansard transcripts. This was an iterative process of reading and rereading the transcripts and taking notes, while the third step focused on categorising that data by identifying themes that captured the content of the data. 'Theme' in this context refers to a

coherent integration of disparate pieces of data (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). In other words, themes capture and synthesise the latent content or meanings of textual data (as opposed to only describing the surface-level, apparent content). Initial themes in Study 1 included ‘children’; ‘children’s reading materials’; ‘sexuality’; ‘education’; and ‘family life’. This stage was also an iterative process to ensure the themes captured the ‘essence’ of the data and determine whether the themes should be collapsed, expanded, or discarded altogether so that they remain relevant to the meaning of the data and the research question.

The fourth step focused on the inter-relationships between discourses – that is, between the themes identified earlier. This step thus involved asking how the themes inform one another. For Study 1, this question asks specifically what ideas about children and sexuality influenced certain political ideas about children’s reading materials and education. Additionally, how did the belief that children are latently homosexual influence politicians’ fears about literature and its ability to activate that latency? These were the interrelationships on which the fourth step focused, while the fifth step was to identify the discursive strategies and techniques. This step involved analysing the data beyond its apparent, surface-level meanings to understand the latent content *in relation to* other discourses or themes, such that the analysis in Study 1 asks how the political discourses of children, sexuality, and children’s literature have all informed one another.

The sixth step involved looking for absences and silences by examining the discourse for what was *not* included. For example, what topics or concepts did politicians not discuss? What was merely implied instead of explicitly stated? Whose voices were centred in the debates and whose were altogether absent? In other words,

whose knowledge was considered important and whose knowledge was wholly disregarded? And what evidence was considered and what evidence was missing? These questions exemplify the focus of this step, while the seventh step was to consider counter-discourses and resistances. In what way were some of the political beliefs resisted in the debates, and what does that resistance reveal? In this case, it often revealed the absence of evidence supporting many of the politicians' claims, an absence made clear by politicians who called for that very evidence. As discussed in the literature review, this lack was, ultimately, not dispositive.

The eighth step, identifying the effects of the discourse, recalls the work of other researchers on Section 28's material effects (e.g., Weeks, 2016). For this study, however, the focus was on the legacy of that law and how it has been resisted or recirculated in the content and pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. Such matters are the subjects of the subsequent two studies in this thesis, as discussed below. The ninth and tenth steps, outlining the background of the issue and contextualising the power/knowledge networks of the period, were accomplished by considering the existing literature on Section 28 in Chapter 2 and situating this study within the socio-political context of the legislation, including the New Right and British society and politics in the 1980s. The final step, which was to consider the limitations of this study, were considered as part of the study's design and are discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Systematically organising the data in the manner that has been described revealed key discursive strategies deployed by politicians in the parliamentary debates, strategies which are relevant to the research questions (namely, the legacy of Section 28). This process of analysis was deemed complete when further analysis led

to no further new findings. As Jäger and Maier (2016) concluded, saturation in discourse analysis is achieved by continuing to analyse materials until arguments begin to repeat themselves. In this study, saturation was achieved when the data supported no new discursive strategies about children, sexuality, and children's literature.

Study 2: British LGB YA Novels After Section 28

To understand how the ideologies exposed and examined in Study 1 have been resisted or reproduced in fiction for young people, two further studies were designed and undertaken for this thesis. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Section 28 was sparked in part by a picture book, and other children's texts played a key role in the debates. Given that this role had not yet been considered by researchers, the research question as to whether and how children's literature published after the legislation's enactment has resisted, or reproduced and transmitted for popular consumption, the political constructions of children and sexuality that enabled the law. In other words, how might the political ideas underpinning Section 28 have found material existence in literature for the young?

Additionally, as discussed, some educators believed Section 28 had prohibited what they could teach young people. This led to the question of whether authors – those who produced very the sort of literature that sparked the law – made similar assumptions about what they could or could not write for young people. The second study was designed to investigate these questions through a DCA of British YA fiction with lesbian and gay content published after Section 28. The investigation focused in particular on what how that literature constitutes children and sexuality. It

then compares those findings to the political beliefs about children, children's literature, and sexuality evident in the findings of Study 1. This investigation also considers whether the literature was in fact as depraved as politicians made it out to be in the debates. The findings support the argument that the literature has indeed resisted, even fragmented, those ideologies, exposing, in turn, a sea change in British society's attitude towards sexual diversity amongst young people.

The Data Collection Process: Identifying the Corpus

Study 2 examines British LGB YA literature published after Section 28 was enacted and the themes made evident through a directed content analysis of the corpus. It is useful to consider first what is meant by 'published after Section 28' means before considering further the details of how the corpus came to be defined. As we will see, Study 1 takes a closer look at the content of the key children's texts used by politicians to justify the legislation. Since Section 28 was debated from 1986–1988, those texts are primarily from the 1980s, and considering their content provides insight into the kinds of stories about non-heterosexual published for children during that decade. But looking at children's books from the 1980s gave rise to the question of what non-heterosexual children's books looked like in the years following the legislation, beginning with the 1990s and moving into the 2000s. Investigating that content in relation to the Section 28 constructions of children and sexuality became the primary aim of Study 2.

As is discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, the number of British children's books with non-heterosexual content has slowly increased over the years, with substantial growth apparent in just the past few years alone, providing a wide range of reading.

However, to ensure that there was scope within one chapter of this thesis to investigate British LGBT+ fiction for young people, it became necessary to narrow the boundaries of the corpus. A more manageable corpus emerges if one accounts for two factors stemming from 2014/2015. First, arguably the most recent significant LGBT+ legal reform in the U.K. was the enactment of same-sex marriage legislation in Scotland in 2014. Second, at around that same time, YA novels in the U.K. began to reflect the multiplicity and heterogeneity of LGBT+ identities (see Corbett, 2020, on the increasing number of identities, particularly trans but also nonbinary and genderqueer, and intersections of race, in YA fiction from ca. 2015–2020). These two factors provide an endcap to the corpus. In addition to mapping or aligning the novels with key legal reforms (beginning with Aidan Chambers's (1999/2007) *Postcards From No Man's Land* and the *Sterling* decision), the Section 28 debates were focused on heterosexual, gay, and (to a lesser extent) lesbian identities, with no discussion of other sexualities or genders. Therefore, the focus on YA novels with primarily lesbian or gay content speaks most directly to the patterns of thinking about sexuality that circulated in the debates. The scope of the corpus is not intended to suggest a hierarchical status of gay and lesbian identities above other gender and sexual identities amongst young people, but the corpus is productive for measuring the cultural legacy of Section 28 while also ensuring that the number of texts can be analysed sufficiently in this thesis.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there are 16 key texts in particular (identified in Tables 1 and 3), that provide many insights into what non-heterosexual British children's literature actually says about young people and sexuality. The primary aim of investigating the novels is to understand how the fictional portrayals or

representations of children and sexuality speak to the discursive themes identified in Study 1 and to further understand how the texts either resist or reproduce the patterns of thought that enabled Section 28.

The corpus includes a range of novels rather than just a few texts. As Jäger and Maier (2016) noted, in studies of discourse and power – this thesis is inherently about discourse and power given that it is premised on discourse and power as constituted in the parliamentary debates – the key data are not comprised of one single text but the repetition of statements *across* texts. A 'single text has minimal effects that are hardly noticeable and almost impossible to improve. In contrast, a discourse, with its recurring contents, symbols and strategies, leads to the emergence and solidification of knowledge and therefore has sustained effects' (Jäger & Maier, 2016, p. 118). Accordingly, 16 texts were selected to expose the 'sustained' discourse constituting children and sexuality in young people's fiction and how that discourse has reproduced or resisted the Section 28 ideologies.

The corpus was selected using purposive judgement or relevance sampling. This method is the most appropriate because it allows for the researcher to decide what texts should be included in the sample (Neuendorf, 2002). What is appropriate, and what therefore comprises the sample of texts in this thesis, 'is defined by the analytical problem at hand' (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 118). In this study, the analytical problem or focus is the literary representation of children and sexuality in children's literature, making a number of factors relevant to the identification of specific texts. Bean et al. (2013) has suggested that a corpus should include 'authentic selections that realistically capture teen coming-of-age dilemmas and problems' (p. 100). The corpus for Study 2 is therefore comprised of 'realist' texts (and contemporary, given

the range of years under analysis) rather than genres such as science fiction and fantasy. This selection is based on the premise that realist texts would speak most directly to and about LGBT+ young people's experiences in contemporary society. In other words, the focus is on fiction 'that goes to the heart of adolescent life experiences and continues to mirror the particular social context of the time' (Bean et al., 2013, p. 100). This focus resulted in excluding from the corpus such texts as *Love in Revolution*, a historical fiction novel by B. R. Collins (2013); *Black Rabbit Summer*, a murder mystery by Kevin Brooks (2009); and the paranormal tale of *Vampires, A Very Peculiar History* by Fiona Macdonald (2010). As stated, the purpose of such exclusions was to avoid books that may have, through their setting or plot, have a less direct connection to young people's lived experiences and thus less to reveal about the legacy of Section 28 in modern British society. This narrower scope also helped ensure that the textual data could be fully analysed in the space of a single results chapter. Finally, the decision was made to focus on British authors, as they are the writers most embedded within British society, as opposed to writers from other countries, where the impact of Section 28 would not be applicable. In sum, each book selected had to

- be tagged with 'juvenile', 'teen', 'Young Adult', or similar labels by publishers or retailers;
- be written by a British author; [3]
- contain non-heterosexual content;

[3] This excludes texts by authors who are not British, but which are nevertheless set in the U.K., such as *What I Was*, which is set in England but by American writer Meg Rosoff.

- portray a protagonist under the age of 18;[4]
- have been published after 1988;
- have a contemporary setting;
- be written in English; and
- be easily available in print or as an e-text.

This list of criteria guided the corpus development.

With the criteria having been identified, the next step was to execute database searches to identify matching texts. The catalogue of the National Library of Scotland (NLS) was searched first because it is a legal deposit library, meaning that it contains copies of all books published in the U.K. To locate relevant books in the NLS database, the following search terms were entered:

> Subject = Trans OR homosexual* OR lesbian OR gay OR LGBT* OR bisexual
>
> And
>
> Subject = Juvenile OR "young adult"

As discussed previously, the results were filtered to include only books (as opposed to other types of media contained in the database) published up to and including the year 2014. This returned 152 results. There was not an option to filter those results by country, so each entry was reviewed individually to identify those written by British authors.

Searches of other databases were also conducted to ensure texts were not inadvertently missed. For WorldCat, the same search terms and years as above were

[4] What defines YA fiction is debatable and the age of 18 is not necessarily a strict cut-off point in defining that category of texts; however, I decided to align my criteria with legal definitions of children which, notwithstanding certain exceptions, are ages 18 and under.

entered, and the tags ‘Juvenile’, ‘Fiction’, and ‘English’ – all options available from that database’s menu – were selected. Although ‘English’ was selected, other languages were returned in the results. Selecting ‘English’ on the menu alongside the results rectified this issue. These actions produced 852 results. The likely reason many more results were produced than in the NLS search is that WorldCat compiles texts from many different countries, whereas the NLS is focused on the U.K. The WorldCat catalogue does not offer the option to filter each book by the author’s country, so each entry was individually reviewed to ascertain whether there were any additional relevant texts not identified through the NLS search.

Finally, secondary sources were also consulted for their lists of LGBT+ YA novels as compiled by other researchers and writers. Those sources included studies of children’s literature by B. J. Epstein (2013), Town (2017), and Jenkins and Cart (2018), as well as both the BookTrust and the Scottish BookTrust, organisations that promote reading and literacy. In total, 16 novels were included in the corpus, as shown in Table 3. Although the focus was initially on LGBT+ content when identifying relevant texts, the YA novels for the pertinent time period included only LGB content.

Table 3

Corpus of British LGB YA Novels

Title	Author	Year
Postcards From No Man’s Land	Aidan Chambers	1999
The Shell House	Linda Newbery	2002
Living Upside Down	Kate Tym	2002
Girl, 15: Charming but Insane	Sue Limb	2004
Sugar Rush	Julie Burchill	2004
Pretty Things	Sarra Manning	2005
Kiss	Jacqueline Wilson	2007
My Side of the Story	Will Davis	2007

Title	Author	Year
The Traitor Game	B. R. Collins	2008
Boys Don't Cry	Malorie Blackman	2010
What's Up With Jody Barton?	Hayley Long	2012
Hollow Pike	Juno Dawson	2012
Undone	Cat Clarke	2013
Secret Lies	Amy Dunne	2013
Because of Her	K. E. Payne	2014
Solitaire	Alice Oseman	2014

Approach to Data Analysis: Directed Content Analysis

There are many methods for analysing children's literature. The *Routledge Companion to Children's Literature* (Rudd, 2010a) includes essays describing a number of different perspectives and lenses such as gender studies, colonialism, and narratology. These approaches, however, tend to be used only when giving a close reading to a small number of texts. In Rudge's (2004) narratological reading of children's fantasy texts, for example, five books are considered, which tends to be at the upper range with most articles focusing on one to three texts or a single author's body of work. In this study, however, 16 texts are examined for their broad trends in how the narratives constitute children and sexuality. This number of texts called for an analysis that would allow for a discussion of those trends along with moments of 'zooming in' for closer readings of passages that exemplify key analytical points as necessary. Given that this study would investigate how the ideologies revealed in Study 1 have been reproduced in literature, it was important for the chosen methodology to allow the analysis to be guided by those results. This factor was key in the decision to use the method of DCA, as informed by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), as its method.

As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain, a DCA allows for existing theory or research to focus the research question and provide initial codes or categories. Using

this approach allowed the discursive strategies identified in Study 1 to serve as a starting point for textual analysis in Study 2. The first step in this process was to read through the data and mark all passages which, on first impression, appeared to represent the codes or categories that were identified in the earlier study. Study 1 identified the discursive strategies around the political constructions of children, sexuality, and family life in the parliamentary debates. As a result, the initial codes or categories were simply 'representations of LGBT+ young people', 'sexuality', and 'family life'. The next step was to code passages appropriately, a process which typically results in new categories and subcategories. This step was an iterative exercise that involved marking relevant passages with the appropriate code. These results were then used to refine, extend, or enrich the existing theory or research.

As the narratives were read and tagged, there emerged new categories or themes that better captured the essence of the textual data. These themes were 'violence-centred narratives', 'young people as knowledgeable', and 'resisting labels'. The goal was to identify narrative patterns in relation to these themes and to understand how they were consistent with or resistant to the political constructions of children, homosexuality, and family life in the Section 28 debates. As stated previously, according to Jäger and Maier (2016), analysts should continue to analyse new materials until arguments begin to repeat themselves. Saturation was thus achieved when the entire corpus had been read and reread and no new themes emerged.

Study 3: The Pedagogical Potential of LGBT+ Children's Literature

Study 3 engaged teachers with LGBT+ children's literature to understand their views on whether such literature has pedagogical utility and, if so, what that utility encompasses. While Study 2 investigates the literature itself, Study 3 explores the views of current teachers, those who are part of the very profession that had faced a de facto prohibition against the teaching of LGBT+ issues and texts. As discussed, although Lee (2019) demonstrated that teachers who grew up under Section 28 have continued to experience silencing or chilling effects, one line of enquiry has remained open: What are the views of current educators in Scotland on the pedagogical potential or affordances of LGBT+ children's literature? In responding to that question, Study 3 investigates the extent to which the ideologies of Section 28 continue to influence current educators who work with children and literature every day. The argument is made that this study confirms Study 2's conclusion that there has been a sea change in society's attitudes toward sexual diversity amongst young people. Indeed, Study 3 demonstrates that the ideologies of Section 28 have not only been significantly eroded but are now considered quite harmful by teachers. This shift is underscored most prominently by the Scottish Government's decision to mandate a curriculum that is LGBT+ inclusive, a decision that was not opposed or disagreed with by any of the participants in Study 3.

The Data Collection Process: Marshall's Read-and-Response Method

Multiple methods were available for collecting data on teachers' views of LGBT+ children's literature and its pedagogical utility. A focus group was considered but the concern with this approach was centred on the unsuccessful

experience of attempting to form focus groups for an earlier study, as discussed in Chapter 1. Such a result suggested that forming another focus group, this time with teachers, would also likely be unsuccessful, and called for a different approach. Questionnaires and structured interviews were considered, but those methods rely on preprepared answers or lines of inquiry. A questionnaire poses standardised, structured questions to participants and thus requires the researcher to first know what the range of answers to a question might be (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016). Structured interviews offer more flexibility but would also have incurred additional costs (such as travel for the researcher and/or participants, parking charges, and so on).

The read-and-response method (B. Marshall, 2000) was deemed the best approach because it avoided preselected or predetermined responses while also minimising costs. In other words, it avoided predetermined answers and allowed for spontaneous responses by 'eschew[ing] right and wrong answers, appear[ing] open to negotiation and invit[ing] comment and analysis' (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 71). It was these sorts of spontaneous responses sought in Study 3. The method also seemed particularly apt for a study involving teachers, having first been developed in response to the need (as Marshall saw it) for a research tool that allows English teachers to use the skills they know best: analysing and critiquing a text. Additionally, in asking participants to cross out, comment, and otherwise indicate their views of the text, the method avoids another significant issue presented by other methods: the assumption that the meanings of words and concepts are the same for all participants (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016). For example, asking participants how often they have been victims of abuse assumes that 'abuse' has a single meaning that

all participants share and recognise. Furthermore, while open questions allow for more individualised and richer responses than closed questions, open questions nevertheless presume, by their very framing, what participants find important. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 2, it was important not to make any assumptions about LGBT+ children's books having utility, or what that utility might look like, as a point of departure from existing research. The read-and-response method was identified as a tool which was aligned with these concerns and offered the most flexible approach to engage educators with the very meanings of the words and concepts that are core to Study 1 (i.e., children, sexuality, and children's literature).

The method involves drafting different position statements or descriptions regarding the utility of LGBT+ children's literature. For the study on competing traditions of teaching English, 'an A5 booklet that contained the descriptions of five different philosophies of English teaching' was created (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 39). Those philosophies included what were identified as the 'key points of debate' in English teaching (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 56). These booklets were sent to preselected schools for teachers to highlight, annotate, and comment on in the margins. This data was then used to understand participants' 'implicit subject philosophies' (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 1) and to revise or further develop the descriptions. The design of Study 3 followed all but the last of these steps, as the aim was not to use participants' responses to finalise the descriptions, but how those responses constitute children, sexuality, and children's literature within the context of pedagogy.

Teacher Identity

Before discussing further how the read-and-response descriptions were developed, it is important to first consider teacher identity. 'Teacher identity' is a complex concept with many different definitions. It has been framed, for example, as encompassing a sense of belonging and capacity to perform in the teacher's professional world (Kiely & Askham, 2012) and as a process involving the development of 'personal and social identities' (Richardson & Watt, 2018, p. 39). But as Beijaard et al. (2004) noted, one common thread across the various definitions is the conceptualisation of teacher identity as a dynamic, ongoing process, such that identity is constantly evolving with no clear distinction between personal and professional identity. Bower (2020) argued that teacher identity is 'inherently linked to personal identity' (p. 113), and Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) similarly theorised teacher identity, describing it in terms of the self – 'self-understanding' and 'the more personal aspects of the individual self' – and of the knowledge and expertise required of a teacher (p. 179). Understanding teacher identity in these terms seems consistent with the 'unavoidable interrelationships between professional and personal identities' identified by C. Day et al. (2006, p. 603). It also echoes the poststructuralist view, discussed in Chapter 3, of identity as an ongoing social or relational process, given that the development of teacher identity is influenced by socio-cultural factors. In other words, such development occurs not entirely within the individual teacher but is closely linked to, and influenced by, the particular circumstances and social situations in which it occurs (Kelly, 2006).

Therefore, in this thesis, teacher identity refers to 'the way that teachers, both individually and collectively, view and understand themselves as teachers' (Mockler,

2011, p. 519), a departure from Marshall's method, which focused solely on professional identity (i.e., 'the different kinds of English teachers'), which she divided into five categories: Old Grammarians, Pragmatists, Liberals, Technicians, and Critical Dissenters, each representing key points of debate across 'a spectrum of opinions' (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 57). Her goal was to use the data obtained in the study to refine the descriptions to better capture the different kinds of teaching philosophies, and her research framework was thus deductive. For Study 2, however, the decision was made to adopt an inductive approach; rather than supply predefined labels, participants are asked to reflect upon, then name, the group with which they most identified. In other words, the aim is for teachers to construct their professional roles using their own words. Participants are also asked to identify their job title, school type, age, religion, sexuality, and gender identity. These details, coupled with the labels articulated by participants, offer a framework for thinking about the potential link between personal and professional life and certain opinions about the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. In other words, the question is posed as to whether participants' differing positions – personally and professionally – correspond to particular beliefs about LGBT+ literature. For example, do teachers who are religious or teach in a religious school believe LGBT+ literature has little pedagogical value (as we will see, this question was answered in the negative)? Do the beliefs relate in some way to the label they use to describe their teaching role? These questions, and how the data answers them, are considered in Chapter 6.

Developing the Descriptions

Given that I do not have a teaching background, the design of Study 3 draws on the descriptions Marshall developed for her own study. As stated, there were five descriptions intended to capture a range of English teaching philosophies. 'The Old Grammarians' described teachers interested primarily in the 'aesthetic experience' and imagination of literature (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 59) as well as the personal growth and fulfilment possible through reading literature. 'Pragmatists' used literature to effectively prepare students for exams. 'The Liberals' believed in the benefits of literature and were interested in building empathy in readers and promoting tolerance. 'The Technicians' were more interested in reading comprehension, the functional uses of language, and technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. 'Critical Dissenters', the final group, took 'literary and linguistic' approaches to texts, often challenging 'both their own positions and those of everybody else' while also questioning 'the canon' and suggesting alternate texts (B. Marshall, 2000, pp. 57–58). These descriptions encompassed a wide spectrum of views, ranging from teachers who focused on literature because of the practical skills it can be used to develop, to those who focused on the transformative effects of literature rather than (or in addition to) technical skills.

Reflecting this work, the design of Study 3 sought to develop a similar spectrum of views focused specifically on LGBT+ literature, such as teachers who consider the literature to have no place in the classroom, to those who see the literature as potentially transformative and of significant value to all students. With this broader scaffolding in place, existing research on LGBT+ children's literature in classrooms (considered in Chapter 2) was used to 'drill down' and develop the

descriptions in more detail, as well as identify potential key points of debate as Marshall had done. But whereas she had intended for participants to help refine her five descriptions, making the refined descriptions the end result of her work, the descriptions in this study were intended only to prompt debate and elicit responses. The aim is not to claim in the end that the descriptions do or do not accurately capture teaching philosophies; rather, the focus is on what participants themselves articulated about the subject and how discourse on the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature constitutes children and sexuality. In other words, given this analysis is inductive rather than deductive, the descriptions were the means to, rather than the end point of, the analysis.

Existing research on LGBT+ children's books in relation to pedagogy guided the drafting of the descriptions. This research has been discussed already in the literature review in Chapter 2; however, a brief recapitulation here of some of the key studies will help demonstrate the development of the descriptions. Thein's (2013) study of teachers' resistance to implementing LGBT+ books into classroom practices was particularly informative. Thein found that resistance on the part of educators often centres on notions of 'appropriateness'. In that study, there were a number of reasons identified behind the view that LGBT+ texts are not appropriate for classrooms, including the perceptions that: classrooms are not appropriate spaces for addressing queer texts and issues; LGBT+ issues require teaching about sex, which is a subject that should not be taught in schools; LGBT+ issues should be confined to health classes; and it is not for the teacher to decide whether to teach LGBT+ issues, so any changes or decisions in this regard should be made by school

leaders. All of these justifications centred on what teachers perceived to be appropriate for students *and* for the teachers themselves professionally.

The second theme was ‘displaced negative stance’, or the notion that others will protest if LGBT+ texts are taught (Thein, 2013, p. 173). This theme captured the desire to avoid the disapproval of others, including schools, parents, and communities. Another concern was that students might respond in homophobic or immature ways. Wanting to avoid disapproval links, logically, to a desire to avoid the repercussions of those reactions, which is made more explicit in the third theme, ‘force of facts’ or the belief that teaching LGBT+ texts would threaten one’s career or violate law and/or policy (Thein, 2013, p. 174). At the time of the study, federal and state laws in the U.S.A. prohibited equal treatment of LGBT+ people. Many of the teachers viewed this as a prohibition on teaching about LGBT+ issues. Even teachers who were sympathetic feared facing legal ramifications, echoing the effects that Section 28 has had on educators in the U.K.

The fourth theme was ‘reversal’, referring to teachers who justify their silence with the belief that teaching LGBT+ perspectives would actually cause students more harm than good. One teacher, for example, believed that such teaching would cause bullying or embarrassment, or otherwise ‘get out of hand’ (Thein, 2013, p. 175). Another teacher said that he would not know how to counter homophobia and that any attempts to do so would only ‘add fuel to the fire’ (Thein, 2013, p. 175). In other words, teachers feared harming students and being unable to counter that harm. Being unable to effectively counter harm overlaps with the final theme, ‘ability/preparedness.’ This identified teachers who did not believe they had the ability or knowledge to teach LGBT+ texts and issues. Some thought that such

teaching would come across as 'funny or embarrassing', while others said they lacked the skills to incorporate LGBT+ texts without offending students (Thein, 2013, p. 176). Similar to 'reversal', teachers were concerned with possible harm to students and not knowing how to counter that harm.

These findings are echoed throughout the literature. Consider, for example, Clark's (2010) work with preservice teachers, which involved asking participants 'how teachers should respond to students who express […] homophobic views' (p. 707). One participant 'seem[ed] to locate the responsibility for teaching tolerance in homes rather than schools' and said she would not attempt to change students' views because a teacher should be 'non-biased' and 'keep her personal beliefs to herself' (Clark, 2010, p. 707). Another said that 'teaching students to be accepting of homosexuality […] is not part of the normal realm of teaching' and that teachers should not 'correct students' thoughts about homosexuality' (Clark, 2010, p. 708). That stance on derogatory language was concerned not with combating homophobia but creating 'an inviting and safe classroom' (Clark, 2010, p. 708). Clark's participants also echoed concerns about lack of training and possible consequences if LGBT+ texts were taught. For example, one responded that raising those kinds of questions was not something she had seen in her fieldwork or learned in her teacher education programme (Clark, 2010, p. 710). Some teachers suggested that 'teacher education courses could take on [homophobia] more directly, particularly through texts' (Clark, 2010, p. 710), but others were concerned about 'getting into trouble' with administrators and parents who would not tolerate the teaching of LGBT+ texts and issues (Clark, 2010, p. 711).

Not all participants in these and similar studies were resistant to teaching against homophobia. One participant, for example, said that 'confronting bigotry in the classroom is not about pushing one's own agenda' but about addressing homophobic values (Clark, 2010, p. 708). Another student said that if she did not teach against homophobia, she would be 'letting society dictate [her] teaching methods' (Clark, 2010, p. 708). That same student, however, saw her choice as being a matter of deciding 'if finding and keeping a job is more important than being true to [her] own beliefs' (Clark, 2010, p. 709). This suggests she might, contrary to her statement, allow society to 'dictate' her teaching methods if it were the difference in keeping her job versus losing it. But what is key to understand in the context of Study 3 is that there exists a range of opinions on the pedagogical utility (or lack thereof) of LGBT+ perspectives and texts. It should be noted that the range of opinions on LGBT+ children's literature exists due not only to dominant ideologies about sexuality and gender (as defined earlier and discussed throughout this thesis) but also to certain social, cultural, and material constraints surrounding the individuals (including the teachers who responded in Study 3 in this thesis) who hold those opinions. Such constraints are evident in the studies discussed above, including, for example, certain laws or legal sanctions and concerns about possibly violating the law and what consequences teachers might experience as a result, such as job loss.

Study 3 is premised on five descriptions, each represented by a nominal letter from A to D, that draw upon the literature to describe teachers' views. Groups A and B are aligned with the more conservative end of the spectrum developed by Marshall for her study. Teachers in Group A believe that LGBT+ texts have no pedagogical

potential at all for a variety of reasons, each related to notions of inappropriateness or irrelevance. Teachers in Group B are similarly resistant due to the belief that others, both in and out of the classroom, will react negatively and that they (the teachers) are not properly trained to respond effectively. Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan (2013) connected a lack of training to the finding that few instructors of preservice teachers include lesbian and gay texts or discussions of sexual orientation in their classes. This effectively silences any discussion of homophobia and how it affects students, leaving teachers to continue seeing sexuality as a 'sensitive' issue that students, in their perceived innocence, should be 'protected' from (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2013, pp. 349–350). These notions of innocence and protection are reflected in Group B's description, and the views of both groups echo the responses of teachers in the existing literature, as discussed above and in Chapter 2.

Groups C and D describe teachers with a more moderate view and who are willing, albeit cautiously, to implement LGBT+ texts and perspectives into their classroom practices. Teachers in Group C believe that the texts, while not appropriate for all students, are appropriate for some. Clark and Blackburn (2009) focused on English teachers who used canonical works to explore gay and lesbian themes, books and picture books with gay and lesbian characters, and queer picture books to explore the topic of family. Despite these seemingly progressive efforts, the practices were found to have actually further normalised homophobia and empowered homophobic positions. For example, the texts 'were positioned in ways that privileged didactic purposes over pleasure or political action' which, as Clark and Blackburn (2009) argued, 'subtly reinforces homophobia and heteronormativity' (p. 27). For example, some teachers included LGBT+ texts only in units such as

‘Fear’ or ‘Survival’, while none presented the texts as possible mirrors (see Bishop, 1990) for their students or even just for pleasurable reading (Clark & Blackburn, 2009, pp. 27–28). The authors also suggested that some teachers believed their job was not ‘to challenge their homophobic, heterosexist students’ but to simply raise ‘the issue’ and make LGBT+ texts available (Clark & Blackburn, 2009, pp. 28, 29), as though the mere provision of such texts would ever be sufficient. Finally, teachers in this study all further positioned LGBT+ texts as nonnormative by presenting them in lessons only once during the school year or in a single day. These positions, and the limited classroom use of LGBT+ texts, are reflected in Group C.

Group D represents the views that there is value in LGBT+ texts in a variety of contexts and topics, and that teaching itself is not apolitical. The drafting of this group’s description relied on the argument of Clark and Blackburn (2009) that teaching is political and never value-free, and that texts can be used for a range of reasons: to counter homophobic positions, reflect students who identify as LGBT+ and show that they are not alone, and read for pleasure. Accordingly, Group D describes teachers who believe the utility of these texts goes beyond just lessons on homophobia – that is, they see those texts as literature that can be read for pleasure and included in lessons, such as those on family or immigration, that are not necessarily predicated on deficit constructions of LGBT+ identity.

Likewise, Group E includes teachers who, while having views similar to those of Group D, have stronger beliefs about the value of LGBT+ children’s literature as a pedagogical tool. In particular, they believe that the literature is such a valuable tool that an educator’s failure to make use of it actually harms students. This is the fifth and final description in the study.

A secondary aim of the study is to capture teachers' views on the Scottish Government's decision to embed LGBT+ inclusive lessons across the curriculum. To do this, each description include a statement on the government's decision. For example, Group C describes teachers who are open to using LGBT+ literature but only for some students, believing that others, even teachers themselves, should be able to opt out of the mandated lessons. As the results discussed in Chapter 6 demonstrate, this position is rejected by all participants.

With the descriptions in place, their remained the question of how best to deliver the study. While Marshall produced a printed booklet on A5 sized paper, the decision was made for Study 3 to be made available electronically via Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com) through an anonymous link. The reason for this departure from Marshall's design was the expectation that an electronic method would be more readily accessible to a wider pool of potential participants, resulting in more responses. Furthermore, an electronic copy not only allowed participants to use assistive reading technology (such as using text-to-speech readers or enlarging the font for increased visibility), but it also has the benefit of having eliminated the costs of printing and prepaid postage that would have been required with the use of hard copies. In the end, eight teachers participated in the study, suggesting that Marshall's approach of providing hard copies to selected schools might have provided a larger number of responses after all. That being said, there was a reliance on the researcher's 'extensive contacts across the country' (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 67) to engage participation across 20 schools. Given my lack of similar relationships and experience, Study 3 would have had to rely on my 'cold calling' schools to discuss

their potential involvement. This lack of existing relationships and goodwill suggests that responses might still have been limited even with a hard-copy approach.

To ensure participants were fully informed (and as will be discussed further in the section below on ethics), the link provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet, attached as Appendix A and discussed further below, which set out the purpose of the study and what would be required for participation. If participants acknowledged that information and clicked on the appropriate button to indicate consent, they were provided a page of instructions on how to engage with the group descriptions (if consent was refused, the participant would be unable to proceed to that stage). Participants would then download the descriptions, which were in Word format. The document was set up so that any changes made by participants were tracked using Word's automated tracking function. The purpose of this setting was to make it easier to distinguish participants' contributions without requiring an additional step (such as changing the text settings or using the highlight function). The goal was to make participation as technically seamless as possible.

The final part of the document asked demographic questions, which aided in understanding teacher identities, as discussed above. Given the centrality of language in the study's design and the epistemology that informed it, the questions were open-ended rather than predetermined tick boxes, allowing participants to describe themselves in their own words, just as they were asked to do when labelling the group descriptions. When the participant finished annotating the document, they simply uploaded it to the same Qualtrics site. The responses were uploaded and saved on the University of Strathclyde's cloud storage, password-protected and accessible only to myself and my doctoral supervisors.

Approach to Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

To understand the data from this study, multiple methods were available, including discourse analysis (discussed above), grounded theory (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2015), interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (e.g., Tuffour, 2017), and narrative analysis (e.g., Riessman, 1993). Grounded theory, for example, is directed toward theory development (i.e., the construction of a 'plausible and useful' theory or theories grounded in the data) while IPA emphasises lived experiences in great detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 80–81). Narrative analysis, on the other hand, explores how people use stories to interpret and understand the world. While each of these approaches may have yielded useful patterns, the aim of Study 3 is different to those inherent in each of these approaches. Specifically, the aim was not to develop a more broadly applicable theory or explore the personal and detailed 'storied' experiences of teachers' everyday lives; rather, as discussed, it was to examine how, and to what extent, the legacy of Section 28 can be understood by engaging the views of teachers on the use of LGBT+ texts as pedagogical tools. In doing so, we will further see how the educators construct children and sexuality.

Accordingly, Study 3 adopted a thematic analysis (TA), as informed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013). This method, first developed in the 1970s by Holton (Merton, 1975), is useful 'for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In other words, it is a method for examining textual information and discerning or extracting common threads of the content, often by way of taking disparate parts and recognising how they cohere or coalesce into a whole. This method was deemed to be the best for Study 3 because it allowed for the disparate data – the comments and highlighted text – to be pooled

together and analysed for themes relevant to the research question. In doing so, this study also demonstrates that Marshall's method is applicable to investigations of phenomena beyond the method's original focus, and thus contributes to the literature on the methodology of that approach.

Given that the analysis is driven by the analytic interest in Section 28, the TA in Study 3 is 'theoretical' rather than inductive. Inductive TA is not driven by the researcher's topic or area of focus but instead is data-driven, such that the data are coded without preconceptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In theoretical TA, however, the analysis *is* driven by the researcher's particular focus or interest, allowing the data to be coded for a specific research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As discussed above, Study 3 is driven by the questions of what educators think about the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature (see Table 2), how those views construct children and sexuality, and how those constructions compare to those circulated in the parliamentary debates. With these questions guiding the analysis, the TA approach was necessarily theoretical rather than inductive. Furthermore, the purposes that have been identified here avoid the criticism that TA is often only a description of participant responses rather than critical analysis. In particular, the data was theorised, rather than merely described, by analysing what it revealed about the phenomena being investigated. This specific aim moved the analysis from description to theorisation.

Braun and Clarke's Approach to Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA approach involves six steps: (1) familiarising yourself with the data; (2) generating initial codes (labels for different features of the

data, which become the building blocks of themes); (3) searching for themes amongst the codes; (4) reviewing potential themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report or writing up. In following those steps, I first became familiar with the data and reading the data *as* data by not absorbing only the surface-level meaning but reading actively and analytically with the research questions in mind.

The next stage segmented the data into initial codes that began to interpret the data's latent content. This step resulted in a mix of descriptive and analytical codes, including 'the importance of supporting students'; 'the positive value of literature'; 'teacher roles'; 'managing harassment'; 'empathy'; and 'parents cannot prevent education'. This stage required working through every element of data (i.e., all participant responses, including highlighted text, group labelling, and text written in by the participants). The aim was to be inclusive since this was an early stage of analysis and codes could always be discarded later. Following from there, the codes were developed into themes, an active process of 'shap[ing] and craft[ing]' the data and identifying similarities and differences amongst the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63). Codes were variously collapsed or clustered, creating three themes, with all relevant codes sorted accordingly: (1) silence about LGBT+ identities in education as harmful to children, (2) reasons why LGBT+ inclusive education is important, and (3) additional support and training on teaching LGBT+ inclusive lessons, using LGBT+ texts, supporting LGBT+ students, and combating homophobia. As these themes were constructed, a primary focus was to consider how they fit together to tell a story about the data, one that answers the research questions.

Subsequent stages focused on refining the themes, including a review of the themes in relation to the coded data. The purpose here was to ascertain whether the themes worked in relation to all the data or needed to be altered, collapsed, or altogether discarded. To accomplish this, the data was reread to ensure the themes meaningful captured the elements important to the research questions. The fifth step defined and named the themes by clearly stating what was unique and specific about each and its essence. The result was the naming of three themes (itself an iterative process): 'the right to LGBT+ inclusive education, 'silence harms', and 'continuing professional development for LGBT+ inclusive education'. Each of these names captured what was determined to be the 'essence' of the underlying data. Extracts from participant responses were also selected to illustrate the key analytic points, the aim being not to paraphrase what participants wrote but to interpret and connect their responses with the research questions.

The final step produced the report in this thesis and was the result of the mutually constitutive relationship between writing and analysis. In this stage, a story about the data is constructed to answer the research questions. Study 3's overarching argument is that the views of the participants – as mentioned previously, teachers had faced a de facto prohibition from even mentioning LGBT+ issues in schools under Section 28 – indicates the legacy of the legislation has largely been eroded, confirming the findings of Study 2 that suggested a progressive change in wider societal attitudes toward sexual and gender diversity amongst young people.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations guided each of the above studies from the design stage to writing up the findings in this thesis. Ethics are the standards and practice codes for how one conducts research, including the researcher's relationship to, and interactions with, research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 61). As Braun and Clarke (2013) noted, the core ethical considerations include 'obtaining informed consent and avoiding deception, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, ensuring participants' right to withdraw (without explanation or negative impact), not subjecting participants to (unnecessary) risks, and being honest and accurate in reporting research results' (p. 63).

Studies 1 and 2 both focus on textual data that is publicly available and thus did not involve any participants. Accordingly, there were no issues of consent, confidentiality, privacy, or unnecessary risks. Specifically, Study 1 was an analysis of statements made in parliament – that is, it involved public officials carrying out routine, public duties with the full knowledge that their speech was being recorded for official records available to the public, all of which are elements that negated rights to confidentiality and privacy that might have otherwise applied. Given that the officials were carrying out public duties, and that the making and keeping of Hansard records is a routine matter of parliamentary business, it was also not necessary to consider whether Study 1 would take up any of the politicians' tax-payer-funded time (as might have been the case had the study involved interviewing the politicians, for example). Similarly, Study 2 also involved publicly available data, this time in the form of published novels, that did not invoke confidentiality or privacy rights.

The primary ethical consideration for both Studies 1 and 2 centred on how the data was analysed and presented (rather than how the data was obtained). In other words, because the data was already publicly available, the ethical concerns focused on reporting the research results or findings honestly and accurately. This concern was addressed by accurately representing the data in in this thesis and not plagiarising the work of others (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 63). Specifically, care was taken to accurately represent what the politicians said by quoting their words directly rather than paraphrasing them and providing the context in which they were uttered. For the novels, excerpts or quotes were relied on to illustrate and support the findings.

Ethical considerations were more extensive in Study 3 given the involvement of human participants. The study was developed according to the University of Strathclyde's (2013) own code of regulations on conducting research ethically. Proof that the design satisfied those requirements is found in the fact that the ethics committee of the School of Education approved the study and gave permission for it to proceed. Additionally, the factors identified by Braun and Clark's elements above were embedded in that study's design. The Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A),was key in that regard. As stated earlier, it provided detailed information about the purposes of the study and how the data might be used, which ensured that participants were fully informed before giving consent. It also explained that participation could be withdrawn at any time prior to submitting the responses (since participation was anonymous, it would not have been possible to withdraw post-submission). Participants were asked to confirm their consent by clicking the appropriate button, at which point they would advance to the next stage. If consent

was refused, the Qualtrics screen simply thanked them for their time and asked them to close the web browser.

Privacy and confidentiality were also embedded in Study 3's design to ensure participant anonymity. This design included selecting the Qualtrics option to block collection of personal metadata, such as the IP address and geographic location, of anyone who accessed the study's link. The Word document on which responses were made was similarly blocked from collecting metadata. Additionally, the instructions asked that personally identifying information, such as names, email, physical address, or school name, not be given in the responses (and, in fact, none of the responses contained any such information). Furthermore, none of the responses included words or language so unique that that quoting them in this thesis, or any publications based on this thesis, would compromise anonymity. Finally, privacy and confidentiality were also considered in how the responses were stored: as stated previously, they were saved to the University of Strathclyde's cloud storage in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors.

Finally, there were no psychological or physical risks to participants. Because the teachers were all adult-aged and the topic itself (broadly stated as law, literature, and education) was non-sensitive (i.e., it did not involve a vulnerable population such as young children or a sensitive topic such as physical abuse), there was little risk of psychological or emotional harm. Even so, and out of caution, the concluding screen of the study provided contact information for Samaritans, a charity providing emotional support for people in distress. Because the study was online, the physical risks inherent in most social situations (for example, travelling from one location to another) were not present. Finally, as with Studies 1 and 2, honesty and integrity

were achieved in by accurately representing the data in in this thesis and not plagiarising others' work (see Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 63).

A Note on Queer Methods

In addition to the discussion of queer theory and queer legal theory in this chapter, it should be noted that the methods discussed in this chapter are all 'queer' methods. They are queer by virtue of being attentive to heteronormativity (and other normative beliefs about sexuality and gender) and to the regimes of power/knowledge that regulate or discipline sexuality, particularly in relation to young people. They thus form the basis of research that is 'positioned within conceptual frameworks that highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings and resulting power relations' (K. Browne & Nash, 2010, p. 4). In addition to the aims that have been described in detail thus far, this thesis seeks to challenge normative assumptions about sexuality and gender, as well as the social categories and binaries that seek to contain sexuality and gender, in the context of young people's lives and experiences. This work challenges such assumptions in the political discourse surrounding Section 28, fictional constructions of young people and sexuality, and the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ perspectives and children's literature, as understood through the views of current educators. The thesis can thus be framed as a critical exploration of the normative 'truths' about young people and sexuality that are embedded within each of these specific contexts. The intention in highlighting the methods as queer by virtue of these aims is not a statement about the meaning of 'queer' itself or how queer research should be conducted, but to show

how a queer positionality intersects the methodologies, and therefore the very design, of this research.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the theoretical foundations and practical concerns of the methods adopted in each of the studies comprising this thesis. As explained, the aim is to investigate the legacy of Section 28 in the context of the content and pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. Within the poststructural framework discussed, the thesis is concerned with constructions of children, sexuality, and children's literature politically, culturally, and educationally. This chapter has described the methods adopted for examining the Hansard transcripts, the corpus of British LGB YA novels, and the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature. It has explained the rationale for each of the methods, including genealogical or Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis, directed content analysis, and thematic analysis. The decisions made in designing the studies have also been justified and potential criticisms have been addressed. The next chapter presents the findings of Study 1, the genealogical analysis of the Section 28 parliamentary debates.

Chapter 4: Children, Sexuality, and Family Life in the Parliamentary Debates

This chapter discusses the 1986–1988 Section 28 parliamentary debates using the Foucauldian analytical method of genealogy, as informed by Carabine (2001). While comparable to critical discourse analysis, genealogy is distinct in its emphasis on power and knowledge as 'the result of contingent turns of history, not the outcome of rationally inevitable trends' (Gutting & Oksala, 2019, n.p.). 'Contingent' in this sense refers to the nature of certain forces as being 'true by virtue of the ways things in fact are and not by logical necessity' (Oxford University Press, 2020a). In other words, genealogy seeks not to uncover some hidden meaning of a text but instead is 'an historical critique that traces the forgotten origins of our present' (Clifford, 2018, p. 3) and asks how power/knowledge relationships have produced and sustained hegemonic 'truths' about particular subjects and objects.

Foucault used the term 'power/knowledge' to identify how truth is produced and regulated: what counts as 'truth' is a function of power (for example, the power invested in scientific disciplines) and 'truth' then fortifies that power (Feder, 2007, p. 34). This mutually constitutive process is a circular, self-sustaining, reinforcing system or regime that defines its own boundaries of legitimate knowledge, discursive limits that constrain or enable how particular subjects are written, spoken, and thought about (McHoul & Grace, 1993), constituting 'a grid of intelligibility' (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 93). Through this generative and meaning-making process, discourse wields power by coercing subjects into conformity and delimiting their possibilities. Those norms are then performed or replicated by individuals so that they come to have the appearance of being natural or inevitable (Butler, 1990). Genealogy is thus concerned with the triad of power, knowledge, and discourse and

the discursive strategies that constitute legitimate knowledge and hegemonic norms that define and discipline subjects.

Although 'ideology' and 'discourse' have already been defined in this thesis, I want to consider here Carabine's use of the term 'discourse' in relation to Foucault's genealogy. According to Carabine (2001), discourse is more particularly understood as the way in which a topic is spoken of and it is constitutive – that is, discourse constructs a particular version of a subject, and this version is defined and established as the 'truth' at particular moments. Discourses are fluid, 'drawing upon [other] existing discourses about an issue whilst utilizing, interacting with, and being mediated by, other dominant discourses […] to produce new ways of conceptualizing the issue or topic' (Carabine, 2001, p. 269). Foucault's genealogy, then, is a method which traces the history of an issue or topic by examining the discourses about it at a particular time to understood how certain statements have come to be counted as true or not (McHoul & Grace, 1993). The genealogical analysis in this chapter is therefore focused on the 'groups of related statements' (Carabine, 2001, p. 268) about children, sexuality, and children's literature that cohere to produce meaning.

The analysis in this chapter is clustered around discursive strategies, which can be understood as strategies of normalisation and exclusion by which a discourse constitutes its object. They refer, in other words, to how discourses are formulated. Through the process detailed in Chapter 3, identifying the strategies at work in the debates required becoming familiar with the data and discerning recurring themes. Through that iterative process, data relating the themes to the subjects of literature, reading, educational materials, texts, and other resources for children were compiled. This process revealed four interdependent strategies through which the child was put

into the political discourse of the parliamentary debates. The first was the construction of children as latently homosexual. The second was achieved through construction of the child as innocent but corrupt(ible). The third was through the positioning of parenthood and family life as the vanguard against corruption of the child. The fourth was the absence of any discussion of heterosexual texts, revealing a rather striking and telling double standard. While interdependent, each of these discourses is discussed separately to clarify how they operate.

Discursive Strategy 1: The Child as Latently Homosexual

The aim of this section is to demonstrate the role of discourse in constituting ‘the child’ as latently homosexual. ‘Latent’ or ‘unconscious homosexuality’ is defined as ‘gay or lesbian tendencies that have never been expressed overtly; they are usually unrecognized or actively denied (i.e., repressed) by the individual’ (American Psychological Association, 2018, ‘latent homosexuality’ entry). Because it encompasses both unrecognised and repressed homosexuality, latent homosexuality may refer to a hidden or dormant inclination or *potential* for interest in same-sex relationships or sexual acts. It is the dormant or potential homosexuality within children that concerned parliament, as the child must be prevented from activating that potential (or having it activated for them by outside influences, such as literature) and moving from an unexplored or unrealised homosexuality to an active exploration – or, even worse, a commitment to – that identity (see R. M. Hoffman, 2004, for a discussion of these stages in relation to heterosexual identity development). This construction of sexuality is consistent with A. M. Smith’s (1990) finding that supporters of Section 28 viewed sexuality as unfixed at birth and

children as being, therefore, 'vulnerable to sexual corruption' (p. 48). Indeed, the Earl of Halsbury claimed that 'people's sexual orientation was not fixed at any particular stage' and that school-leavers at the age of 16 were 'open to seduction' (HL Debate, 1988c, c593). It is rather striking that the Parliamentarians conceived of sexuality as unfixed and fluid, as such a view is consistent with how poststructuralist thought and queer theory frame sexuality. What is more striking, however, is that while sexuality might have been constructed as unfixed in the parliamentary debates, that unfixed state was further constructed specifically as homosexual in nature. What parliament sought to guard against was homosexuality (the innate, natural state of the child) becoming the fixed state.

To aid in understanding the production of this discourse, consider Foucault's (1976/1978) notion of the 'pedagogization of children's sex', which he described as

> a double assertion that practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that, being unwarranted, at the same time 'natural' and 'contrary to nature', this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers; children were defined as 'preliminary' sexual beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous dividing line. Parents, families, educators, doctors, and eventually psychologists would have to take charge, in a continuous way, of this precious and perilous, dangerous and endangered sexual potential. (p. 104)

Foucault (1976/1978) further argued that even the internal discourse of institutions, for example in the case of secondary schools of the 18th century, was premised on the assumption 'that [children's] sexuality existed, that it was precocious, active, and

ever present' (p. 28). This precocious sexuality was dangerous and therefore in need of monitoring and control by adults.

These arguments provide an apt description of the premise on which the Section 28 legislation rested. In particular, the law was based on similar assumptions about the so-called dangers of children experiencing (homo)sexuality, evidencing the heteronormative ideology that children should only experience heterosexuality, as heterosexuality and not homosexuality was the only legitimate behaviour or expression. But supporters actually took it one step further: not only did children's sexuality exist, not only was it precocious, active, and dangerous, it was innately *homo*sexual. MP Harry Greenway, for example, said: 'In Ealing the schools have been invited to put on their notice boards invitations to children to ring gay and lesbian lines. That is wrong, because it is an incitement to children' (HC Debate, 1987b, c1002). The word 'incitement' suggests a stirring up of something which otherwise would lie dormant, in this case, homosexuality. It constructs homosexuality as a potentiality that could roused within the child.

Thus, while heteronormativity – the belief that only heterosexuality is normal or natural – surfaced in Parliamentarians' discussions of Section 28, there was an implicit and contradicting belief that homosexuality was, at least on some level, also a natural or innate quality. Consider, for example, Dame Jill Knight, also an MP, who constructed homosexuality as a latent quality when speaking of one text in particular in the House of Commons. She said:

> First, there is a publication called 'The Playbook for Kids about Sex'. It is written for young children and is presented in the type of colour and line

> drawings that would appeal to a child. In fact, it is the most frightening piece of propaganda about children. (HC Debate, 1987a, c997)

The objection here is not just to the content of the book (although Dame Knight certainly objected to that as well) but how that content is presented and the attractiveness of its presentation. In other words, Dame Jill was concerned that the book could evoke or attract homosexuality. By linking the attractiveness of the drawings to sexual arousal (given that homosexuality is first and foremost a sexual reaction) the line drawings became, in and through their presentation, erotic. These elements, centred on the notion of evoking homosexuality, constructed homosexuality as an innate quality lying in wait for some outside forces to act upon it or call it forth. Section 28 was premised on the construction of children's books and written resources as being one such outside force.

Similarly, Lord John Boyd-Carpenter, first Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority and an ex-MP, said in the House of Lords: 'The promotion of the idea in schools that homosexuality is a way of life of equal merit to the more normal habits and standards of our fellow countrymen is most dangerous. To put it brutally, I think that it is wrong to put ideas of this kind before young people' (HL Debate, 1988a, c968). The phrase 'to put ideas of this kind before young people' echoes the language of 'lure' and 'appeal'. Perhaps more significantly, however, is the use of the phrase 'the more normal habits', as it implies that homosexuality is indeed a habit in the first place, albeit a less 'normal' one (thus implying a hierarchy of sexuality, a matter discussed further later in this chapter). Moreover, the word 'habit' denotes a physical or mental condition (Oxford University Press, 2020c), which in turn implied that homosexuality was a condition already existing within the child,

one that required adults to act in order to ensure that children did not see homosexuality as having 'equal merit to the more normal habit' or condition of heterosexuality.

The words of Baroness Lucy Faithfull, a social worker who sat in the House of Lords and about whom it was once said that 'there is no cause involving children in which she will not engage' (Graham, 1996, p. 74), constituted homosexuality not only as a possible condition or potentiality but as something that was actually inevitable. Specifically, she argued that homosexuality

> is a phase. If it is encouraged, if it is taught to be a way of life, there are some—and I say only some—who will not pass out of that stage, but will remain homosexuals and follow the homosexual way of life to their lasting unhappiness. (HL Debate, 1986, c329)

To 'encourage' means to 'stimulate the development of' (Oxford University Press, 2020b). If one can stimulate the development of something, that something must exist in order to *be* developed: homosexuality, therefore, must lie within the nature of the child as a dormant quality, waiting for stimulation in whatever form. Furthermore, that 'phase' of homosexuality is necessarily inevitable: if only some never pass out of that stage, then most others do. Accordingly, most children will experience homosexuality. It is therefore not just a condition, but an *inevitable* condition through which adults must help children to pass unencumbered by literature. This framing constructs sexuality not as separate to childhood but endemic to it.

As with the language used by Baroness Faithfull, the word 'encourage' plays a significant role in Dame Jill Knight's construction of sexuality as dangerous.

According to her, homosexuality was ‘desperately dangerous for society and extremely dangerous for [children]’ and, further, that it ‘perverted, diverted or converted [children] from normal family life’ (HC Debate, 1987a, c998). On this basis, she objected to David Rees’s (1983) teen novel *The Milkman’s on his Way*, as it ‘glorifies homosexuality and encourages youngsters to believe that it is better than any other sexual way of life’ (HC Debate, 1987a, c997). As with the example above, to encourage is to stimulate development. Stimulation comes, in this case, in the form of literature, specifically, Rees’s novel. In other words, Section 28 was premised on the construction of children as innately homosexual and of literature written for young people as having the significant power to activate that innate nature. In other words, literature was constructed as a threat to the established heterosexist hierarchy in which homosexuality was considered inferior to heterosexuality.

This power of literature was such that politicians even refused to quote passages from the books being debated, as though doing so might have perverted Parliamentarians, let alone children. Baroness Caroline Cox – who served as a registered nurse and helped draft ‘The Right to Learn’, which said that ‘the state’s excessive and expanding role in education is a major cause of [the education sector’s] ills, and that [the Conservative party] should aspire to diminish it’ (Anderson et al., 1981, p. 4) – told the Lords that she would not quote from *The Milkman* as to do so might shock the peers (HL Debate, 1986, c321). In the Commons, Dame Jill Knight similarly objected to the novel’s ‘explicit terms’ and called it ‘a pile of filth’ (HC Debate, 1987a, cc997–998). These characterisations reinforced the constructions of same-sex sexual activity as perverted, as something

that ought never be discussed lest those who hear be lured into participation of such acts. This silencing is evidence of how power can also operate through repression (the refusal to quote the books) and suggests that a closer examination of the novel might further reveal how power operated in Dame Jill's characterisations of it.

Published by the Gay Men's Press (established in 1979 as Britain's first gay-specific publisher), Rees's novel is set in the small Cornish town of Bude and follows the life of a gay teenager named Ewan, a surfer who at first has difficulty resolving his lack of interest in girls. He eventually meets Paul, a teacher from London who is vacationing with a group of friends, all of whom are also gay. They spend a week together intimately and socially, and it is probably these passages which offended some politicians. Specifically, there are three potential scenes to which Parliamentarians may have been objecting.

The first occurs between Ewan and his best friend, Leslie, as they wrestle each other:

> Our legs touched. Sweat. Then the most extraordinary, unlooked for, incredible thing happened. His hand was inside my shorts […] I tugged at his shorts. I wanted to see. 'What the hell do you think you're doing?' he asked. But changed his mind: they were obviously a handicap. He shut his eyes. I did not, amazed at what I saw. I hadn't realised how much the size of an erect cock differed from one person to another. Noticing other boys, limp in the changing room at school, had told me mine was much the same as other people's. But Leslie's was a prodigy. Would a girl be able to cope with such a weapon?

I wanted to touch him, caress him, wrap myself round him, kiss him all over. I didn't, of course. He was doubtless pretending that my hand was Linda's or Adrienne's or whoever the girl of the moment was, and I…I only saw him. The climax was the most ecstatic few seconds I had ever experienced. (Rees, 1983, p. 20)

After Leslie leaves, Ewan finally acknowledges to himself that he is homosexual and wants to experience sexual activity with Leslie again:

> I'd not ask, not even suggest or hint such a thing. It would have to happen exactly as it had done just now, spontaneously, he starting it. Any move on my part and I would be exposed for what I was, with all the dire and dreadful consequence such knowledge in the hands of others would bring down on me.
>
> Sperm on my skin, his mixed with mine. I touched it, then licked my finger. I was still perpendicular, firm as a rock; a situation I could do something about, and I did, reliving the experience in my imagination. (Rees, 1983, p. 21)

In the second scene, Ewan and his new friend, Paul, are naked on a beach:

> And [Paul] was touching my skin, caressing me, sucking my cock, arousing me so much that I felt there could be no stopping now even if coach-loads of people suddenly appeared on top of the cliffs […] This was making love: so much feeling passed between us, so much gentleness. We came at exactly the same moment, in each other's hands. (Rees, 1983, p. 55)

In the third scene, Ewan is again with Paul:

At first I was frightened; it would be painful, I thought. Did I really feel an urge for this? It was, perhaps, a denial of my maleness? I should penetrate: that was what it was for. Wasn't it? Everybody said so. Into Paul? The idea was ridiculous. I wanted him inside me; I wanted to be fucked. Only that would give me absolute satisfaction, emotionally.

'If it hurts,' [Paul] said, kissing me, stroking me with his fingers, 'I won't do it. I promise. This will make it easier.'

'What?'

'K.Y. A lubricant.'

Pain, yes, quite severe – he wasn't small – but only a bit (I would get used to that in time; indeed soon there was never any discomfort), it was the most natural, normal and utterly beautiful experience. His hand, still slippery with K.Y. on my cock, a sensation more superb than any I had ever felt, then orgasm so perfect I thought I was changed from a body into pure dazzling light. And he, coming, the spurt and gasp of him inside me: oh yes; this is what life is for, Ewan: for this I was made.

Kisses, gentle hands touching skin. Drifting towards sleep. (Rees, 1983, p. 58)

While the details are at times explicit, calling them filth and refusing to read any part of them – especially to an adult audience assembled specifically to consider these matters – represents the novel as prurient and excessive. Yet all together, these scenes constitute only about a page and a half of the 118-page novel. Furthermore, Dame Jill Knight's call of attention to the age of two of the characters – 'a 16-year-old boy and his adult male homosexual lover' (HC Debate, 1987a, c997) – portrays

the sex as abusive rather than consensual (it also misrepresents the age itself, as Ewan was 17). She further objected based on her perception that Rees's 'book glorifies homosexuality and encourages youngsters to believe that it is better than any other sexual way of life' (HC Debate, 1987a, c997). But the author himself said that he wrote the novel for the teen 'struggling with guilt, derision, or despair because he is homosexual' (Rees, 1983, p. 165). The novel, then, of which these scenes were only a small part, was intended to show that same-sex relationships are natural, even beautiful, to show that guilt, derisions, and despair do not have to be the experience of gay men. Yet these positive values of literature were wholly disregarded by parliament.

But even considering all of the foregoing, it is rather striking that, while Baroness Cox and others argued that the novel's explicitness made it 'totally inappropriate for use in schools' (HL Debate, 1988a, c1013), there was never any confirmation in parliament that the book was ever actually available in schools. Even if all the arguments about this literature were true, they fail the 'so what?' test in that children were not actually being perverted by this literature, or at least such was never established in the parliamentary debates. The arguments, then, seemed to be much ado about nothing.

But there is perhaps another reason Dame Jill Knight and others objected to Rees's book in particular. As Foucault (1975/1995) wrote in regard to relations of power and domination: 'the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body' (p. 26). Yet the body's productivity and subjection are subverted in Rees's novel. When Ewan first has sex with Paul, Ewan is penetrated, such that he physically and literally contained Paul's sexuality. Dame

Jill's objections can be read as objecting to the containment of sexuality by an individual rather than through state regulation and legislation. The place of government, perhaps even its very provenance, had been usurped by the subject, Ewan. Similarly, the ejaculation of Leslie onto Ewan can be read as an unabashed, brazen, even tangible rejection of the state's attempts to regulate family life and procreation. What is more, the subject took great pleasure in this usurpation and rejection, thus (re)claiming sex as a pleasurable rather than only procreative activity. Perhaps, then, it was not merely the latent homosexuality of children parliament sought to contain but the radical, subversive, destabilising potential inherent in the rejection of norms and of the heteropatriarchal belief that sexual relations should occur only between opposite-sexed couples, as depicted in the novel.

While the previous paragraph is perhaps tongue-in-cheek, the passages just discussed are important in relation to another discursive strategy, one that reveals a double standard. While not a predominant strategy, power operated in the parliamentary debates through 'certain silences or interrogatory gaps' (Feder, 2007, p. 94). We have already seen how silence operated in the case of politicians refusing to even quote the literature they had gathered to debate, but this strategy also included, in particular, the silence about, or absence of, heterosexual children's books and resources (i.e., texts that with only representations or portrayals of heterosexuality). This absence is rather striking given that parliament constructed literature as so powerful it could determine a child's sexuality for their entire lifetime, as discussed above. Yet only texts portraying homosexuality were subjected to this morality discourse. There was no analysis or consideration of heterosexual literature, despite the fact that many such novels were more explicit than *The*

Milkman's on his Way and, even where not outright explicit, nevertheless contained metaphors, and even abstinence, that were erotically charged (as with virtually any novel about vampires, for example).

Consider, for example, the ever-popular novel *Forever* by Judy Blume (1975), whose books have been ubiquitous in school libraries since Blume began writing in the 1970s. The first line of *Forever* – 'Sybil Davison has a genius I.Q. and has been laid by at least six different guys' (p. 1) – is just the beginning of the novel's focus on sex. In fact, there are at least 11 scenes in which teenagers are stroking breasts, spreading legs, fondling genitals, having orgasms, and attempting sex (in different positions), sometimes achieving penetration, sometimes not. Some of these scenes even span two or more pages. These lengthy and numerous passages stand in stark contrast to the three short scenes in *The Milkman's on his Way*.

In one such scene, the protagonist, Katherine, and her boyfriend, Michael, find themselves alone on a ski break:

> I [Katherine] slipped my nightgown over my head and dropped it on the floor. Then there were just my bikini pants and Michael's pajama bottoms between us. We kissed again. Feeling him against me made me so excited I couldn't lie still. He rolled over on top of me and we moved together again and again and it felt so good I didn't ever want to stop – until I came.
>
> After a minute I reached for Michael's hand. 'Show me what to do,' I said.
>
> 'Do whatever you want.'
>
> 'Help me, Michael…I feel so stupid.'

> ‘Don’t,’ he said, wiggling out of his pajama bottoms. He led my hand to his penis […]
>
> In books penises are always described as hot and throbbing but [his] just felt like ordinary skin. Just his shape was different – that and the fact that he wasn’t smooth, exactly – as if there was a lot going on under the skin. I don’t know why I’d been so nervous about touching Michael. Once I got over being scared I let my hands go everywhere. I wanted to feel every part of him […]
>
> When I kissed his face it was all sweaty and his eyes were half-closed. He took my hand and led it back […] showing me how to hold him, moving my hand up and down according to his rhythm. Soon Michael moaned and I felt him come – a pulsating feeling, a throbbing, like the books said – then wetness. Some of it got on my hand but I didn’t let go […] (Blume, 1975, pp. 64–65)

There are many more instances of penetration throughout *Forever*, such as in this scene:

> This time I tried to relax and think of nothing – nothing but how my body felt – and then [he] was brushing against me and I whispered, ‘Are you in…are we doing it yet?’
>
> ‘Not yet,’ Michael said, pushing harder. ‘I don’t want to hurt you.’
>
> ‘Don’t worry…just do it!’
>
> ‘I’m trying, Kath,…but it’s very tight in there.’
>
> ‘What should I do?’

> ‘Can you spread your legs some more…and maybe raise them a little?’
>
> ‘Like this?’
>
> ‘That’s better…much better.’
>
> I could feel him halfway inside me and then Michael whispered, ‘Kath…’
>
> ‘What?’
>
> ‘I think I’m going to come again.’
>
> I felt a big thrust, followed by a quick sharp pain that made my suck in my breath.’ (Blume, 1975, pp. 88–89)

These scenes are not only explicit but contain many more details, such as how a penis feels, than *The Milkman’s on his Way*. There are also passages that, while minor and not explicit, are nevertheless notable for the subjects they broach, such as Katherine’s mother handing her an article about sex that specifically mentions orgasm; her grandmother giving her pamphlets about ‘birth control, abortion, and venereal disease’ (Blume, 1975, p. 100); Katherine herself obtaining birth control; and her unmarried classmate, the famous Sybil, becoming pregnant and having a baby before graduation. These matters would surely have been of great interest to a parliament concerned with protecting innocent children from sexual knowledge, yet not once were they mentioned, even despite their widespread popularity. While *Forever* was first published in 1975, it continued to be hugely popular even at the time of the parliamentary debates (this is discussed further below). Such silence reveals the double standard to which non-heterosexual children’s books were held.

To underscore this double standard, consider another novel that was popular for teens, *Breaktime* by Aidan Chambers (1978/2012), ‘the first children’s book to include a masturbation scene as well as a sexual encounter between two consenting but not romantically involved teenagers which contains no references to contraception, sexual health and responsibility, or love’ (Reynolds, 2007, p. 118). One notable scene consists of a stream-of-consciousness description of 17-year-old Ditto masturbating (an excerpt of which is shown in Figure 1 to preserve the text’s formatting).

There is another explicit passage in the novel that quotes extensively from the nonfiction text, *A Young Person’s Guide to Life and Love*:

> In the more drawnout [sic] love-making, lips, tongue, hands may make loving contact with lips, tongue, breasts or genitals—for several minutes or for many […] For most couples, however, the ultimate desire is for intercourse, in which the man inserts his erect penis into the woman’s vagina. Her labia and vagina have been made more moist than usual by her excitement, so the penis can slip in more easily. The man has the instinct to thrust his hips rhythmically backwards and forwards to move the penis partly out and in again, to increase the sensation for both […] As the couple come nearer to orgasm, both partners usually want the rhythmic motion to become more vigorous and the woman may participate in it too. At the moment of orgasm—and generous, experienced lovers try to make their climaxes come simultaneously—they are overwhelmed by five or ten seconds of intense, pulsating pleasure while the ejaculation occurs, and they cling tightly

together. (Spock, 1971, as cited in Chambers, 1978/2012, 'Patterns of Lovemaking' section)

This is only a short extract yet it demonstrates, as does the excerpt in Figure 1, that Chambers's novel, like Blume's *Forever*, was just as, if not more, sexually explicit than Rees's novel, yet these and other explicit heterosexual text were never examined by Parliamentarians in relation to Section 28.

Figure 1

Excerpt from Breaktime *(Chambers, 1978/2012, 'Picture' section):*

legs what legs what tits and a face to go with them a bit knowing
though and maybe that's what held me back though it doesn't now
you brute   but this letter now maybe all the time she was waiting
was wanting was after it me me her after it was she me her me
her legs breasts skin face legs legs o legs her her her there there
there   there   there   there

and it's gone all over my frigging shirt and my hanky's in my pocket
in me trousers on the frigging floor   should have thought   pre-
pared   but didn't think   didn't expect her to send such a provoca-
tive picture the slut

It does not seem likely that such an omission was the result of a lack of awareness that such texts existed. Both Chambers and Blume were (and indeed continue to be) popular, even acclaimed, writers whose works circulated years before Rees's and Bösche's books were even published. In 1986, for example, a decade after it was first published, *Forever* was included by *The Guardian* (1986) on its 'hit list' of the 'top 21 teenage novels and described by *The Sunday Times* as 'a classic exploration of first love' (Drummond, 1986). Similarly, *Breaktime* was described as 'the first postmodern British children's story' (Tucker, 2000) while Chambers himself has been called 'an important figure in children's literature, especially Young Adult literature, ever since the late Sixties' (Thorn, 1995). Clearly, then, these

heterosexual texts and their numerous and lengthy explicit scenes would have been known to Parliamentarians and were likely to have been read by some of their own children, making the absence of these texts from the debates all the more notable and revealing the double standard to which they were held.

Furthermore, the apparent prominence and wider circulation of heterosexual children's books leads to the question of 'gatekeeping' in literature and publishing, and how Parliamentarians accessed non-heterosexual texts in the first place. As discussed previously, the news media circulated stories that sensationalised certain lesbian and gay children's books (see, e.g., Petley, 2019), which may have played a part in making Parliamentarians aware of the books. Yet actual access to the books, for both Parliamentarians and young people, appears to have been limited to some extent. Consider, for example, *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin*. Although the Daily Mail reported that the picture book, and thus homosexuality itself, was being promoted to children at taxpayers' expense, that single copy found by the Daily Mail was not widely available but was instead kept in a resource room at one school with limited or controlled access (K. Wilson et al., 2018). As discussed previously, little evidence was presented during the debates to corroborate claims that lesbian and gay texts were actually being provided to young children in schools and libraries. Yet rather than focus on the texts that were popular (as discussed above), Parliamentarians searched for and rooted out lesbian and gay texts in order to construct them as being widely read. In doing so, they may have inadvertently increased demand for the texts. As Conservative Peer Guy Black recalled:

> Large numbers of copies had to be sought of [*Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin*] because they kept disappearing. There was one famous Friday

> afternoon when Norman Tebbit wanted to brandish a copy above his head and we couldn't find any. So library boys were sent scurrying to bookshops, undercover, to get yet more copies. I think the [Conservative Research Department] purchased more copies than any other organisation. (McManus, 2011, p. 138)

Similarly, David Fernbach (2020), who helped found the publishing company that translated *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* (Gay Men's Press), wrote that it was not until Thatcher began targeting local government (a matter discussed in the literature review) that the picture book gained attention from the mainstream media, which subsequently 'brought the greatest publicity [Gay Men's Press] would ever receive' (n.p.). Not only did Parliamentarians increase the demand for these texts, but they presumably did so through the use of taxpayer funds to purchase those texts. In other words, the debates may have, rather ironically, resulted in the very promotion that Section 28 was purportedly intended to prevent.

These factors – in particular, the fact that popular heterosexual books and writers, and others like them, were never discussed in the debates despite those texts likely being more widely available and more readily accessed than the texts at issue in the debates – imply that the effects of heterosexual literature on young minds were irrelevant to Parliamentarians. This double standard was highlighted by MP Simon Hughes, although he referenced materials and media other than children's books:

> If the clause's aim is to protect the young, why are we not doing something about soft porn magazines, which are on sale in newsagents? Why are we not doing something about the matter raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) only last year—page 3 pictures in the

> popular newspapers? If we are trying not to promote different forms of sexuality, why do we not deal with television advertising, which often tries to sell products merely by appealing to people's sexual nature and motives? Why do the Government suddenly select this target, rather than another? (HC Debate, 1987b, c993).

The omission of porn magazines, televisions ads, and mainstream, as well as – and most significantly – popular teen novels, suggests heterosexuality as the standard for evaluating what literature young minds should unproblematically be able to access. Perhaps parliament was unconcerned about children's exposure to these texts and products because such exposure could only encourage heterosexuality and quash same-sex desires, and thus uphold a heteropatriarchal society. In other words, because these reading materials supported hegemonic constructions of sexuality and gender, they were not a rejection of heteronormative values and their influence was therefore constituted as unproblematic.

This is the case even though the novels portray sex outside of marriage and would therefore have been seen to constitute a threat to family life that parliament was purportedly seeking to protect. In *Forever*, Sybil, who has a baby before graduation, is forced to do 'the right thing' by giving the child to an adoptive family (Blume, 1975, p. 144). Removing the child from the teenage mother so that married parents can give her 'a good life' (Blume, 1975, p. 144) transforms the illegitimate into the legitimate, perpetuates the ideals of heteronormative and heteropatriarchal family life, and reasserts traditional gender roles. In addition, Katherine ends her relationship with Michael, a rejection of the premarital sex that had so entangled their relationship and therefore of 'inappropriate' femininity. In *Breaktime*, Ditto sets

out to prove his friend Morgan wrong about fiction being worthless and does so by writing about his break from school (in other words, he embarks on an adventure, itself an attribute of hegemonic masculinity). *Breaktime* is presented, for the most part, as what Ditto wrote and can therefore be read as the made-up fantasy of a teenager, as fiction within fiction, allowing cognitive dissonance or a rejection of the premarital (yet still heteronormative) sex. As Ditto himself asks, 'How do you know I didn't sit in my room at home all week making the stuff up?' (Chambers, 1978/2012, p. 132). Even if the events were 'real', they took place while Ditto was on a holiday away from home, and his return home and reassimilation into everyday 'normal' life is a rejection of the non-normative ideals that had framed his adventure, an adventure that is now boundaried and contained. In the end, perhaps these novels were understood to portray sexual aspirations to heteronormative ideals and practices, and thus of heteropatriarchy, bringing them, despite their transgressions, within the hierarchy of legitimate sexuality and family life constructed in the Section 28 discourses.

Discursive Strategy 2: The Child as Innocent but Corrupt(ible)

Containment of sexuality through regulation and legislation recalls Foucault's argument that sex, as a concern of the state, requires individuals 'to place themselves under surveillance', surveillance which included the discipline of 'pedagogy, having as its objective the specific sexuality of children […] the sin of youth' (Foucault, 1976/1978, pp. 116–117). Indeed, for Foucault (1976/1978), the 'pedagogization of children's sex' was a 'double assertion' that the sexual activity of children was both natural and contrary to nature and 'posed physical and moral, individual and

collective dangers' such that 'parents, families, educators, doctors, and eventually psychologists would have to take charge, in a continuous way, of this sexual potential' (p. 104). In other words, 'a specific "children's sexuality" was established: it was precarious, dangerous, to be watched over constantly', resulting in 'a network of power over children' (Foucault, 1989, p. 141).

These notions of taking charge of children's sexual potential, of watching over it, are echoed by the second discursive strategy of constructing the child as innocent but corrupt(ible). There is no doubt that supporters of Section 28 believed homosexuality was something perverted and morally corrupt. The Earl of Halsbury, for example, called homosexuality 'one of the worst mischiefs corrupting the fibre of our children' (HL Debate, 1986, c311). But if homosexuality is corrupt, and if, as in the first discursive strategy, the child is already latently homosexual, then it follows that the child is necessarily corrupt, or at least corruptible if the homosexuality is not contained through pedagogy or legislation. In other words, the child contains the potentiality of corruptness but, until that potentiality is activated, remains innocent.

The anxiety of the corrupt(ible) child is evident in this rather striking story told by Dame Jill Knight in the debates:

> An elderly gentleman who had been a colonel in the Indian army told me that it was his belief that homosexuals were made if enough influence was exerted upon them. He said that in the hill country and in parts of Poona, when he was in the Indian army, drummer boys used to be sent out from England – they were often orphans – and sent up the forward areas to the regiments. He said—and I have never forgotten this—that not one of those children had a chance. They all ended up as homosexuals because of the life they were

> forced to lead. I find it outrageous that little children should have been perverted in that way. (HC Debate, 1987a, c998)

These images of young drummer boys being led by older men to be sodomised in the hills of corruption viscerally evoked parliament's anxieties of a physical corruption. Notions of physical danger were further evoked through the expression of the belief that what children were learning in schools in the 1980s 'would undoubtedly lead to a great spread of AIDS' (HC Debate, 1987a, c998). Aids 'had become the bearer of a number of political, social and moral anxieties […] including "promiscuity", permissive lifestyles and drug taking' (Weeks, 1991, pp. 118–119). As the epidemic grew, so did fears about Aids spreading amongst the general population (Berridge, 1991, p. 180; Weeks, 2016, p. 246). It was this spread of Aids (rather than its existence amongst the gay community) that apparently concerned parliament.

Aside from the perceived physical danger, homosexuality was also constructed as a danger to the young person's mind, and it was this particular connection that most directly linked children's literature to the corruption of young people. Indeed, Lord Skelmersdale argued that parliament 'must ensure that children are not subject to insidious propaganda for homosexuality' (HL Debate, 1986, c334) and, further, that 'the promotion of homosexuality as an acceptable way of life reflects a misguided and possibly dangerous view, particularly where young minds are concerned' (HL Debate, 1986, c336). The emphasis of Dame Jill Knight and Lord Skelmersdale on 'the young' and the 'insidious' things that might 'lure' and 'pervert' children reveals a clear worry and unease over the corruptibility of the child. As demonstrated in the first discursive strategy, parliament believed that part of the danger was literature itself. As Lord Denning said,

> The influence on youngsters under 16 may make them or mar them for the rest of their lives. Then we see them being made or marred by these booklets and publicity distributed at the hands of the local council in the schools. (HL Debate, 1986, c326)

Such a view is echoed in the language used above by Lord Skelmersdale. The words used by these politicians – 'make or mar', 'insidious', 'propaganda' – constituted literature as something powerful, as having the potential to ensnare you and cause a lifetime of harmful consequences.

Given this potential, it is perhaps no wonder that parliament effectively sought to censor the literature available to children and to, in Dame Jill Knight's words, 'put a stop to the iniquitous corruption of children' (HC Debate, 1987a, c1000). It thus became necessary to prevent access to any texts or resources that might stimulate or agitate corrupt children, which explains why an otherwise innocuous picture book became the matchstick for the 1986–1988 debates. The mere potential, however unlikely, of one child accessing that book and thereby becoming corrupted, became a moral panic for the New Right. Lord Denning, who had been charged by Prime Minister Macmillan in 1963 to investigate and report[5] on the circumstances of War Minister John Profumo's resignation, said:

> Let me tell you the influence that these books that we have seen can have on youngsters. A lot of medical evidence was taken for the Wolfenden Report […] 'Our medical witnesses were unanimously of the view that the main sexual pattern is laid down in the early years of life, and the majority of them

[5] Published on 26 September 1963, the report, described as 'brimful of salacious details' and the 'raciest and most readable Blue Book ever published', sold 4,000 copies to the public within an hour of its release, and sales topped 100,000 over the next few months (*BBC News*, 1999).

> held that it was usually fixed in main outline by the age of 16'. There it is. The influence on youngsters under 16 may make them or mar them for the rest of their lives. (HL Debate, 1986, cc325–326)

To have suggested that books can influence children to become homosexual – indeed, to make or mar them for the rest of their lives – constructed books as being able to incite children's latent homosexuality. Baroness Cox was in apparent agreement, stating that she was against the 'dissemination of materials which may influence young people at an age and at a stage when their sexual identity is still emergent and when that teaching may have deep psychological effects' (HL Debate, 1988b, c878). This language explicitly frames resources, which presumably included children's books, as powerful enough to influence children's developing sexuality. Similarly, Lord Campbell (who had drafted the Section 28 Bill for Lord Halsbury and described same-sex families as 'homosexual set-up[s]' (HL Debate, 1988b, c873), quoted the words of a police officer to describe such literature as 'a lure to pervert the young' (HL Debate, 1986, c312). To 'lure' – to tempt or seduce – indicated the belief that homosexuality could be somehow teased out of children *through* literature. MPs were in apparent agreement with the Lords, with Dame Jill Knight, for example, referring to such texts as 'the most frightening piece[s] of propaganda' (HC Debate, 1987a, c997).

It was not just novels for teens which could corrupt the young, it was also picture books that contained the literal positive images referred to in Section 28. These positive images of homosexuality, argued parliament, allowed such corruption to leak through, to permeate, whatever barrier apparently contained the corruption of homosexuality. Referring to *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, for example, Dame

Jill Knight again said that '[the book] pictures a little girl of about six in bed with her father and his lover, both of whom are naked […] It is terrifying to me that local councils have been promoting that kind of stuff' (HC Debate, 1987a, cc997–998). The inference here is that because the two men are naked, they are therefore abusing the child, that sexual or gender violence is being committed by the men against the child. The implicit link between male nakedness and violence is clear from the characterisation of the image as 'terrifying'. Furthermore, in seeing the nakedness as something more than merely a natural state, in projecting onto the image a sexualised perversion that brings it within the scope of pornography, in (re)imagining it in relation to perversity, supporters of Section 28 revealed, perhaps, their own interiorised perversions.

The sexualisation of the images in *Jenny* reflected not only potential internal anxieties of politicians but also a mistranslation of cultural representations. *Jenny* was originally published in Denmark, a country noted for its lack of inhibition to nakedness: 'Danes, children as well as adults, have, for example, collective shower-rooms that they use after exercising [and] are often naked on the beaches' (Mirdal, 2006, p. 403). Their 'cultural liberation can be traced back to […] near the end of the nineteenth century' (Bonde, 2009, as cited in Frydendal & Thing, 2019, p. 162). In 1987, while the British parliament was enacting Section 28, Denmark was banning discrimination against homosexuals and then introduced, in 1989, registered same-sex partnerships (Edelberg, 2014, pp. 57–58). These cultural differences clearly did not translate to the British context in which Dame Jill Knight found herself 'terrified' by a child's picture book.

Aubrey Walter from Gay Men's Press, the U.K. publisher of *Jenny*, was asked about the nakedness of the two men and explained that to cover them up in the U.K. edition would have been hypocritical: 'How many parents lie in bed clothes to the chin and down to the bloody ankles? [Covering the men up] would be saying that homosexuality is something we have to wrap up' (Mars-Jones, 1988, p. 40). Some members of the British public, however, seemed to share the views of Dame Jill Knight rather than Walter. Mars-Jones, who interviewed the publisher of *Jenny*, described an experience during another interview about the book:

> the party at the next table in the cafe asked to look at *Jenny.* And they would not be persuaded, in spite of the evidence of their own eyes — the yawns, the tray, the dolls, the lack of physical contact — that the scene of breakfast in bed was anything but an orgy. They would accept no other term for it. They were in a bizarre state that combined voyeurism and blindness. (Mars-Jones, 1988, p. 40)

This myopic voyeurism, reflecting Dame Jill Knight's own experience on seeing the image, suggests a fear not of nakedness itself but of homosexual nakedness, and displacing abuse onto that nakedness. In other words, homosexual nakedness was itself recognised as abuse. This harmful construction is consistent with Rubin's (1999) argument that 'disputes over sexual behaviour often become the vehicles for displacing social anxieties, and discharging their attendant emotional intensity' (p. 143). Broadly stated, Section 28 was the result of displacing social anxieties onto children's literature in particular.

It was not just the nakedness in *Jenny* that was offensive, but its portrayal of same-sex partners with a child as a normal family relationship – the very target of

Section 28. Because this portrayal challenged the heteronormative image of 'the family', it was considered to be 'insidious propaganda' (HL Debate, 1986, c334). *Jenny*, in its mundane black-and-white images and depictions of everyday activities, such as grocery shopping and baking a cake, not only resisted or rejected assimilationist or heteronormative constraints of the traditional family life constituted by the debates but resisted those ideals in the public domain (see Harding, 2011, p. 47 for a general discussion of this type of resistance). This, in turn, created 'points of resistance' (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 95) through subversive, counter-hegemonic, and transgressive ways of being and relating intimately.

Such resistance is significant because, through it, *Jenny* not only resisted power but actually exercised it. Power, Foucault (1976/1978) wrote, 'is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared'; instead, resistance is interior to power, a part of 'the strategic field of power relations' (pp. 94, 96). In other words, as Harding (2011) noted, Foucault's conceptualisation of resistance is not the antithesis to power but the very same as power. The therefore power*ful* resistance inherent in texts like *Jenny* is the public demonstration of alternative ways of being outside the heteropatriarchy and beyond what is considered normative and acceptable in such a hierarchy – ways that politicians were forced to grapple with, revealing the power of children's books to engage hegemonic forces, require a response, and shape discourses on the ideals of children, sexuality, and family life.

Further power can be seen in the fact that the discourses about such texts were, regardless of how homosexuality was characterised, speaking nevertheless *about* homosexuality. As Eribon (1999/2004) noted, 'to speak about [homosexuals] was in some way to allow them to recognize themselves. It allowed them to move

beyond the feeling they all must have had of being alone in the world' (p. 150). Although Eribon was speaking about early texts and films which caricatured homosexuality or portrayed it as tragic, his words nevertheless speak to the Section 28 debates on children's literature, the galvanising effects of which can been seen in, for example, the London and Manchester protests, when, as discussed below, tens of thousands marched together against the law's enactment. Ironically, then, by constructing children's literature as powerful, the literature did become, in a sense, powerful: not only did the literature's existence require parliament to respond, but it also resulted in legislation that galvanised the lesbian and gay community, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Another element of the discursive strategy constituting the child as innocent but corrupt(ible) is one which centres on contradiction. Contradictions are, in the study of discursive strategies, 'points of diffraction' or 'points of incompatibility' which occurs when 'two objects, or two types of enunciation, or two concepts may appear, in the same discursive formation, without being able to enter – under pain of manifest contradiction or inconsequence – the same series of statements' (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 65). To explain how this strategy might operate, Feder (2007) gives the examples of Gender Identity Disorder, which postulates 'heterosexuality as at once 'natural' (thus rendering homosexuality a 'perversion') and 'constructed' (a function, that is to say, of a 'proper' upbringing and susceptible to therapeutic reconstruction)' (p. 90). These contradictory and opposing viewpoints are examples of the diffraction identified by Foucault and can be discerned in the arguments against children being 'taught' homosexuality in schools, whether through teaching or the provision of literature. MP Nicholas Bennett, in summing up the purpose of

Section 28, argued that ‘children should not be taught that homosexuality is a way of life that they should follow’ (HC Debate, 1988, c392). Similarly, Lord Bishop, quoting Dr Robert Runcie, the then-Archbishop of Canterbury, said: ‘“I cannot accept the extreme claims that homosexual unions are simply alternative lifestyles to Christian marriage…It is our duty to teach the Christian ideal to our children and not confuse them with options”’ (HL Debate, 1988a, c965).

Contradiction lies at the heart of these arguments and their constructions of sexuality. Indeed, as van Dijk (2006) noted, ideologies are not necessarily logical systems but can in fact be inconsistent. As the above quotations suggest, Bennett believed homosexuality should not be taught as a way of life, implying that the natural way of life was heterosexuality. Yet, if homosexuality was taught, so conversely was heterosexuality. This, in turn, implied that there was no fixed or natural sexuality. Similarly, Dr Runcie denied that same-sex unions were a valid alternative, implying that heterosexuality was the true norm. Yet he also argued that ‘the Christian ideal’ (i.e., heterosexuality) must be taught, implying, as Bennett did, that sexuality is not innate but a learned behaviour. As Feder (2007) pointed out, Foucault characterised such opposed perspectives such as these as ‘points of equivalence’: each one is ‘formed in the same way and on the basis of the same rules; the conditions of their appearance are identical […] and instead of constituting a mere defect of coherence, they form an alternative […] in the form of ‘either…or’ (Foucault, 1969/1972, pp. 65–66). These examples of contradictions recall the ways in which the words of Parliamentarians expressed the heteronormative belief that heterosexuality was natural, while also suggesting that homosexuality was a latent (i.e., natural) quality in children (as discussed previously). Queer legal theory would

ask how Section 28 constructed sexuality, and these Parliamentarians seem to have implicitly answered: sexuality was constructed as either innate in the child or a learned behaviour. In other words, the child was constructed as either corrupted or corruptible.

Discursive Strategy 3: What Does Parenthood and Family Life Look Like?

As we have seen, central to the arguments in favour of Section 28 was the notion of homosexual families as nothing more than 'pretend' families. MP Bennett summed up this position by saying:

> We [parliament] want to encourage our young people wherever possible […] to be heterosexual—and to live, if they choose to get married, in a loving family relationship. This is the acceptable and proper way for our society to be preserved and maintained. (HC Debate, 1988, cc392–393)

That parliament should encourage young people into heterosexuality and then a family relationship constructed heterosexuality as *the* pathway to family life, or at least one that was legally recognised. Lord Skelmersdale was even more explicit in this regard, arguing that it 'would be educationally and morally indefensible' to teach about homosexuality 'as a normal form of relationship' (HL Debate, 1986, c336). This clearly constructs the heterosexual family as the normal, legitimate family, with all other types of families being, in the words of Lord Campbell (who drafted the first iteration of the Section 28 Bill), merely 'a pretence' (HL Debate, 1987, c707).

Such language reflects most prominently the ideology of heteropatriarchy, echoing Rubin's (1999) conceptualisation of an 'erotic pyramid', described in her seminal text on queer legal theory as a hierarchy in which marital, reproductive

heterosexuals are alone at the top, above ‘unmarried monogamous heterosexuals in couples, followed by most other heterosexuals’ (p. 151). Further down that hierarchy are ‘stable, long-term lesbian and gay male couples are verging on respectability, but bar dykes and promiscuous gay men are hovering just above the groups at the very bottom of the pyramid’, which includes trans people, prostitutes, and porn models (Rubin, 1999). The words of Lord Skelmersdale and Lord Campbell echo this conception and legitimise the privileging of heterosexual, reproductive families as evincing ‘good’ sexuality. The apparent fear for parliamentarians was that same-sex families were being portrayed to children as a legitimate family life, upsetting the heteropatriarchal ideal and its privileging of monogamous, reproductive couples. Such fears stemmed from the apparent perception that such portrayals necessarily taught young people, in the words of Lord Bellwin, ‘that heterosexuality is undesirable and that the family and marriage are really not to be put forward as a proper basis for life’ (HL Debate, 1988a, c976). Similarly, in the House of Commons, Dame Jill Knight said that ‘children [were] being perverted, diverted or converted from normal family like to a lifestyle which [was] desperately dangerous for society and extremely dangerous for them’ (HC Debate, 1987a, c998). This perceived denigration of innocence was, according to the Earl of Longford, ‘fatally disruptive for the family’ (HL Debate, 1986, c316) and the ‘family unit’ was therefore ‘under attack’ (HC Debate, 1988, c387) by children’s literature.

Lord Mackie even argued that homosexuals themselves would be harmed if same-sex families were encouraged through literature and education. Specifically, he said that ‘to teach children in school that it is a natural relationship compared with marriage, and to publish literature on it which has been quoted, increases the

prejudice against the homosexual' (HL Debate, 1988a, c997). The link between teaching or literature about homosexuality as a natural relationship and prejudices against the individual homosexual was never made clear. However, it was evident that despite the implicit acknowledgement that homosexuality would actually lead to some kind of family life, just not the legitimate kind, homosexuality remained dangerous for all of society. Furthermore, such arguments deployed the mode of reification through naturalisation (Thompson, 1990), as the argument that same-sex relationships were not natural operated to implicitly construct heterosexual relationships as natural.

The concern remained that literature was being used to promote 'alternative' family types. As Dr Rhodes Boyson, the Minister for Local Government, said:

> [Section 28] opposes the positive images of lesbianism and homosexuality, as though they were alternative ways of life that should be shown to all children in schools. Those images imply that one can say to children that they can live in a family with a mother and father, but there is an alternative way of life which is just as reputable, in which one lives with a person of one's own sex, and the two are equal. That could undermine the basis of our society. (HC Debate, 1987a, c1002)

Lord Boyd Carpenter even claimed that 'Lambeth council [was] considering making gay books available in children's homes' (HL Debate, 1988a, c968). Here, again, danger to society was posited as justification against texts portraying or including representations of homosexuality. It was such texts that were the perceived pipeline for this danger and that pipeline led straight into the family home. This crisis of the family was the moral justification for Section 28.

Notions of what did or did not constitute a legitimate family and acceptable forms of parenthood were not new matters for parliament to consider. Carabine (2001), for instance, analysed certain types of parenthood and how they were constructed by parliament as problematic in the 19th century. She found that narratives throughout the 1800s constituted single pregnant women and unmarried mothers as 'underserving, predatory and immoral' (Carabine, 2001, p. 301). Through these characterisations, norms were established for the type of family that was appropriate and acceptable. Furthermore, a certain type of heterosexuality was privileged, that of the heterosexual married life, establishing a hierarchy of relationship types, even for heterosexuals.

Constructions of appropriate and acceptable parenthood and what counted as a legitimate family were deployed in the Section 28 debates as well, as is demonstrated in the above discussion of *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*. Ideas about acceptable parenthood can also be gleaned from the way in which Baroness Emily Blatch, who would become Minister of State for Education in 1991, spoke in the Lords about the novel *Faultline* by Sheila Ortiz-Taylor (1982):

> There are some of us—call it prejudice if you like—who feel serious disquiet at the description of two females in a sexual relationship bringing up a small child […] I should be seriously concerned if it were being advocated that such was any kind of a normal relationship and a desirable family relationship. (HL Debate, 1988c, c609)

These words, which connected 'a small child' with the sexual nature of a committed relationship, echo Dame Jill Knight's concerns about the image of Jenny with her father and his partner in bed. Once again, not only was abuse displaced onto same-

sex relationships, but such relationships were explicitly delineated from, and made distinct to, 'normal' and 'desirable' family relationships. Such clear opposition to same-sex families constituted heterosexual marriage and family life as hallmarks of the responsible sexual subject and, therefore, the responsible citizen. Consequently, controls of family and production (i.e., intimate citizenship) constituted the subject as an object of control. Section 28 sought, in turn, to regulate the object in part by controlling the availability of non-heterosexual literature and constituting that literature as a dangerous and widespread threat.

Discussion

As we have seen, the discursive constructions of children were not simply or only discourses about children and family life but were part of a process that discursively produced knowledge of sexuality, or more specifically, acceptable and appropriate sexuality in the context of childhood. Norms of what was appropriate and acceptable were thereby established: for children, these norms were heterosexuality, and as children grew into adulthood, heterosexuality within marriage and family life. Such discourses privileged heterosexuality within family life rather than, for example, single life or cohabitation. This, in turn, created, within the overarching hierarchy of sexuality generally, a hierarchy of heterosexuality itself. In other words, to be heterosexual was not in and of itself a sufficiently appropriate way of life, as one must also be in a relationship legally recognised and conducive to procreation. This framing constituted not just norms of sexuality but of gender as well, evidencing the manifestation of heteropatriarchy. Here, parliamentarians explicitly argued, as discussed, that legitimate families are only those that conform to

a particular structure that adheres to traditional gender roles, in which children are raised by both a mother and a father. Indeed, as discussed, Section 28 was a response in part to the 'violation' of such traditional roles that was depicted in a picture book about two men raising a child.

Consistent with Foucault's understanding of discourse and what counts as truth being mutually constitutive and self-reinforcing, heterosexual family life was constituted as the norm and became an enforcement mechanism for maintaining that norm. Relations of sex, Foucault (1976/1978) argued, gave rise to the deployment of sexuality as a means for 'controlling populations in an increasingly comprehensive way' (p. 107). This system of control gradually came to focus on the family as a means 'to anchor sexuality and provide it with a permanent support' and its 'chief agents' were the parents (Foucault, 1976/1978, pp. 108, 110). Foucault (1976/1978) further argued that

> from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the family engaged in searching out the slightest traces of sexuality in its midst, wrenching from itself the most difficult confessions, soliciting an audience with everyone who might know something about the matter, and opening itself unreservedly to endless examination. (p. 111)

The family was therefore another tool for regulating sexuality and children's access to information. In the U.K., this was accomplished primarily through the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, which 'shifted control [of sex education] to school governors and head teachers [and] enhanced accountability to parents' (Monk, 2001, p. 272). Making the provisions of sex education accountable to parents emphasised the family's role in regulating children's sexuality.

Section 28 can thus also be placed within the larger context of education reform (and of child protectionism in general, as discussed in Chapter 2) that was then taking place. In 1987, for example, the U.K. Government's Department of Education and Science (one of the predecessors to the current Department for Education) issued guidance on 'Sex Education at School'. Under that guidance, schools were advised to foster amongst students 'a recognition that both sexes should behave responsibly in sexual matters', which involved helping students to 'appreciate the benefits of stable married and family life and the responsibilities of parenthood' (Hancock, 1987, para. 19). The circular also said that 'there is no place in any school in any circumstances for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour, which presents it as the "norm", or which encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils' (Hancock, 1987, para. 22). At least one person, MP Robin Squire – who, in 1992, would ask the Government to extend the right of tenancy succession to same-sex partners (McManus, 2011, p. 191) – thought that children should not be taught 'sexuality of any sort' in school (HC Debate, 1988, c375), yet it was specifically homosexuality that schools were discouraged, through policies and legislation, from discussing.

Within and through all of these discourses is a reinforcement of both 'otherness' and stigmatisation against homosexuality, straight and gay alike. This ideology of homophobia and heterosexism can be understood as fragmentation (Thompson, 1990): not only are same-sex desires and relationships emphasised as different to the 'norm' of heterosexuality, but they are also constructed as harmful and damaging, as corrupting and even as fatally endangering individuals. The 'benefits of stable married and family life', on the other hand, could only be gained

through heterosexuality, or at least performative heterosexuality. These discourses, and the silencing of other discourses, by legitimising intolerance and hostility toward lesbian and gay people and their families (Colvin & Hawksley, 1989), privileged heterosexual family life as a way of life over any other. This ideology operated through the modes of legitimation and rationalisation (Thompson, 1990), arguing that there are justifiable grounds for maintaining heteropatriarchal domination (i.e., that heterosexual, reproductive families are the very basis of society and must therefore be protected or safeguarded; see van der Toorn et al., 2020). Furthermore, the privileging created a hierarchy of both sexuality and heterosexuality that resonated with Rubin's (1999) erotic pyramid (discussed previously). In particular, it manifested in the ways that, as detailed above, the Section 28 debates legitimised marital, reproductive, heterosexual relationships while delegitimating same-sex relationships, largely excluding lesbians, and making no mention whatsoever of trans or other gender or sexual identities.

While the exclusion of some identities might be expected, given that gender diversity amongst young people was not yet as visible or the topic of widespread and prominent debates and hostility as in today's world (a matter explored further in Chapter 7), trans people, including young people, did exist. The exclusion of gender diversity in particular from the debates, and the erasure of trans people altogether, resulted in the construction of gender and embodied personhood as encompassing only cisgender males and cisgender females. This framing constituted, in turn, childhood itself as being completely devoid of any gender diversity whatsoever. These ideas about childhood, and the misrecognitions embedded within them, were the norms by which literature and representations in literature for children were

judged as moral or immoral, acceptable or unacceptable, dangerous or not dangerous. Any literature or other resources for young people deemed unacceptable were to be feared, reviled, and rejected.

There was some opposition to Section 28 expressed amongst Parliamentarians, but such views were in the minority. We have already considered MP Simon Hughes' brief speech questioning why parliament was not also legislating against porn and other media. Lord Graham, an ex-MP and the only Peer to speak in opposition to the original iteration of Section 28 (see HL Debate, 1986, cc327–329), best summed up the substance of the opposition. In particular, he argued that Section 28 would 'repress the honest and open discussion of these matters at a time when [...] they ought as never before to be discussed seriously and sensibly in our schools' and, further, that there should be 'a greater understanding of the sexual orientation of everyone who lives in our society (HL Debate, 1986, c328). Others had less-radical oppositions, arguing that the new Education (No. 2) Act 1986 would, in the words of Lord Skelmersdale, 'prove fully effective in safeguarding pupils from [...] undesirable and extremist influence' of literature (HL Debate, 1986, c336). And some, such as Roberts, while remaining 'opposed to any education authority, any school or any teacher promoting homosexuality', were also 'not against portraying homosexuality in a positive way and promoting positive images of the fact that homosexuality exists' (Standing Committee, 1987, c1206).

Some of the public were also opposed to the law. On the day Section 28 was passed, a group of lesbians protested by abseiling into the House of Lords while shouting, 'Lesbians are angry!', and later disrupted a news broadcast (Elliott & Humphries, 2017, p. 231; Sommerlad, 2018). In London, 30,000 people rallied while

Manchester hosted its largest ever gay march when more than 20,000 people protested and actor Ian McKellen came out publicly for the first time (Elliott & Humphries, 2017, pp. 231–232; Sommerlad, 2018). These highly visible protests, which made aspects of personal, private life more visible themselves, rejected the norms of gender and sexuality that the debates had effectively reinforced, and were manifestations of the refusal to be contained, managed, and regulated. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 28 thus acted as a catalyst that mobilised the lesbian and gay community. Furthermore, lesbians abseiling into the House of Lords can even be read as a reclamation of the space of the 'house' or home from the political constructions of it as a normative space in which ideologies and appropriate behaviours were, in this case quite literally, regulated and enforced.

These examples were, in other words, 'reverse' discourses in which 'homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged' (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 101). As Stychin (1995) argued, 'identities come to be formed in part through the exercise of power (including law) in oppressive ways. But, in addition, identities can be articulated and consolidated through acts of hegemonic resistance and political process' (pp. 7–8). Such resistance in this case, as described above, demonstrated that the effects of domination, however widespread, are never completely stable (Foucault, 1976/1978). Whereas literature could 'only' portray on its pages new ways of being and of conceptualising homosexuality and the laws that regulate it, these demonstrations were real-life examples of such resistance. They were made visible through their sheer numbers and, in the case of the news broadcast protest, or indeed of any broadcast of or interview about any of the protests, brought this resistance, through

the camera and television, into the private space of the home, perhaps more so than children's literature ever did.

But this resistance should not be read as discounting the value of literature itself, including LGBT+ literature for children and young people. Not only does such literature provide points of resistance, as discussed earlier, but they also bring resistance into the private space of the home. This literature often explores visions or potentialities of the everyday lives of gays and lesbians, visions that are alternative, and even resistant to dominant discourses of heteronormative and heteropatriarchal ideologies (discussed previously) and their constraining or containing effects. In doing so, these narratives, in their diffusion of the 'negative schemas' through which homosexuals were imagined and represented (Eribon, 1999/2004, p. 152), bring to light different perspectives and possibilities, and new ideas about the place of power and forms of resistance. The significance of non-heterosexual texts, then, can be located in the frameworks they provide for alternative ways of thinking about and perceiving sex, sexuality, and family life and, consequently, the laws that regulate and constrain them. This opening up of legal consciousness to young people is, perhaps, what Section 28 supporters ultimately feared the most.

Conclusion

The inquiry in this study has been guided by, and has answered, the following research questions:

- How were children, children's sexuality, and children's literature constituted in the debates surrounding the enactment of Section 28?
- What role did children's literature play in those debates?

Analysing Section 28 and the 1986–1988 debates through the lens of sexuality reveals that the discursive constructions of children were concerned with, and were the outcome of, multiple discourses about much more than simply children: ideas and discourses about sexuality, the family, morality, education, and literature are embedded within these discourses. This analysis also shows that concern with non-heterosexual literature is, likewise, about much more than simply concern over what children are reading. Discourses of the child, and the other dominant discourses that cut across and constitute discourses of the child, including sexuality and morality, became a means by which appropriate sexuality was articulated and regulated. And by speaking about the child in these terms – in terms of desire, sex, and sexuality – politicians were forced to think about the child in sexual terms and children consequently became, or were constituted as, sexual. After all, homosexuality – whether dormant or otherwise – is, in part, about erotic/sexual attraction, and therefore parliament must have conceived of the child as experiencing, or potentially experiencing, erotic/sexual attraction. It is that desire, the *as yet* unacted upon or realised desire that defined constructions of the child as latently homosexual. In other words, the child became, through political discourse, sexualised in terms of (potential) desire, a desire that could corrupt children and ultimately undermine hegemonic norms of sexuality, gender, and family life.

Given that the corrupt(ible) child could undermine family life, all children were constituted as a problem (i.e., as homosexual and corrupt*ing*) and therefore required surveillance, control, and censorship of the reading material and resources available to them. Children's literature has been described as 'an effort to educate children in ways that adults understand as being for their own good, an effort that

seems to fly in the face of the declared allegiance of contemporary adult societies to individual freedom and individual choice' (Nodelman, 2013, p. 158). According to parliament, children could not be trusted with such freedom and individual choice. The discursive strategies deployed in the debates constituted clear boundaries of appropriate literature and education for children (and as we will see in Studies 2 and 3, those boundaries have shifted).

These discourses reappeared in the debates surrounding the repeal of Section 28 (see, e.g., Rahman, 2004), but opposition to LGBT+ perspectives can be seen more recently in the 2019 protests to the No Outsiders programme, which was introduced in Birmingham schools to teach about the Equality Act 2010, including different relationships. After the programme was introduced, there were objections from some parents, which soon grew into daily protests (*BBC News*, 2019). The protests were led by Amir Ahmed, who did not have children at any of the affected schools but objected to 'proselytizing [the] homosexual way of life to children' and said that 'we have traditional family values and morally we do not accept homosexuality as a valid sexual relationship to have' (*BBC News*, 2019, 'Who is heading the demonstrations?' section). The tone of these objections, even their very language – that homosexuality can be proselytised or taught to children, that it is contrary to family life and not a 'valid' relationship – echo clearly and eerily, almost to the point of mimicry, those raised in the Section 28 debates. This construct clearly thus uses traditional grounds, or appeals to notions of traditionality, to legitimate (Thompson, 1990) the ideologies of heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy. Ahmed even claimed that 'conditioning' children 'to accept [homosexuality]' can make them 'more promiscuous as they grow older' (*BBC News*, 2019, 'Who is heading the

demonstrations?' section), displacing, as politicians did ad nauseam, concerns about the corruption of children onto same-sex desire, using the mode of fragmentation (Thompson, 1990) to differentiate homosexuality as a harmful threat.

The question also remains to what extent these discourses, circulated today, have on children themselves, many of whom identify as LGBT+ and are no doubt aware of protests like those in Birmingham. Many LGBT+ students are already particularly vulnerable and powerless, being threatened, harassed, and physically attacked at school, in the home, and on social media (Horn et al., 2008). Matters may be even more bleak if they are also isolated at home, unable to talk about their problems due to intolerant families. However, these factors underscore the importance of children's books that, as discussed, can offer LGBT+ young people a means to find answers, experience new perspectives, and cope with their own life experiences. In the words of F. A. Day (2000), such

> books can play an important role in helping young [non-heterosexual] people survive the life-threatening circumstances in which they find themselves […] One way to provide hope to these isolated youngsters is to share compassionate books that deal honestly with the very issues with which they are grappling. (p. xviii)

This brings us to the next study in this thesis, which is the examination of 16 British LGB YA novels to better understand, in light of the discursive strategies circulated in the Section 28 debates, what their narratives convey to readers about young people and sexuality.

Chapter 5: British LGB YA Novels After Section 28

The previous chapter discussed the Section 28 parliamentary debates and the role of children's literature in what Weeks (2016) described as 'the key legislative move in the 1980s' for lesbian and gay history (p. 238). This chapter presents a directed content analysis of British LGB YA novels published after Section 28's enactment and maps that literature against key LGBT+ legal reforms. It focuses on the content of the novels and how young people and sexual diversity are constructed in their pages, beginning with a discussion of the themes that were identified in the directed content analysis: (1) violence-centred narratives, (2) young people as knowledgeable, and (3) questioning and resisting labels.

The first theme encompasses narratives that centre on and emphasise violent trauma, drawing on examples from the novels by Newbery, Davis, Wilson, Collins, Blackman, Long, Dawson, Dunne, C. Clarke, Oseman, and Payne (see Table 4). The second theme centers on young people as knowledgeable, as depicted in the novels by Manning, Dunne, Tym, Chambers, Newbery, and C. Clarke. The third theme focuses on the questioning of, and resistance to, labels, as demonstrated in the novels by Burchill, Long, Limb, Chambers, Newbery, and Manning. The same themes often appear and reappear in each of the novels, reflecting shared ideological preoccupations across the corpus that reflect a progressive shift in thinking in British society that has resulted in greater acceptance of, and even a political commitment to, recognising the value of sexual diversity in the lives of young people. As will be discussed, this shift also reflects how young people themselves may organise, understand, process, and experience same-sex desires. The chapter's conclusion demonstrates the ways in which the corpus of texts can be read as a microcosm of

larger societal and institutional evolutions in the recognition of same-sex desire, which reflects more complex and nuanced ideas about young people and sexuality that are a significant erosion of Section 28's legacy.

Theme 1: Violence-Centred Narratives

This section presents the first theme, violence-centred narratives. Violence is defined as the 'deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc.; physically violent behaviour or treatment' (Oxford University Press, 2020d). The analysis in this section demonstrates how, in the novels portraying violence (see Table 4), those in the earlier half of the corpus (published between 2002 and 2012) conflate violence with same-sex desires by portraying characters who are harmed because of their sexuality. In other words, non-heterosexual young people are constructed as vulnerable to harm specifically because of their same-sex desires. It then demonstrates how novels in the latter half of the corpus, published between 2012 and 2014, offer a different ideological argument by *not* linking their portrayals of violence to experiences of same-sex desires. In those novels, such desires are shown instead to actually enhance young people's lives in a positive way.

This distinction is subtle upon a first reading of the novels, but it is significant, particularly against the backdrop of LGBT+ legal reforms discussed throughout the discussion below, as it reveals a change in wider British society's recognition and acceptance of LGB youth. Specifically, the shift can be understood as a move away from the dogmatic constructs of the Section 28 debates that framed children as innocent and both sexual diversity and children's literature as harmful,

and toward one that constitutes childhood as dynamic and accepts non-heterosexual young people and recognises their capacities for agency and self-determination.

The construction of sexual diversity amongst young people as dangerous is most clearly evident in the novels by Newbery, Davis, Wilson, Collins, Blackman, and Long, in which characters are subjected to physically violent behaviour because of their actual or perceived sexuality. Given that sexuality is the motivating factor, the attacks can be understood as homophobic hate crimes.[6] These portrayals are distinct from the corpus novels in which violence is *not* motivated by similar hostility. This distinction (novels which conflate sexuality with violence and those that do not) and the relevant novels are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Novels Portraying Sexual Diversity as Dangerous or Unremarkable

Dangerous	Year	Unremarkable	Year
The Shell House	2002	*Hollow Pike*	2012
My Side of the Story	2007	*Secret Lies*	2013
Kiss	2007	*Undone*	2013
The Traitor Game	2008	*Solitaire*	2014
Boys Don't Cry	2010	*Because of Her*	2014
What's Up With Jody Barton?	2012		

[6] Such violence might qualify the attacks as hate crime, defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (n.d., 'Hate crime' section) – the agency responsible for criminal prosecutions in England and Wales – as 'a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity'. Police Scotland (n.d., 'What is hate crime?' section) similarly define the term as 'any crime which is perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by malice or ill will towards a social group', including those covered by sexual orientation and transgender/gender identity.

Each of the novels in the first column of Table 4 links violence directly to non-heterosexual desire, which, in turn, constructs teens with those desires as vulnerable to physical harm, as the following textual evidence and analyses show. Each of the novels will now be discussed in order of the year of publication.

The Shell House by Linda Newbery (2002)

This novel was published just two years after the repeal of Section 28 in Scotland and the lifting of the ban on lesbians and gays serving in the British armed forces (Weeks, 2016, p. 260), which marked wider acceptance of lesbian and gay people. The novel, which has been described as crossing over the traditional boundary of YA and adult novels (Jenkins & Cart, 2018, p. 94), includes two narratives. The first is about Edmund, an 18-year-old Englishman serving in the First World War who is in love with a young man named Alex but is expected to marry a woman named Philippa. When Alex dies, Edmund decides to leave his parents and Philippa a note that leads them to believe he has drowned himself to avoid his continued service in the war. In reality, he has run off to create a new identity, adopting Alex's last name and creating a new life for himself. It is never made clear what exactly becomes of him (leaving open the possibility that he was able to live more happily, if not openly as a gay man, then at least to a greater degree than was possible in his old life), but what is significant is that Edmund must pretend a violent death to enable his new identity. While he does not actually die (and therefore his body is not subjected to actual, physical violence), his parents and Philippa are not aware of this. They believe that he has actually drowned, and it is their belief in his violent end that allows Edmund to achieve the freedom to, presumably, embrace his

sexuality. This form of violence is not as clear-cut or obvious as the examples discussed below, but it is nevertheless a form of (imagined) self-harm motivated by the hostility Edmund faces from his family. This novel, while perhaps a more subtle manifestation of the construction of sexual diversity amongst young people as dangerous, nevertheless reinforces that link and is a deficit framing of homosexuality as a site of tragedy, even if the protagonist is successful in escaping the most immediate constraints of a heteropatriarchal society.

My Side of the Story by Will Davis (2007)

The link between violence and sexuality in this novel is particularly disturbing because the author seems not to have realised that his own book includes a rape scene, which reveals how writers can insert ideology unconsciously. Indeed, after the rape, none of the characters, particularly the victim, seem to ever realise what happened or respond to it in any way. The author thus (albeit perhaps inadvertently and unconsciously) constructed rape as unremarkable in the lives of gay teens. The story begins with Jaz's parents finding out that he is gay and confronting him about his sneaking out to gay bars in London. The tension between Jaz and his mother propels much of the plot, with side stories about bullying that Jaz is subjected to in school once everyone learns he is gay. One bully, Fabian, threatens him with a knife more than once, at one point even holding it against Jaz's throat and asking him, 'So how's my favourite faggot today?' (Davis, 2007/2008, p. 70). The violence escalates with Fabian eventually committing suicide a few days later.

The rape occurs when Jaz is visiting in Brighton a man named Jon, whom he had earlier met in London. Jon has a roommate named Buddy, and Buddy and Jaz

are out one night at a bar. Buddy offers Jaz cocaine after they have both already had several alcoholic drinks. They start kissing and Buddy's hand are 'touching [Jaz] all over' (Davis, 2007/2008, p. 184). Jaz thinks: 'I'm not sure I want to be here [...] but it's too late to be saying No' (Davis, 2007/2008, p. 184). When Buddy says he wants to go back to his flat, Jaz says okay but thinks: 'only because I don't seem to have a free will anymore' (Davis, 2007/2008, p. 185). He again tells himself that this encounter is not something he really wants when they arrive back to the flat and does not even realise the moment when Buddy takes his clothes off. Once Buddy is on top of him, Jaz again thinks: 'you can't really tell someone to stop when they're in the throes, so I just lie back and deal with it' (Davis, 2007/2008, pp. 185–186). Jaz also does not realise when Buddy turns him over nor does he know if Buddy has put a condom on, but he does 'remember the pain', describing it as like 'being impaled' (Davis, 2007/2008, p. 186). He grabs the sheets, digs in with his nails, and cries as things progress. Jon eventually walks in on them, and when the rape is finished, Jaz's only concern is to make things 'right' with Jon because he finds himself attracted to him. Nothing is said about what had just happened for the rest of the novel, implying that these sorts of actions are entirely normal and unremarkable.

These troubling depictions not only construct young gay teens as vulnerable and powerless, but they also argue that physical harm is apparently so commonplace in the lives of gay people, young and old alike, that even rape is ordinary. Furthermore, the narrative erases issues of consent and sexual agency. The rape in particular (and in addition to the bullying) frames gay life as violent while also sending the message to readers that it is unacceptable to say no at any point, that consent, given at the beginning, cannot later be revoked. Readers may acquire the

perception that one indeed cannot stop sex if the other person is already ‘in the throes’ of it, that once sex is initiated, they must ‘deal with it’ even if they do not want it any longer. The book also suggests that people who have consumed significant amounts of drugs and alcohol nevertheless still possess the capacity to give consent in the first place. These messages teach young people to be silent in the very moments when they should be anything but, and they are also the most problematic and damaging of any ideology in this entire corpus. Whether or not the author intended to make such arguments, these are the ideas to which readers have been and are exposed. As Stephens (1992) argued, ideology ‘need not be a product of deliberate policy’ but can also reflect ‘beliefs and assumptions of which the author is, or may be, unaware’ (p. 9). Political messages, therefore, can operate in children’s literature independent of authorial intentions, as Davis’s novel clearly shows.

Kiss by Jacqueline Wilson (2007)

Carl is secretly attracted to his classmate, Paul, something Carl wants to keep hidden from his best friend, Sylvie. Carl is unsure whether Paul is gay, but when he is alone with him one night, he takes a chance and kisses Paul. Paul reacts violently and physically attacks him. Carl describes what happens:

> He acted like it’s some sort of contagious disease and I was trying to infect him too. He was so *angry* with me. I fell over and he actually started *kicking* me, even though we’d been best mates just two minutes ago. Then he stormed off, saying he never ever wanted to see me again. (J. Wilson, 2007, p. 236)

This attack recalls the so-called defence of 'homosexual panic', described by Sedgwick (1990) as a defence for 'a person (typically a man) accused of antigay violence [which] implies that his responsibility for the crime was diminished by a pathological psychological condition, perhaps brought on by an unwanted sexual advance from the man whom he then attacked' (p. 19). The gay panic defence

> alludes to the double bind […] in which any affection or desire of one man for another might also implicate the recipient-object himself as homosexual, requiring, so it goes, a potent demonstration of denial that cannot help but look excessive and self-implicating. (Tribunella, 2011, p. 129)

Paul's violent attack is just such a 'potent demonstration', but he may fear more than 'just' being perceived as gay. As Butler (1995) argued, masculinity and feminity 'emerge in tandem with the achievement of heterosexuality' (p. 168). Paul's violent 'panic' can therefore be read as a fear of being implicated not only as gay but also feminine, a manifestation of both homophobia and 'effeminophobia' (Sedgwick, 1991/2004, p. 141), the fear not just of being gay but of effeminacy and being associated with the feminine sex or manifesting in oneself traditionally feminine traits. He desires both heterosexuality *and* masculinity, conflating sexuality and gender (a clear example of heteropatriarchy) and translating Carl's kiss as a threat to one and both the same.

Violence also manifests in this novel in the form of self-harm that reveals Carl's internalised homophobia (which, again, is the result of him acting on his desires, because the homophobia and sexism he internalises is that of Paul). In the shed behind his family's house, he keeps a collection of glass figurines. In response to being violently rejected by Paul, he goes to the shed and destroys everything in it,

including the figurines. He suffers multiple cuts on his arms and hands from the broken glass, requiring a hospital visit for sutures, a visible manifestation of internalised homophobia. As in the novel above, this book constructs trauma as a direct result of same-sex desires.

The Traitor Game by B. R. Collins (2008)

Sexuality is again linked to trauma in this novel, which was published between the Equality Acts 2006 and 2010 (reforms that collated certain legal protections against discrimination based on sexuality). Michael and Francis are best friends who soon suffer a falling out after a misunderstanding that results in an escalating argument. In a flash of revenge, Michael tells the school bully that Francis is gay, a 'bloody pansy', believing it was 'the only thing he *could* say that would make Francis's life a total misery' (Collins, 2008/2009, p. 126). Francis actually is gay, but Michael only guesses at this. The bully, Shipley, and his friends decide to attack Francis, while Michael watches:

> Then someone hit Francis. And the others joined in.
>
> Michael sensed it in his own body, the force of it, the damage, like someone had swung something hard into his chest. He felt the separate punches, the moment when Francis dropped to his knees, the kick that knocked him forward, scratching for breath. Francis raised his arms to protect his head, just taking it now, not fighting back, and cold haemorrhaged into Michael's stomach, burning him. (Collins, 2008/2009, pp. 144–145)

This attack leads to Michael apologising to Francis (or at least attempting to), which leads to Francis coming out to Michael. Violence, as in *Kiss*, is the prompt for

coming (forcibly) out. The argument between Francis and Michael is only resolved once Michael turns the homophobic insults around on Shipley (also called Shitley), accusing *him* of being gay:

> [Michael] said, 'Why do you bully kids like Benedick Townsend? […] Because you can't think of anything better to do? Or just because you're a pathetic, sadistic, perverted shit? […] So what makes you do it? Does it turn you on? […] Kids like Townsend…it's because deep down you're as much of a pervert – you're as much of a faggot' (Collins, 2008/2009, pp. 272–273)

There is not an acceptance of Francis being gay, but rather an inversion of it, a deflection or (re)projection of his homophobic disgust toward the homophobic bully. Francis recognises this, asking Michael, 'You thought telling Shitley he was as much of a pervert as I am would make me feel better about the whole thing?' (Collins, 2008/2009, p. 287). But this recognition is now shown to have any significance. Instead, Francis and Michael simply become friends again. In other words, their relationship is seemingly repaired by inverted hate speech.

This framing of reverse homophobia as insignificant is troubling because it suggests that it is acceptable or justified if aimed at the 'right' target, echoing Blackman's novel (discussed below). Positioning homophobia as something that can be justified reinforces the construction of heterosexuality as the hegemonic norm (and thus reinforced heteronormativity) as it not only 'others' different types of sexual desire, but it also weaponizes them as a means to enforce that otherness. Therefore, while trauma in this novel was not the result of a character acting on their same-sex desire, it constructs such desire as something to be weaponised against

others. This construction is only possible through the framing of same-sex attraction as dangerous.

Boys Don't Cry by Malorie Blackman (2010)

Adam is openly gay but Josh, whom he is dating, is not, even to the point of expressing homophobic opinions when in the company of others. In one scene, for example, he, Adam, and Dante (Adam's brother) are having dinner with a few other friends to celebrate Dante's birthday:

> 'Josh, can I have one of your chips?' Adam asked, his hand already on Josh's plate.
>
> Josh grabbed Adam's wrist, twisting it viciously. 'I don't want your hand in my food, you queer son-of-a-bitch.'
>
> 'Josh…' Adam gasped out […]
>
> 'Sorry, Dante, but I don't want your brother touching my food,' said Josh, adding viciously, 'God knows what I might catch.' (Blackman, 2010/2014, p. 213)

Once they leave the restaurant, the scene escalates, with Josh physically assaulting Adam and calling him a 'fairy', 'filthy little queer', 'poof', 'queer', and 'shirt-lifter' (Blackman, 2010/2014, p. 217). Adam ends up in the hospital with a broken jaw and nose, two broken ribs, and a shattered eye socket. Once he is home, he attempts suicide. It is these scenes which provide the bonding moments for everyone in their family to grow closer together. Dante realises that being gay is not 'a phase' and becomes more accepting of Adam, and both Dante and Adam are able to realise that their father truly does love them, with the whole family drawing closer as a result.

This book constructs gay teens as vulnerable because of their sexuality, and that such harm can ultimately be beneficial to the extent it draws their family closer together. Like Davis, the author here probably did not intend to convey this message, but it is nevertheless an ideological construct that may potentially influence young readers by suggesting that abuse can, on some level, be justified.

What's Up With Jody Barton? by Hayley Long (2012)

This novel, published the year before marriage equality was achieved in England and Wales, was shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award (Woodfine, 2012). Jody is attracted to his twin sister's crush and then boyfriend, Liam. Like Carl in *Kiss*, Jody seizes the moment he finds himself alone with Liam and kisses him suddenly. Liam, predictably, responds violently, hitting Jody in the face and yelling, 'What the hell was that? You gay piece of shit' (Long, 2012, p. 107). After hitting Jody, Liam calls him bent and spits toward him. Liam's punch, which seems almost a reflexive movement, places the blame, as would a panic defence, on the victim ('What the hell was that?') as somehow deserving a violent response.[7] Again, the argument is made that acting on same-sex desires – moments, it seems, that must be stolen rather than consensual – inevitably results in violence.

One other novel is tangentially related to the portrayals of violence discussed in this theme: Tym's (2002) *Living Upside Down*, the only book in the corpus to portray a parent in a same-sex relationship. In that novel, Chloe, who is 16, lives with her father, an alcoholic. Both he and Chloe have trouble accepting the fact that

[7] Jody's kiss could, like Carl's, constitute assault and battery, but even so, the violent responses are clearly disproportionate.

Chloe's mother is now dating other women, blaming her (and presumably her sexuality) for her father's drinking: 'It was her fault he was like this' (Tym, 2002, p. 132). This line could be read as Chloe being unhappy solely because of the divorce, but it is difficult to not make the link between her mother's sexuality and her father's alcoholism, as the novel frames homosexuality as a significant plot point. The blurb on the back cover even reads, with a rather dramatic use of an ellipsis: 'when her mum leaves her dad…for a woman, Chloe's life really starts to crumble'. The novel thus perpetuates the link between harm (the effects of alcoholism and Chloe's life falling apart) and sexual diversity. It also reifies the othering of LGBT+ identity, given that the plot pivots around the framing of a parent's same-sex relationship as unusual and a challenge for Chloe to overcome.

As the evidence in this analysis has revealed so far, several of the novels in the corpus conflate sexual diversity with trauma, violence, and vulnerability, which would perhaps seem to perpetuate heterosexism (i.e., the belief that homosexuality is inferior). While these novels portray young people who experience same-sex desire, and therefore are the sorts of texts that politicians in the Section 28 debates had sought to control, they nevertheless echo Parliamentarians' conflations of innocence with childhood and of harm with homosexuality. The novels' depictions of same-sex desires can thus be read as oppressing sexual diversity amongst young people rather than actually empowering it, even though LGB characters are included in the narratives. As Crisp (2009) wrote, homophobia as a literary mechanism 'reinforce[s] a view of gay people as outcasts subject to being the targets of physical abuse and verbal harassment' (p. 336). Using homophobia to frame the experiences of young lesbian and gay characters is especially troubling in light of the argument by Clark

and Blackburn (2014) that if ‘readers encounter scenes of violence but not of sex (and love), then they may come to understand that to be LGBTQQ is a lonely life, devoid of sex and love but full of violence’ (p. 885). While pain and pleasure are typical experiences for any sexual orientation (Trites, 2000), many of these novels, as discussed, emphasise violence by centring the plots on trauma, and overcoming trauma, in place of love or pleasure.

Additionally, in constituting sexual diversity as a site of vulnerability and harm for young people, the novels focus only on the cisgender male experience. This ideology, cissexism, operates through dissimulation (Thompson, 1990), in that the focus on gay sexuality seems to gloss over the privileging that centres cisgender gay males in the narratives. The novels can therefore be read more particularly as masculinist enactments of sexuality in two ways: first, through the experiences of cisgender males within a deficit framing of same-sex desire, and second, through heterosexual males who perpetrate the violence in response to unwanted advances from gay young men. In both cases, a direct link is made between violence and masculinity, with violence even being framed as integral to gay identity. The novels do not construct a heteropatriarchal hierarchy of sexuality and gender so much as posit that the only perspective relevant or important to young readers is that of cisgender and gay young men. This narrow construction is an elision of perspectives across the spectrum of sexual and gender positionalities, which may cause young readers who share those positionalities to feel devalued or altogether unimportant when reading books that do not reflect them.

These portrayals of sexual diversity can be understood within the framework of the ‘duality of repression and liberation’ identified by Trites (2000, p. 113), in

which non-heterosexual teen novels can be read as empowering non-heterosexual teens while simultaneously oppressing them. As we have seen, the novels are clearly repressive in their emphasis on masculinity and violence. On the other hand, the texts can, as discussed previously, be empowering in the sense that young people are able to read about others who are negotiating same-sex desires, potentially helping readers with similar desires to feel less isolated and expanding the context in which young people may come not only to understand their present, but to also anticipate their future.

Additionally, none of the narratives ever quite rises to the level of cautionary tale against experiences (however narrow those might be) of sexual diversity in adolescence. They do not portray the full diversity of those experiences, but they evidence a clear departure from the Section 28 argument that sexual diversity amongst young people must be suppressed. For example, Edmund in *The Shell House* fakes his death precisely because (it would seem) he believes same-sex relationships to be so important and pleasurable that he willingly gave up his family and comfort so as to live more fully as a man who had loved, and would presumably love again, another man. That is quite a strong case for the benefits and pleasures of same-sex relationships. Similarly, Jody in *What's Up With Jody Barton?* eventually reflects on everything that happened with Liam, decides he no longer cares about him, and subsequently comes out to his father. That moment is portrayed warmly:

> And then he [Jody's father] put his guiding hand back on my shoulder and we both walked on towards the two great big rainbows in the sky.

> And it was true what I told him. I don't fancy Liam Mackie any more. I don't even like him. But, even so, I won't ever forget him. Because he was the spark which lit the fire that changed my life.
>
> And I'm totally cool with that. (Long, 2012, p. 249)

Despite Liam's attack and other negative behaviour toward Jody, Jody has come out of those experiences with his life having changed (although this scene recalls Blackman's portrayal of a family growing closer together after a homophobic attack, and thus similarly suggests that perhaps the end can justifies the means).

Furthermore, homophobia in these novels, even if never addressed through legal channels, is shown to be itself deviant. None of the homophobic characters are portrayed by the authors as sympathetic, and the reader is therefore distanced from the opinions of those characters. Shipley in *The Traitor Game*, for example, is only ever shown when he attacks, verbally or otherwise, the other characters. Liam in *What's Up With Jody Barton?* is misogynistic, admitting that he only dated Jody's sister because he was attracted to their mother; and toward the end of the novel, Jody's father kicks Liam out of the family's café. Josh in *Boys Don't Cry* does break down into tears when he admits he is gay (implying regret but also that his violence was motivated by internalised homophobia), but this is the only scene in which any interiority is shown for Josh, limiting any potentially sympathetic response from the reader. Finally, in *Kiss*, Paul is only present in a few scenes and all of the other characters express outrage at how he treated Carl. Thus, while the novels frame young lesbian and gay life as violent, it is clear that such violence is unacceptable. This framing is accomplished, in part, by portraying the non-heterosexual characters as engaging and likeable, which in turn fosters empathy in the readers, as is evident

when, for example, Adam survives his suicide attempt and bonds with his family, and Jody finally comes out to his father.

Although some of the narratives are problematic (including issues of consent and reverse homophobia), the way that these stories are drawn together in their conclusions does not construct same-sex desires as something dangerous that young people should avoid, but rather as something that ultimately benefits the characters, who are willing to go to great lengths to continue experiencing those desires. The favourable (if rather narrow) treatment of same-sex desires encourages acceptance by, and empathy from, the reader. These examples – along with the ways in which Carl bonds with friends and family in *Kiss*, as does Jaz does in *My Side of the Story*, and Francis and Michael's relationship endures in *The Traitor Game* – are, while not completely opposed to the arguments of Crisp (2009) and Trites (2000), given that the narratives are still framed significantly by masculinity and violence, demonstrate how those arguments cannot be applied without nuance that takes into account the overarching ideology of this corpus, which is that, while humans can be both strong and weak, sexuality itself is never a weakness.

A Shift in the Corpus

A shift can be discerned in the corpus in that the novels by Dawson, Dunne, C. Clarke, Oseman, and Payne, while also portraying violence, locate trauma outside sexuality altogether: homophobia no longer takes the form of physical assaults and, notably, sexuality itself is either less significant or altogether insignificant to the plot. This is not to say that homophobia is completely absent from their pages. In fact, there are several instances in which slurs are hurled at the non-heterosexual victims,

just as there are in the novels discussed above. However, the deemphasis on sexuality as a motivation or plot device indicates a growing intolerance of homophobia itself amongst teens. There is even one example in which a teen is attacked *because* of his alleged homophobia, in clear contrast to the sexuality-based trauma in other novels. The following textual evidence and analyses support this shift.

Hollow Pike by Juno Dawson (2012)

Lis has just moved to a new town and high school in England. Two of her new friends, Kitty and Delilah, are in a lesbian relationship; the story, however, unfolds not around their sexuality but around the death of one of their classmates. There are occasional homophobic slurs, but they are not significant to the plot or shown to affect Kitty and Delilah in any particular way. The focus instead is on matters wholly unrelated to the same-sex relationship, which is backgrounded (rather than foregrounded) in the novel.

Secret Lies by Amy Dunne (2013)

Nicola is assaulted and battered by her mum’s boyfriend, Chris, who attempts to rape Nicola after physically and mentally abusing her for years. At the beginning of the novel, she rushes out of the house and literally runs into Jenny, falling down. Nicola is taken back to Jenny’s house to wash and bandage her injured hand. This leads to them developing a relationship, first as friends and then as lovers. The first time they have sex happens after Jenny takes photos of Nicola’s scars and fresh wounds from when Chris had burned his cigarettes into her back. Eventually, Nicola

ends up in the hospital after confronting Chris and trying to capture his abuse on video so that she can have him arrested. Chris's assault leaves her face 'covered with dark bruising and disfigured from the swelling and bloating', with a swollen left eye and a 'severe gash on her forehead and scalp' (Dunne, 2013, p. 266). The novel ends soon after Chris's arrest, with Nicola recovering in the hospital. While this is the only novel showing the victim reporting their abuse to the police and violence is clearly significant to the novel's plot, none of these instances are motivated by hostility toward sexuality. Rather, it is the home itself, the centre of family life that Section 28 had sought to protect, that is shown as the site of violence and exploitation.

Undone by Cat Clarke (2013)

This novel was first published the same year that marriage equality was achieved in England and Wales. Kai, an openly gay teenager, is secretly filmed performing oral sex on another boy. This recorded surveillance is then released to Kai's entire school (by his sister in a moment of revenge, as revealed at the end of the novel). Other students call Kai homophobic names and he eventually kills himself, leaving behind his best friend, Jem, to enact her own revenge plot. While recording the sex act and then releasing it are both very real forms of violence, Kai's sister did these things not because of his sexuality, but because he was involved with her boyfriend. The motivation, in other words, was not hostility toward Kai's sexuality but betrayal and jealousy.

Solitaire by Alice Oseman (2014)

This novel was first published the year marriage equality was achieved in Scotland. Ben becomes angry at his classmate, Charlie, who is openly gay. Ben suspects that Charlie has circulated rumours about him (the nature of the rumours is never really made clear). This confrontation results in Charlie being assaulted, as described by Charlie's sister, Tori:

> There's a sharp smack and a crash […] Charlie is crumpled on the floor. Ben Hope is in some kind of rage, just hitting Charlie's face, and there's blood, and Nick tackles Ben in the side and the pair topple down the row and into the wall at the end […] and Nick is screaming, 'I'LL KILL YOU!' over and over […] (Oseman, 2014/2018, p. 202)

While there is clearly a significant amount of violence in this novel, it is motivated by betrayal: Ben does not attack Charlie because he is gay but because he believes Charlie to be behind the rumours. Ben's attack is eventually published on an anonymous blog read by most of his classmates. The post, published while Ben is at a house party, calls for everyone to 'giv[e] him exactly what he deserves' (Oseman, 2014/2018, p. 231). He is then attacked at the party: 'Two boys hold Ben Hope while several others hurl punches and kicks at him. Blood spatters on to the snow and the spectacle gets wild cheers every time a hit is made' (Oseman, 2014/2018, p. 232). Afterward, some of the students feel sorry for Ben but 'others say he deserved what he got for being a homophobe' (Oseman, 2014/2018, p. 240). In this scene, the violence is motivated not by homophobia but by intolerance of homophobia. As with the reverse homophobia in *The Traitor Game*, the attack is troubling because it apparently justifies vigilante 'justice' and physical harm. Even more troubling, the

attack occurred without any substantive proof whatsoever, being motivated by a mere post on an anonymous blog. Whether or not Ben is actually homophobic is never confirmed.

Because of Her by K. E. Payne (2014)

Physical violence is mostly absent in this novel, making it a significant departure from the trauma-based narratives (whether or not linked to sexuality) discussed so far. Tabby joins the school's fencing team and learns that her crush, a classmate named Eden, is also a member of the team. During one of their practice duels, Tabby injures her knee and Eden, who accidentally caused the injury, goes with her to the hospital. This incident is the limit of physical harm in the novel and it is of course completely unrelated to sexuality. The couple is on the receiving end of a number of slurs when they go public with their relationship, but the slurs are resisted by the ways in which their relationship is shown to be warm and accepted by others. Everything comes to a head at Eden's birthday party, where Eden confesses her love for Tabby in front of everyone, including Eden's parents. At first, her mother does not understand, then says the idea of Eden loving another woman is 'absurd' and accuses Tabby of encouraging Eden to 'experiment' with her (Payne, 2014, Chapter 46, paras. 1, 26). A classmate calls Tabby a 'poisonous bitch' for making Eden 'like this' and for 'spouting […] lezzy bullshit' (Payne, 2014, Chapter 46, paras. 37, 41). Other words used to describe their relationship include 'revolting', 'disgusting', 'sickening', and 'vile' (Payne, 2014, Chapter 46, paras. 39, 52, 57, 59). However, the reader is not encouraged to approve of or accept the slurs as true or in any way deserved. Eden's dad, for example, tells her that she is 'very brave' and that her

mother just needs time (Payne, 2014, Chapter 46, para. 81). The homophobic classmates, on the other hand (and there are only three of them out of the entire party), are themselves never presented sympathetically, which further distances the reader from their views.

The novel is also significant for how it portrays the relationship between Eden and Tabby, that is, by expanding not on the moments of homophobia but on the tenderness and warmth between Eden and Tabby and the benefits they receive from each other's love. Consider, for example, this passage:

> We looked at one another, holding each other's eyes for the longest time. Slowly, Eden leaned closer. Still looking into my eyes, she grazed her lips against mine, softly to begin with, then harder as I kissed her back. She looped her arm around my waist, pulling me against her, and kissed me deeper still, the intensity of the moment and her warm lips on mine making my head swirl. Finally, she pulled back, taking my hands in hers. 'I love you, Tabs. Very much.'
>
> 'Three little words.' I looked down at our joined hands. 'But they mean so much. To me, anyway.' (Payne, 2014, Chapter 46, paras. 129–130).

The novel also concludes with Tabby thinking that 'sometimes change really can be for the better' (Payne, 2014, Chapter 46, para. 130). The novel thus centers on the ways in which same-sex desires and relationships enhance the characters' lives. This focus is absent from the other novels with portrayals of violence discussed above, further underscoring the shifts being discussed here.

These novels thus demonstrate a shift from constructing sexuality as a site of victimhood. In the earlier books portraying violence, there is danger in acting upon

one's same-sex desires, or at least in others realising that one has such desires. Crisp's (2011) argument about the *Rainbow Boys* series applies here as well: the non-heterosexual characters 'must always be prepared to defend themselves against violent antagonists' (p. 217). Homophobic violence is thus constituted as an inevitability for young people who experience same-sex desires. To draw on Trites's (2011) argument that heterosexuality colonises lesbianism, violence here colonises same-sex desires. In the later novels, however, non-heterosexual teens are depicted not as sexual minorities experiencing trauma because of their same-sex desires, but as just teens experiencing life and love. This shift is significant because portrayals of teens with same-sex desires as simply regular teens construct those desires as 'normal' and unremarkable. The teens experience problems, of course (otherwise there would be no plot), but their relationships are depicted as pleasurable and beneficial, something that is noticeably absent in the earlier novels. Indeed, had those earlier novels portrayed sexual diversity as unremarkable, there would have been virtually no plot. In the 2012–2014 novels, the drama of the plot is divorced from sexuality, a key shift in this corpus that corresponds to LGBT+ legal reforms. As Long said of her novel *What's Up With Jody Barton?*: 'Ultimately it's just a book about a teenager' (Woodfine, 2012). The same sentiment applies to the 2012–2014 novels: they are books not about sexuality but about teenagers.

This shift is in direct polarity to the constructions of young people and sexuality that circulated in the Section 28 debates, in which childhood was conflated with innocence (even while young people themselves were constructed as innately homosexual) and sexuality was so remarkable that government intervention was required to help control or prevent it. This protectionist intervention sought to keep

young people from having access, at local authority expense, to literature that might incite lurid, (homo)sexual desires. Yet the novels discussed so far show a transition from such conservative views being reflected in their narratives. Young people with same-sex desires have come to be shown simply as people who, just like adults, are not suffering because of their desires but doing their best to navigate whatever life throws at them. Even in the books linking violence with non-heterosexuality sexual diversity is constructed as beneficial and worthwhile. This position is in sharp contrast to the Section 28 argument that children must be protected from that kind of diversity lest they be corrupted and undermine the basis of society (i.e., heteronormativity, heterosexism, and heteropatriarchy). The Section 28 ideologies of innocence, vulnerability, and protection are thus rejected in British LGB YA fiction published since the parliamentary debates. The examples discussed above are not, however, the only ways in which the novels undermine the Section 28 constructions of young people and sexuality.

Theme 2: Young People as Knowledgeable

This section discusses the constructions of young people as knowledgeable individuals who exercise agency and self-determination. To some extent, this theme is present in all of the novels, as they each show young people exercising, at least to some extent, insight and independence. Constructing young people as such is contrary to the ideas circulated in the parliamentary debates, constituted children as having little self-awareness and wholly lacking in agency, and argued that knowledge itself (about sexual diversity) leads inevitably to perversion and corruption of the young. The novels discussed in this theme, however, portray young

people as thoughtful individuals who exercise a great deal of agency, independence, and self-awareness, contesting the adult/child binary. They tell us that young people are protected not by the suppression of, but rather by the access to, knowledge that enables them to better navigate relationships and understand their place in the world. While, as mentioned, each novel portrays this theme, the following discussion will focus on the portrayals in which the theme is most clearly evoked.

At times, this theme operates through depictions of differences between generations, that is, differences between teenagers and older adults, when it comes to perceptions of sexuality and desire. Teenagers are typically constructed as more open and accepting of non-heterosexuality, while adults are often shown to be, if not outright resistant, then at least hesitant to accept the value of such diversity. These portrayals construct young people as not only more progressive than adults but also as individuals who are knowledgeable and possess independent thought and agency. In *Pretty Things*, for example, Charlie often wears t-shirts that have words like 'gayer' written across the front, even while his friend's mum says of him, 'Charlie isn't really gay, it's just a phase he's going through' (Manning, 2005, p. 78). This constructs Charlie as independent, as knowing who he is and proudly declaring it, even as others (i.e., adults) doubt him.

The most striking portrayals occur in *Postcards From No Man's Land* with its teenage characters and their rather radical understandings of family and marriage. *Postcards* was published in 1999 at the conclusion of a decade marked by increasing acceptance of lesbian and gay people. It is useful, therefore, to briefly consider that context before discussing the novel. As Weeks (2016) described it:

> By the 1990s, the various LGBT worlds were maturing into something much broader, less embattled, more fully rooted in culture and society […] Same-sex desires and practices and gender nonconformity were no longer lived in the shadows. They were living, breathing parts of a rapidly changing society where practically everyone knew someone who was lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer. What had appeared dangerous was in danger of appearing every day, mundane, ordinary. (pp. 250–251)

In other words, LGBT+ people had perhaps become a more accepted and more visible part of society. It is fitting, then, that the law began to recognise certain rights of LGBT people, the first major legal milestone being the *Fitzpatrick* case. This case was discussed previously, but to briefly restate the matter: the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords found that the definition of 'family members' actually did include the same-sex partner of a deceased tenant. Said Lord Nicholls:

> A man and woman living together in a stable and permanent sexual relationship are capable of being members of a family for this purpose. Once this is accepted, there can be no rational or other basis on which the like conclusion can be withheld from a similarly stable and permanent sexual relationship between two men or between two women. […] Where sexual partners are involved, whether heterosexual or homosexual, there is scope for the intimate mutual love and affection and long-term commitment that typically characterise the relationship of husband and wife. This love and affection and commitment can exist in same-sex relationships as in heterosexual relationships. (*Fitzpatrick*, 2000, pp. 314–315)

This acknowledgement of a same-sex relationship as stable and permanent, as being essentially equal to the relationship between a man and a woman (at least within the context of the Rents Act), indicates an evolving conceptualisation of 'the family' that is a rather striking contradiction to how same-sex couples were constituted by the parliamentary debates. The decision is an explicit recognition of the so-called 'pretended' family that Section 28 targeted, and it undermines the heteropatriarchal belief (i.e., that only opposite-sexed couples should raise children) that underpinned the law.

Postcards From No Man's Land – the first YA novel with LGBT+ content to win the Michael L. Printz Award from the American Library Association (Jenkins & Cart, 2018, p. 36) –critiques family life through the teenage characters' rejections of heteropatriarchy as the organising principle for intimate relationships (Oswald et al., 2009). Jacob, who is from the U.K., visits Amsterdam to see an elderly woman named Geertrui, who had helped care for Jacob's grandfather during the Second World War. While there, Jordan stays with Daan, Geertrui's grandson, and meets Ton, Daan's friend. During one conversation amongst the three of them, Jacob brings up the subject of marriage and Ton's response is one of displeasure:

> 'Marriage!' [said Ton].
>
> 'You don't like it? [asked Jacob.]
>
> 'Do you?'
>
> 'Why not? With the right person.'
>
> 'Don't you think it's strange? Two people swearing to stay together for the rest of their lives and not to love anybody else—'
>
> 'Not in that way—'

'Whatever *that* way is!'

'Don't ask me.'

'I don't believe there is a *that way*. Do you? Friends. Can't do without them. Lovers. For sure, yes please. Someone to live with while it's right, while it works. Okay. But for ever? Never. Nothing is forever.' (Chambers, 1999/2007, p. 262)

The idea of marriage as a lasting union, as the organising basis of society – which, as discussed in the previous chapter, so clearly operated in the Section 28 debates – is thus critiqued and rejected by Ton. For him, intimate relationships are not oriented toward the future (i.e., a lasting and enduring bond), but instead are about relating intimately 'while it's right'. This framing of relationships seems to answer the call of Edelman (2004) for LGBT+ people to reject the burden of a reproductive future and to instead embrace the present (as discussed previously). Whereas the parliamentary debates constituted society as reliant on forcing children into heterosexuality and a reproductive family life, the young people in this novel reject the very notion of one 'appropriate' and 'acceptable' family structure or definition. To Ton, in particular, it is the heteropatriarchal, nuclear family that is 'pretended'.

Daan similarly critiques marriage as the acceptable form of state-sanctioned 'love':

> Marriage belongs to an out-of-date social system, a different way of life from now. There's nothing *absoluut* about it. It's only a way of controlling the population. It's about property and land rights […] Inheritance. The purity of […] the family line. Only if the woman was pure when the man married her and she became his possession was he sure his children were his. And only if

he was the one who fucked her could he still call her his. Marriage is about the protection of the genes and about ownership […] It's of no importance. Except to a few dinosaurs, like royal families and monomaniacal multimillionaires, and to people with a vested interest, like priests and lawyers and politicians. (Chambers, 1999/2007, pp. 292–293)

Daan thus critiques marriage by stripping it back to its legal underpinnings as a mechanism for conveying inheritance, securing property, and achieving both through a future blood lineage. What he is exposing and rejecting, in other words, are the ways in which state-sanctioned relationships are necessarily oriented toward the future, and how marriage can operate as a legal contract rather than an expression of love. For Daan, it is the rejection of heteropatriarchal marriage that enables a fuller expression or experience of love, which he explains:

> It is not that we each have a limited supply of [love] that we can only give to one person at a time. Or that we have one kind of love that we can only be given to one person in the whole of our lives. (Chambers, 1999/2007, p. 294)

Without the expectation that love should be confined to one person, it can be more freely given. Daan thus has an open relationship with Ton and a woman named Simone. Again, Daan explains:

> I love Ton. I sleep with him when we both want it. Or when one of us needs it, even if the other doesn't want it then. I love Simone […] Ton never sleeps with women. That's the way he is. Simone only sleeps with me. That's the way she is. I sleep with them both. That's the way I am. They both want to sleep with me. That's how we are. That's how we want it. If we didn't, or if any one of us didn't, then, okay, that's it. All the stuff about gender. Male,

> female, queer, bi, feminist, new man, whatever—it's meaningless. As out of date as marriage for ever. I'm tired of hearing about it. We're beyond that now. (Chambers, 1999/2007, pp. 294–295)

This is a rejection not only of marriage and heteronormative and heteropatriarchal principles for organising family life, but also the binary of man/woman – all of which, as discussed, were considered the basis of marriage and society by politicians in the Section 28 debates. Specifically, it recognises ways of relating intimately or sexually outside of traditional notions of marriage and gender roles. The relationship for this novel's characters is one between three people and seems based more on desire ('that's how we want it') than anything else. The centering of desire or enjoyment, particularly in what some might call a 'promiscuous' relationship (i.e., non-monogamous), can be read as a rejection of the nation-state's emphasis on the regulated and dichotomous structure of marriage that compels family-based, sexual monogamy. It can also be interpreted as a further response to Edelman (2004), given that it seems oriented around the present (i.e., an in-the-moment satisfaction of desire that Daan expresses as happening 'when we both want it') rather than the future (establishing bloodlines, securing inheritance, and so on).

Additionally, the characterisation of gender and sexuality labels as 'meaningless' demonstrates how the explicit rejection of labels operates in the novel's construction of family life, while the open nature of the relationship and, to some extent, Jacob's attraction to Ton, Hille, and even Daan, construct sexuality as mutable and fluid rather than defined and contained. Queer theory, as discussed, has sought to question sites of oppression and of regulation, including marriage, sexuality, and gender, just as these characters seem to do in their rejection of the very

labels that make such regulation possible (e.g., Section 28's restriction of positive images of 'homosexual' experiences and relationships). The above conversation depicted in this scene is thus aligned with a poststructural critique or subversion of the institution of marriage and heteronormative domestication, portraying instead alternate ways of relating intimately, ways that are not organised around concerns for the future or labels of gender or sexuality.

Presented alongside this queering of family life is a rather traditional take on marriage by an older generation, demonstrated through the novel's alternate chapters that portray the experience of Geertrui as a young woman while her family helps care for wounded English soldiers in the Second World War. One of the soldiers is Jacob's grandfather, also named Jacob. The WWII Jacob is already married when falls in love with Geertrui. He and Geertrui have sex just before he dies unexpectedly, leaving her pregnant and unmarried. A man named Dirk is also in love with her and agrees to marry her and raise the child as his own. That Geertrui could raise the child on her own is not presented as a possibility in the narrative, which renders marriage as the only acceptable way to raise a child, echoing the Section 28 debates. Family life in this part of the novel, then, is presented rather traditionally as far as what comprises the family structure. In doing so, it highlights the differences of one generation when compared to another by throwing into sharper relief the queered version of love and family in the contemporary storyline. In other words, setting the 'natural' family binary against the relief of the contemporary narrative exposes that same binary as false or, at least, historically and socially contingent. But while doing so, Geertrui's story simultaneously shows similarities between the generations. Just as Geertrui's behaviour would have been controversial in the 1940s,

as would Jacob's marrying her to raise another man's child, so too might have been the queered version of family and relationships envisioned by Ton and Daan (at least in the U.K., if not Amsterdam). These characters all took or are taking actions outside contemporary 'norms' and their stories show how those norms are contingent. The juxtaposition of these stories is an argument that what one generation might consider to be radical could be considered less radical by the next, and thus demonstrates that it should be expected that young people would view love, marriage, and sexuality differently.

While the novel does take place in Amsterdam which, like Denmark as discussed in the previous chapter, is culturally more open to sexuality than the U.K. has traditionally been, its author, Chambers, is British and was thus writing from a British perspective. Moreover, the novel received critical acclaim in the U.K., even winning the Carnegie Medal in 1999. Its depictions of sexuality were therefore not only accepted but even celebrated amongst at least some of the British public. In other words, the setting of the novel does not completely divorce it from the British context in which it was written and has been circulated and read. Indeed, if that were the case, *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin*, being from and about a family in Denmark, would not have had such a significant and lasting effect in the U.K. Chambers's novel is, therefore, relevant to understanding how young people and sexuality are understood in British society.

In sum, *Postcards From No Man's Land* demonstrates a rejection of the family life in the form constituted as legitimate in the parliamentary debates. The characters casting the state-sanctioned family structure aside in favour of decidedly queer relationships. In doing so, they even challenge the homonormative idea that

LGBT+ parented families, in being 'analogous to families with heterosexual parents', are normal (Oswald et al., 2009, p. 50). Daan and the other characters do not demonstrate any desire for dyadic relationship structures, but rather for desire itself, in all its varied and multiple forms. In finding happiness and satisfaction in their non-heteronormative relationships, they expose 'the falsehood that heterosexual relationships, marriage, and parenting are the only paths to happiness' (Oswald et al., 2009, p. 53). These narratives undermine both Foucault's (1976/1978) understanding of the family as an enforcement mechanism that maintains the 'norm' of heterosexuality and Althusser's (1970/1971) suggestion of repression through the family apparatus.

There are a few depictions in the corpus of how knowledge can be destructive rather than beneficial, but they occur in only two of the novels. In *Undone*, as discussed above, Kai's sister secretly films him with another boy. In *Secret Lies*, Jenny's older sister is convinced that there is something 'wrong' with Nicola and is determined to find out what. She roots through Nicola's things until finding the DVDs and books on being a lesbian, which she then uses to confront Jenny and force her to end her relationship with Nicola. While Jenny's sister is at first focused just on ending the relationship, she eventually fears Jenny will become a lesbian if she is not 'protected' from Nicola. This inner-generational surveillance, like the novels above, demonstrates how often other family members, whether parents or siblings, seek to repress (Althusser, 1970/1971) same-sex desires. These examples are significant because they argue the destructive nature not of knowledge, but of how a person can *use* knowledge to manipulate people and events. Kai's sister used her knowledge for revenge, and Jenny's sister used knowledge to pressure Jenny into ending her

relationship. However, while the destructive nature of knowledge might seem to reinforce the Section 28 premise that young people must be protected from knowledge lest they be corrupted, the narratives reveal that it is the misuse of knowledge, not knowledge itself, that is ultimately destructive. It was not Kai's sister knowing about his sexuality, but her act of revealing that intimate knowledge to the entire school, that was so destructive. It was not Jenny's secret relationship that almost destroyed Jenny's family, but her sister's misguided threats to out her that caused a serious rift. The idea that knowledge alone can corrupt is thus undermined.

The examples in this theme construct young people as thoughtful, knowledgeable individuals. They do not simply reject existing relationship structures, in which case one might argue that they simply do not know better and need to 'grow up'. Rather, they *critique* those structures through thoughtful deliberation. They analyse, assess, evaluate, and come to their own conclusions. They demonstrate not 'innocent' minds easily corrupted by literature, but intellectual depth and reasoning ability. They have not been beguiled but act deliberately and intentionally. Whereas Parliamentarians constituted children as easily seduced and in need not only of adult intervention but of government intervention, these novels conceive of young people as having agency, reason, and independence. This divergence in views is further demonstrated in the third and final theme of this corpus, which will now be discussed.

Theme 3: Questioning and Resisting Labels

This section discusses the novels in which characters question and resist labels of sexuality and desire, a theme that captures the construction of young people

as sexually aware, with the ability to decide for themselves the particular relevance, if any, that desire has in terms of their core identity and sense of self. While the theme occurs in only six of the 16 YA novels (see Table 5), it was unexpected and thus warrants discussion along with the other themes. The reason this theme was unexpected is that, as discussed in Chapter 2, the plot in many lesbian and gay YA novels focuses on the process of a young person realising a gay or lesbian identity and the consequences that result from that realisation (Jenkins & Cart, 2018). In other words, sexuality is portrayed or constructed as central to the young person's sense of self, a common thread in much of Study 2's corpus as well. But as the following discussion makes clear, the theme of questioning and resisting labels, and at times subverting them, captures those novels that are Butlerian in the portrayal of teen characters who interrogate and even reject differences of desire as a legitimate basis of identity, resisting the notion that sexuality has significance beyond describing attraction.

Table 5

Novels Portraying Young People Who Question and Resist Labels

Novel	Year	Other Themes
Postcards From No Man's Land	1999	Young People as Knowledgeable
The Shell House	2002	Violence-Centred Narrative
Girl, 15: Charming but Insane	2004	Young People as Knowledgeable
Pretty Things	2004	Young People as Knowledgeable
Sugar Rush	2004	Young People as Knowledgeable
What's Up With Jody Barton?	2012	Young People as Knowledgeable

Through depicting such resistance, the novels construct young people as possessing a high degree of self-awareness, which can be read as a counter-discourse to the categories of sexuality and gender used to define and contain subjectivity. This

counter-discourse is in direct opposition to the Section 28 construction of sexuality as a key organising principle for oneself. Contrary to such a view, sexuality in these novels is, at times, innocuous and mundane. This does not mean that portrayals of prejudice are absent from the novels. Indeed, concern about reactions to one's coming out (or, in some cases, forcibly being outed) frames many of the narratives. Rather, these concerns, while present, do not dominate the plot, allowing other concerns (such as navigating a new school and making friends) to be brought into the stories, concerns experienced by every teenager, regardless of sexuality.

By opening up the plot to these other, more common concerns, the YA novels construct sexual diversity not as a marker of difference but as ordinary to young people. This framing of LGBT+ lives, which surfaces in how some young people view their own experiences (Coleman-Fountain, 2014), is significant when one considers that Section 28 came about precisely because sexual diversity amongst children was deemed to be wholly destructive and abhorrent (even if latent and therefore natural) such that government intervention was necessary to control children's access to certain literature. In particular, non-heterosexuality in the novels is constituted not only as normal for young people, but as so ordinary that desire is not central to how some young people organise their identity or social selves, a construction which is consonant with lived experiences (see Allen et al., 2021; Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Coleman-Fountain, 2014). Such portrayals are accomplished through characters who experience non-heteronormative desires yet refuse to label or be defined by them. All of this is considered further in the 'Discussion' section below, but we begin by first considering each of the novels (in

order of the year of publication, as shown in Table 5) comprising this theme to reveal how the narratives construct young people and sexuality.

As mentioned previously in the first theme, Jacob in *Postcards From No Man's Land* is attracted to both Ton and Hille. Although he never acts on his attraction to Ton, he does with Hille. Yet at the close of the novel, he is determined to return to Amsterdam, when he will no doubt see Ton again, leaving open the possibility of the two of them eventually acting on what seems to be a mutual attraction. In fact, given the open relationships that are in play (as discussed above), it is possible that sex will involve not just Jacob and Ton but also his cousin, Daan, and a woman named Simone. There is even the suggestion of Jacob and Daan being attracted to each other, despite being cousins. None of Jacob's desires are ever labelled, leaving them ambiguous and open to interpretation.

In *The Shell House*, Greg's sexuality likewise remains open. At one point, he sees his friend, Jordan, showering naked in the boys' locker room at school. When Greg and Faith later kiss, his mind slips back to that telling moment:

> Into his mind, vivid and disturbing, slipped the moment yesterday morning in the changing room when Jordan had turned and looked at him. It had taken only an instant, but there had been a sort of connection. An exchange, an unspoken understanding. He had stared openly at Jordan as he stood there naked; he had gazed for too long, and Jordan had seen and not minded. (Newbery, 2002/2003, p. 176)

Greg escapes any final pronouncement of his sexuality and thus, like the other characters discussed, escapes the containment of those labels.

A more subtle resistance to categories of sexuality is portrayed in *Girl, 15: Charming but Insane* (Limb, 2004/2009), first published the year after Section 28 was repealed in England and Wales. Jess spends much of the story wondering if Ben is interested in her friend, Flora. When she finally asks Ben about this, he responds: 'I'm not interested in any girls, yeah? […] Not in that way. I don't want a girlfriend. I couldn't, like, cope with it. […] No girl's ever going to break my heart' (Limb, 2004/2009, p. 269). This is all that is directly said about his sexuality, although Jess suspects he is gay: 'it did cross her mind that Ben might possibly be gay. She hoped so. It would be so cool. She had always wanted a gay best friend' (Limb, 2004/2009, p. 271). Regardless of what she thinks, Ben's sexuality is left open to interpretation. He could, for example, be asexual (not experiencing attraction to either sex) or aromantic, having no interest in romantic relationships. Or, like Kim in *Sugar Rush* (Burchill, 2004/2005; discussed below), it could be that Ben is choosing not to label his desires at all, in which case this brief portrayal is a departure from the heteronormative convention that orients intimate life around forming romantic relationships (for a discussion of those conventions in relation to LGBT+ people, see Lamont, 2017).

In *Pretty Things*, Daisy is dating Claire but has an affair with a young man named Walker. A few pages are spent on her rumination over this before she eventually declares: 'What did it matter if I was gay or straight or bisexual? It didn't! It wasn't about getting lustful over bloody gender types' (Manning, 2005, p. 312). She continues: 'I wasn't into boys, I was just into one boy, *him*. The same with the girl thing. I didn't fancy all the girls in the world, I just fancied Claire' (Manning, 2005, p. 312). She then concludes: 'Maybe I should stop defining myself through the

people I slept with' (Manning, 2005, p. 312). When Brie asks Daisy if she is gay, straight, or bisexual, Daisy responds:

> 'I'm all of the above. I'm none of the above. I'm a lesbian who likes kissing Walker […] I'm me and I'm still trying to figure out what and who the hell I am. When I find out, I'll get back to you.' (Manning, 2005, p. 340)

Daisy ultimately decides she wants a relationship with both Walker and Claire.

Also in *Pretty Things*, Charlie happily declares: 'I'm gay. I'm a pouf. I'm a fairy. I'm a nancy boy. I'm a big old queen. An arse bandit. A fudge packer. A friend of Dorothy's […] Capital G. Capital A. Capital Y' (Manning, 2005, p. 98). As discussed previously, Charlie's t-shirts allow him to visibly wear his difference rather than hide it. Sexuality is, in that regard, shifted from something which is non-normative (and thus something to be hidden or only spoken about in whispers, such as Jordan quietly telling Greg about his being gay only when they are alone in a quiet corridor) to that which is familiar – a beloved and celebrated part, even, of Charlie's character. With any negative association thus expunged from these labels, they become examples of 'gay discourse', in which words that might otherwise, in another context, be considered homophobic (such as pouf and fudge-packer) are instead used as a form of bonding without any intent to marginalise or wound anyone (McCormack, 2013, p. 98). Moreover, reclaiming labels in this manner is itself a rejection, if not of the label altogether, then at least of its pejorative meanings.

This theme is also prominent in *Sugar Rush*, written by Burchill, who once said that she 'was only a lesbian for about six weeks in 1995' when she dated the sister of the man who would later become her boyfriend and then husband (Barber, 2004, para. 12). The novel initially centres on Kim's experience in changing to a new

school and falling out with her best friend, Zoe. This tension plays out in various scenes while Kim and Sugar grow closer and their relationship takes centre stage. Eventually Kim realises that Sugar might not share her expectations for their relationship:

> I realized with a start that since we'd been lovers she never ever touched me in public any more, and wriggled away whenever I touched her. And I realized that I so missed that best-friend non-stop tactile riot, when it's just the norm for the two of you to walk down the street as entangled as two drowning men trying to win a three-legged race. Now the touching was strictly rationed – behind closed doors, or in the dark, or in deserted places. (Burchill, 2004/2005, p. 118)

While Kim clearly desires more from Sugar, she also mentally distances herself from other gay teens. Consider this passage in which she expresses her feelings:

> It was 'only natural', wasn't it, to get a crush on someone of the same sex who seemed to have all the qualities – beauty, confidence […] – that you wanted for yourself? If you really WERE a proper gay teenager, you'd get so much I-hear-you-and-it's-only-natural-at-your-age eyewash from parents and agony aunts about loving someone of the same gender that you could easily end up totally confused and isolated, in fact more so than years ago, when they were telling you it was a filthy sin.
>
> Poor gay teenagers! I thought smugly as I eyed my treacherous, respectable self in my bedroom mirror. So lonely, so sad, so…stuck. (Burchill, 2004/2005, p. 49).

Kim thus does not consider herself a ‘proper’ gay teenager. B. J. Epstein (2013) noted about this passage that ‘Kim emphasises how stressful it must be for gay teens, while simultaneously distancing herself from them, though she is obviously also mocking herself to a certain extent’ (p. 78). However, the passage seems not to reject queer sexuality itself but any labelling of that sexuality whatsoever. Indeed, Kim explicitly acknowledges the naturalness of same-sex attraction and what she actually rejects is being labelled for her desires. ‘Poor gay teenagers’ is an acknowledgement that those who actively embrace the label will, as a result of that label, inevitably be subjected to – or in Kim’s words, ‘stuck’ with – the opinions and judgements of others. The nuance of Kim’s rejection is further revealed when she later expresses these thoughts: ‘things being the way they are, with my heart and stuff, I don’t need my possible future sexual identity bandied about as a byword for everything that’s rubbish’ (Burchill, 2004/2005, p. 68). For her, gay remains just one possible future identity and she refuses to be confined or contained by any one particular label in the present. This, in turn, implies an actual future. Significantly, her desires do not signal the end of the world, as would have been the case in earlier gay and lesbian novels. Rather, by refusing a label, Kim embraces a future, one that is bound up in her refusal to be contained by categories. That these complex portrayals of sexuality are achieved through the main character instead of a secondary one is reflective of the wider shift (as noted in Chapter 2) amongst lesbian YA novels from narratives that focus on heterosexual main characters with lesbian friends or family to depictions focusing on main characters who themselves have same-sex desires (Town, 2017).

Burchill’s *Sugar Rush* was first published in 2004, the same year that both the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) and Civil Partnership Act (CPA) were passed. The

GRA is the legal mechanism through which trans (but not non-binary) people can have their gender legally recognised, while the CPA grants to same-sex couples (and now heterosexual couples) certain rights and responsibilities similar to marriage. It is fitting that *Sugar Rush* was published at that time, as its rejection of labels can be read as consistent with the rejection of the gender label one is assigned at birth (albeit to accept another label in its place). And with the CPA providing legal recognition of same-sex couples, family life – or at least family life that is officially recognised or state sanctioned – became a new possibility for those couples. This possibility is reflected in Kim's certainty of a future that will not be defined by her sexuality.

But while the novel can be read as progressive, even liberating, for non-heterosexual young people, its author, Burchill, who is also a journalist, has repeatedly expressed anti-trans views (Parsons, 2020a). Clearly, then, however aligned her novel might be with legislative reforms and how young people today understand themselves, it may have been unintentional. Rather, the significance here is that, once Burchill published her anti-trans views, MP Lynne Featherstone, 'the international development minister who was once equalities minister, took to Twitter to denounce Burchill' (Greenslade, 2013, para. 2). This public support by an MP for the trans community stands in clear opposition to the atmosphere of the Section 28 debates less than 30 years previously, and thus indicates a shift towards equality, as further reflected by the fact that David Cameron offered, as leader of the Conservative party, a public apology for Section 28, condemning the law as a

mistake and as ‘offensive to gay people’ (Watt, 2009, para. 2).[8] In fact, Barber, Burchill’s interviewer, wrote that what she found most shocking about *Sugar Rush* was not the sex or depictions of teens with same-sex desires but the portrayal of Kim’s runaway mother, who lives with her boyfriend in the Bahamas, given that Burchill herself had left behind two sons from two previous marriages (Barber, 2004). As with the novels of Davis and Blackman discussed earlier, *Sugar Rush* demonstrates that constructions of young people and sexuality in a novel can operate independently of the author’s personal views and intentions.

Finally, *What’s Up With Jody Barton?* demonstrates this theme through its very form. For the first half of the novel, the author deliberately sidesteps the use of pronouns for Jody. Such circumvention, when coupled with Jody’s unisex name and twin sister, is an obvious attempt to lead the reader to believe that Jody, too, is female. The reveal of Jody’s gender as male is the plot twist that turns the narrative on its head. Although such a ‘reveal’ upholds rather than subverts the hegemonic restriction of gender to two binary categories, the resistance of gendered pronouns for the first half of the novel nevertheless recalls the contingent social construction of gender and sexuality as understood through postructuralist thought and queer theory.

Through the theme of questioning and resisting labels, these novels argue that sexual diversity amongst young people is ordinary, something that is not central to how young people identify or form their social selves. Certainly, for these young people, sexuality is one way in which they interact with the world and come to form opinions about it, and therefore it does feed into their social selves. However, it is not

[8] Cameron also acknowledged, in 2006, that marriage ‘means something whether you're a man and a woman, a woman and a woman or a man and another man’ (Watt, 2009, para. 13).

a central characteristic for them; it is not something they feel must be identified and named in order to know who they are, and sexuality, as a form of desire like any other, would no more form a part of their identity than would, for example, one's predilection for a particular kind of food. This construction clearly contravenes Parliamentarians' construction of sexuality as being so central to who a person was, and to how society was built, that legislative action was required to maintain perceived norms.

Discussion

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Section 28 parliamentary debates constituted children's literature as depraved and full of perverted materials. As a countermeasure to those claims, key non-heterosexual children's books cited in the debates were given closer analysis in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the analysis has been extended by investigating the content of LGBT+ children's literature published after the parliamentary debates. In doing so, it has answered the research questions that guided the analysis, namely:

- How has the content of British LGB YA novels published after Section 28 reproduced or resisted those constructions? And is it as depraved as Parliamentarians claimed?
- Has the content changed or evolved in terms of its depictions of young people and sexual diversity?

As we have seen, the literature has largely resisted the ideologies about sexuality (if not gender) and forms of intimate relationships that dominated the debates. Its content has also evolved in how it constructs young people in relation to sexuality,

revealing a growing departure from the attitudes expressed in parliament that had othered homosexuality, constituting same-sex relationships as different to 'legitimate' heterosexual relationships (and dangerously so), homosexuals as perverts responsible for society's downfall, and young people as having virtually no agency or self-awareness. In contrast, the corpus in Study 2 has constituted sexual diversity amongst young people as acceptable, normal, and even beneficial, depicting young people as exercising independence, agency, and self-awareness.

In sum, the ideologies that enabled Section 28 have been rejected in fiction for the young. In terms of the novels' content, we have seen that the narratives construct, in progressively greater degrees, 'regular' teens whose lives do not revolve around divisions or categories of sexuality (if not gender), even de-emphasising sexuality as important to the identity of some characters. Certain novels, especially (but not only) *Solitaire*, even mark difference not by same-sex desires but by whether one expresses intolerance of such desires. This emphasis is reflective of laws, particularly with hate crime legislation, that seek to address those who are motivated by hostility or discrimination. The corpus calls into question the binary divisions (homosexual/not homosexual, family/not family, knowledge/innocence) that dominated constructions of sexuality and young people in the Section 28 debates. It also reflects the key LGBT+ legal reforms, which have been mapped throughout this chapter, by recognising and representing, in an accepting and affirming way, experiences of sexual diversity amongst young people.

As mentioned previously, in addition to reflecting the reforms that have significantly altered the social and cultural structures in which LGBT+ people conduct their lives in the U.K., the novels also reflect the changing attitudes evident

amongst teenagers themselves. Savin-Williams (2005), in his study of teenagers with same-sex attractions, argued that young people 'are increasingly redefining, reinterpreting, and renegotiating their sexuality such that possessing a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity is practically meaningless' such that 'the notion of "gay" as a noteworthy or identifying characteristic is being abandoned' (pp. 1, 203). Similarly, Coleman-Fountain (2014) found that some young lesbian and gay people resist the idea that labels of same-sex desires are 'primary to identity, the anchor of the personal narrative' (p. 814). In other words, there is a 'changing discursive context' in youthhood such that same-sex desires no longer necessarily 'presage a particular identity' (Cohler & Hammack, 2007, p. 52). This collapse of divisions based on desire – what Coleman-Fountain (2014) described as a claim to ordinariness – is reflected particularly by the novels in which labels are resisted or subverted (although it also surfaces across the corpus, from *Postcard's From No Man's Land* to *Hollow Pike*), and where sexual divisions are deconstructed, subverted, or rendered wholly insignificant to the plot.

The novels also reflect the experiences of young people in two other ways. First, some of the stories counter the perception that teenage males are homophobic. Particularly in *Solitaire*, but also in novels like *What's Up With Jody Barton?* and *Because of Her*, homophobic characters are portrayed negatively and unsympathetically. These depictions reflect the reality of some young people for whom the performance of homophobia is no longer necessary to the assertion of masculinity, such that students who express homophobia are reprimanded by other boys (McCormack, 2012, xxv). This reality is reflected in how the novels define difference not by sexual desire but by intolerance of diversity. Second, young British

men no longer 'fear being socially perceived as gay, [which has] has expanded the range of behaviors that they can enact without social regulation' (McCormack, 2012, p. xxiv).

This expansion of the social dynamics between young men is reflected in *Pretty Things*. Walker (who is straight) and Charlie pretend to be boyfriends in one scene. Walker later gives Charlie 'a sloppy kiss' on the cheek (Manning, 2005, p. 156), calls him 'Charlie-boy', and frequently touches him affectionately by, for example, putting his arm around him, ruffling his hair, and nudging him with his hip (Manning, 2005, p. 189). At one point, Walker even kisses Charlie on the lips (Manning, 2005, p. 336). At no time does Walker seem concerned with possibly being perceived as gay. He is thus free to engage in this range of homosocial behaviours without inhibition. His willingness to do so reflects increasing the intolerance of homophobia amongst young men and the expansion of gendered behaviours and expressions of 'heteromasculinity' (McCormack, 2012, p. 44).

Given the attitudes and perceptions of young people today, it is perhaps unsurprising that 'same-sex attracted teens, when considering relevant personal characteristics and their status as members of a definable group, may be more similar to heterosexual peers than they are to other gay people' (Savin-Williams, 2005, p. 89; see also Coleman-Fountain, 2014). This understanding suggests that sexuality may be less key to defining not only the self but one's community as well. As Adler (2018) noted, 'members of the LGBT "community" differ from one another in every demographic dimension (age, race, religion, education, class, and income), as well as in our sexual practices, lifestyles, and politics' (p. 89). Thus, while the absence in the novels of any meaningful portrayals of a 'gay community' could be read as a failure

to show LGBT+ connection and social support, it can also be understood as a reflection of how community is defined or understood for some LGBT+ teens who do not locate affinity in sexual desire. Such lived experiences, and their reflection in this corpus, further destabilise the very collective identity (i.e., homosexual) debated under Section 28, exposing, in turn, the binary of sameness and difference that underlined virtually every argument in those debates and which some young people today reject.

This discussion brings us to the aims of some of the writers in this corpus, particularly those who have called for children's literature that is not *solely* about inhabiting a particular sexuality or, indeed, any other identity category. While Long, for example, wrote her book in response to the homophobia she witnessed as a teacher in a Cardiff high school, she did not want her novel to be 'defined by that particular issue' (Woodfine, 2012), suggesting that the book, despite the initial motivation behind it, was intended to be primarily about a teenager rather than a *gay* teenager. Similarly, Blackman called for 'more books which feature children of colour, children with disabilities, working class children, LGBT teens, etc which are just about children and teens having adventures and not necessarily about their disability, colour, culture, religion' (Penguin Books, 2016, 'Do you think racism is an issue…' section). Like Long, Blackman believes that books about sexuality (and other identities) are, ultimately, books 'just about children and teens' having adventures and falling in love.

As demonstrated, many of the books in this corpus seem to respond to calls for stories that feature non-heterosexual teens but are not *about* sexuality. This response is particularly evident in the 2012–2014 novels, further revealing how the

content in the corpus has shifted or evolved. If not a linear march forward, the shifts are a clear progression toward the construction of sexual diversity amongst young people as less stigmatised, even ordinary. In doing so, the novels subvert, in no small part, the overarching heteronormativity of YA literature and children's publishing itself. Not only can acceptance be seen in the fact that these books were written and published, but also in their critical reception, as evidenced by their awards and other literary distinctions. *The Shell House*, for example, was shortlisted for both *The Guardian* Children's Fiction Award (Mark, 2002) and the Carnegie Medal (Lane, 2003). *Sugar Rush* was nominated for the BookTrust Teenage Prize and adapted for television (*BBC News*, 2005), while, as previously mentioned, *Postcards From No Man's Land* won the Carnegie Medal. The existence and circulation of these texts, their critical reception, and their replication in other popular culture (television) – all of which in turn promote, further circulate, and 'normalise' the presence of non-heterosexual teens in society, which may have some transformative effects, if not on society as a whole, then at least on some readers, as previously discussed.

This study has also demonstrated how these shifts reflect LGBT+ legal reforms that have led to 'social liberalism [becoming] the dominant discourse in relation to sexuality' (Weeks, 2016, p. 261), as well as the contemporary views of teenagers themselves (see Savin-Williams, 2005). If, as Weston (1991) argued, 'the heart of coming out involves laying claim to a label understood to reflect back on total personhood' (p. 65), the novels have moved beyond the 'coming out' (or issue-based) narratives that dominated early lesbian and gay YA novels. Through such an evolution, they have come to construct same-sex desires as something which young

people simply experience without the need to profess (or confess, in Foucauldian terms) those desires.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered 16 British LGB YA novels published after Section 28. The purpose of its directed content analysis has been to understand the content of the novels, their constructions of children and sexuality, and how those constructions compare to the ideologies that circulated in the Section 28 parliamentary debates. As discussed, the first major finding in this research is a shift in the novels from constituting violence as an inevitable consequence of sexual diversity to portraying non-heterosexual teens as ordinary and unmarked (at least violently) by their sexuality. As we have seen, the changing content aligns with legal and political changes in the U.K. that increasingly recognise the rights of LGBT+ people, beginning with the 1999 *Sterling* decision. The narrative construction of young people as open and accepting of their sexuality suggests that the texts are indebted on some level to existing legal structures (indeed, if those structures and the rights they afford to LGBT+ people were not already in place, the novels would be speculative, perhaps even utopian, fiction), even while they perhaps open up new ways of being for readers who are questioning their desires or who are unfamiliar with LGBT+ perspectives.

The second major finding is that some of the texts construct young people as resistant to labels and divisions of desire, resistance which allows characters to escape the very identity (homosexual) that the debates sought to discipline, regulate, and contain, and the ideologies that are based on those labels and their dichotomies

(us/them, gay/straight, and so on). As Foucault (1976/1978) argued, sexual identities are not innate or natural but socially and historically constructed. These identities became fixed so as to be regulated and controlled, even while simultaneously forming the basis for a collective identity and, therefore, for political power, an element of the legislation's reverse discourse, as discussed in Chapter 4. Particularly in the novels that demonstrate a resistance to labels, the characters begin, much like queer theory itself, to interrogate and deconstruct the notion of a fixed binary or dichotomy (e.g., gay/not gay) and transgress hegemonic configurations of sexuality and gender. In doing so, they operate as 'points of resistance' (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 95) to the deployment of sexuality as a control mechanism in the parliamentary debates. Whereas politicians had constructed homosexuality as a dangerous, latent quality, some of the characters collapse difference altogether, latent or otherwise, particularly in relation to conceptions of identity. Desire is thus constructed as simply desire, which is not to say that desire is itself simple, but that it is recognised in its own sake rather than as indicative of some deeper or overarching quality defining subjectivity. In sum, these novels, considered in tandem, argue against the essentialism of sexuality and the idea that labels of sexuality speak to or reveal some inner truth about a person.

The third major finding is the construction of young people as knowledgeable, particularly in their views of marriage and family life. Some of the novels imagine kinship structures which are, as yet, unaccounted for by the law. They are not, however, speculative fiction: the relationship structures they depict, even if unrecognised by the law, are nevertheless reality for many people, both heterosexual and non-heterosexual. Indeed, by the year 2000, 'the importance of

what came to be known as "families of choice" [had become] increasingly recognised not only within the LGBT worlds themselves but also within wider society' (Weeks, 2016, p. 260). These kinships structures would no doubt have been considered by Section 28 proponents as 'pretended family relationships', but they are constituted as very real, even desirable, possibilities for readers. By portraying characters that envision possibilities beyond hegemonic 'norms', the novels constitute young people as thoughtful, intelligent individuals who exercise agency and self-determination. This argument clearly contravenes those made by some politicians, who believed knowledge could corrupt children and that they must be protected from certain kinds of literature that might convey 'inappropriate' knowledge and information and, in doing so, subvert the heteropatriarchal hierarchies of sexuality and intimate relationships that Section 28 was apparently intended to protect.

Sitting alongside these positive portrayals, however, is the fact that the novels do not portray the full diversity or heterogeneity of sexuality and gender. The non-heterosexual characters (not regarding those who resist labelling) are either lesbian or gay. Daisy in *Pretty Things* does briefly consider bisexuality as a possible identity when contemplating her attractions to both Claire and Walker. Although referring to herself as a lesbian, she is nevertheless resistant to labels: when Brie asks her whether she is gay, straight, or bisexual, Daisy replies: 'I'm all of the above. I'm none of the above' (Manning, 2005, p. 340). Brief contemplation and subsequent dismissal of bisexuality, and the corpus' complete exclusion of trans identity altogether, is not the same sort of rich representation that the corpus gives same-sex attractions.

Some might argue that, despite the progress evident in and reflected by this corpus, the novels still do not really capture queerness. Queerness in this sense is meant not as 'a synonym for *homosexuality* but as a descriptor of disruptions to prevailing cultural codes of sexual and gender normativity' (Pugh, 2011, p. 6) and the experience of desire outside heteronormative ideals of relationships and family structures. Crisp (2009) argues that no LGBT+ children's book has yet inscribed queerness in that sense, as authors are always writing within heteronormative frameworks. While fiction for young people has begun to capture and celebrate sexual and gender diversity, they do so only in terms of current cultural codes, even when those codes are rejected, as in *Postcards*, revealing the ever-present tension in LGBT+ fiction of attempting to portray the world as it is while also 'offering more optimistic roadmaps to both queer and nonqueer readers' (K. R. Browne, 2020, p. 20). To that end, regardless of whether the texts in this corpus inscribe actual 'queerness' or a fuller range of sexual and gender expression, their existence alone constitutes the 'reverse' discourse in which 'homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf [and] to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged' (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 101). In doing so, they are tools that offer young people roadmaps to understanding and embracing sexual and gender diversity.

Because these novels argue for and open up ways of experiencing desire and of being in relationships beyond the heteronormative binary, they also allow readers to explore non-heteronormative understandings privately and empathetically. As Collins said of novels in general, they 'touch you, shake you up, make you laugh and cry, make you feel uncomfortable: but they can't damage you. It's like being a tightrope walker with a safety net' (British Council, n.d.). In other words, LGBT+

children's books allow young readers to learn, explore, and even experience. Books as spaces of learning and exploration recall these words of D. Epstein and Sears (1999):

> We wish to think of pedagogy in terms of all the myriad ways in which we learn and are taught to position ourselves within regimes of truth through which we understand our gendered, heterosexualized, racialized and classed world; the punishments for transgressions as well as the rewards for conformity. In this sense, pedagogy can take place through and within a number of institutional sites other than those, like schools and universities, which are formally concerned with education. (p. 2)

Children's literature about non-heterosexuality is clearly one such site of pedagogy, a cultural space in which young people can learn about gender, sex, sexuality, and relationships, allowing access to information that may be denied to them in more formal contexts (such as schools) where the adult/child binary is rigidly disciplined and reinforced or reproduced. As discussed previously, the books thus provide a means for LGBT+ readers to move beyond any feelings of isolation they may have and undo the negative schemas (Eribon, 1999/2004) through which they may have come to imagine themselves and others. The texts thus open up alternative ways not only for readers with same-sex desires and non-heteronormative genders to 'to recognize themselves' (Eribon, 1999/2004, p. 150), but also for heterosexual, cisgender readers to recognise the humanity of those who do and to understand and empathise with their perspectives.

LGBT+ books are therefore resistant to dominant discourses of heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy, even if they express such resistance or

reverse discourse in hegemonic terms and categories. This tension is a manifestation of the matrix of power identified by Foucault (1976/1978), such that the discourse found within the narratives 'transmits and produces [hegemonic] power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (p. 101). Like the protests to Section 28 (discussed in the previous chapter), the YA novels demonstrate that the effects of heteronormative domination, however widespread, are never completely stable. Specifically, they expose, through their own constitution of children and sexuality, the instability of notions of childhood innocence. Indeed, the very existence and provision of these novels directly contravenes the idea that children must be protected from certain knowledge and literature. In other words, the legacy of Section 28 has been largely eroded by the very sort of literature Parliamentarians sought to suppress.

Chapter 6: The Pedagogical Potential of LGBT+ Children's Literature

The previous chapter analysed the content of British LGB YA fiction published after Section 28. This chapter presents the results of Study 3 on the beliefs and views of eight teachers – people who work with texts and young people in a professional capacity – on the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. By presenting and examining the results of this study, the chapter joins the previous two results chapters to draw a linearity over the past 30 years, one that reveals the political constructions of children, sexuality, and children's literature, what the actual children's literature said about non-heterosexual teens, and now how those same subjects have been constituted in the views of educators.

The chapter begins by describing the study and the teacher identities of its participants. From there, each of the themes around which the data were clustered are discussed: 'the right to LGBT+ inclusive education', 'silence harms', and 'continuing professional development for LGBT+ inclusive education'. In identifying and discussing the implications, the argument is made that the findings confirm the sea change suggested by the YA literature examined in the previous chapter – namely, that there has been a significant, progressive societal shift toward acceptance of sexual diversity and the construction of children as having the capacity for self-determination. It is also argued that children are harmed by the failure to provide an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum. Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings.

The Read-and-Response Method

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study was conducted using an adaptation of the read-and-response method, which was developed to study 'the implicit subject philosophies of English teachers' (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 1). Specifically, the motivation was to create a research tool that would allow teachers to use the skills they know best: analysing and critiquing written texts. This involved developing 'descriptions of five different kinds of English teachers' (B. Marshall, 2000, p. 1) and asking participants to annotate that text. The data was then used to better understand how English teachers viewed their roles and to further refine the descriptions.

Study 3 used a similar approach to prompt the views of educators on the pedagogical uses of LGBT+ children's literature. As discussed in Chapter 3, participants were given five different position statements or descriptions that represent a spectrum of views, ranging from the more conservative, in which LGBT+ literature is thought to have no place, or a very limited one, in educating the young, to the more liberal, in which the literature is considered a necessary pedagogical tool. The descriptions are included in Appendix B, which is a copy of the study provided to participants. As stated previously, the descriptions were not intended to capture all possible positions teachers might take on LGBT+ children's literature; rather, they served as prompts to engage participants with thinking about the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature. Participation involved selecting the description with which the teacher identified the most. Participants were asked name each group, a departure from Marshall's approach (as discussed in Chapter 3). The importance of this element of the study is discussed further below. Participants were

also asked to annotate the description by crossing out sections, writing in the margins, or otherwise changing the text in any way they chose. As discussed previously, this data was then analysed and clustered through an iterative process into the three themes identified above.

Finally, it should be noted that while the following analysis provides excerpts from participants' written responses, Faye[9] elected to primarily highlight her agreement or disagreement with the text rather than engage in written annotations, while Helen elected to only highlight, with no written responses at all. The data provided by the responses of Faye and Helen are of course valuable, particularly when discussing the agreement across all participants, and the responses are therefore referenced where appropriate. It is important to note this because the analysis in this chapter quotes the written responses of the other six participants so as to illustrate the themes, which at a glance would seem to elide the views of the two participants who did not write in any responses and therefore cannot be quoted.

Teacher Identity

Before discussing the themes, it is useful to first consider the teacher identities of the participants. As discussed in Chapter 3, teacher identity or teacher professional identity is difficult to define, but in this thesis refers broadly to 'the way that teachers, both individually and collectively, view and understand themselves as teachers' (Mockler, 2011, p. 519). It was important to understand the participants' positionality in relation to teaching and sexual and gender diversity, and participants were therefore asked to identify their job title, school type, age, religion, sexuality,

[9] Pseudonyms are used to discuss participants and their responses.

and gender identity. A total of eight teachers (including one student teacher) participated and a range of experiences, ages, and school types were represented (one participant elected to not provide any demographic information). Two participants taught in primary schools, four in secondary schools, and one as a specialist support teacher in both primary and secondary classes. Their ages ranged from 24 to 57 years and all identified as female and heterosexual. Three participants identified their school type as nondenominational and one as denominational. Two identified as Roman Catholic, one was raised Roman Catholic, three wrote 'no religion', and one identified as an atheist. This information is summarised in Appendix C.

Given that all participants said they identified with either group D or group E (five selected D[10] and three selected E), these details, coupled with the views articulated by participants and the labels chosen by them to describe the groups, suggest that teacher identity had no direct correlation to support for implementing LGBT+ children's literature into classroom practices. This includes agreement across religious lines. Two participants identified as Roman Catholic, one was raised Roman Catholic, three selected 'no religion', and one identified as an atheist. Faye said she worked in a denominational high school; both she and Grace identified as Roman Catholic yet each explicitly agreed with the prompt stating that 'a curriculum excluding texts about LGBTI children or children with LGBTI parents is unjustified and harmful'. Dana explicitly noted that 'an automatic presumption that people with strong religious beliefs would be uncomfortable with LGBTI texts in classrooms' is a biased understanding, and that 'the existence of a strong religious faith in a teacher

[10] One participant, Helen, did not explicitly choose a group but did highlight the most text in group D, an implicit selection of that group.

does not presume they want to use literature to search for moral lessons'. Thus, while Parliamentarians cited Christian religious beliefs as justification for Section 28 and rejecting non-heterosexual children's literature, a link between religion and resistance to LGBT+ inclusive teaching was rejected, implicitly and explicitly, by participants in this study.

In sum, across all of the different positionalities, there was consistent agreement on the importance of LGBT+ inclusive lessons and literature. It is also rather striking that, while only half of the participants followed instructions to label the group descriptions, the chosen labels are highly similar and even identical in three cases. What is important is not the particular group they gave these labels to (given the convergence of views on the more accepting descriptions), but what the labels suggest. One was 'Equalities Rep', and the other three were 'inclusive'.[11] The words 'inclusive' and 'equalities' (and even 'rep' or representation) connote a desire to recognise and enable the right to learn about LGBT+ perspectives and literature, which leads us to the first theme, the right to LGBT+ inclusive education.

Theme 1: The Right to LGBT+ Inclusive Education

The first theme is the right to an LGBT+ inclusive education, including LGBT+ literature. While it was anticipated that at least some participants would agree that an education inclusive of sexual and gender diversity is important or beneficial, participants in this study went a step further and argued that children actually have a right to such an education. Particularly surprising was the view that

[11] Dana did not write in her own label (she selected group D) but did highlight the word 'inclusive', which appeared to be her labelling of that group.

this right should be privileged over that of the parents to determine their child's education (discussed further below). While the right to an education in general is already provided for by law,[12] this finding is an argument about the specific content of that education. The following statements illustrate this theme:

Chris (who described her teaching role as 'Nursery/primary ("All stages")'

> 'we cannot let parents negatively stop us from supporting and including our children'
>
> 'keeping things dealt with at home stops young people looking for support from teachers and others which can lead to more isolation, depression and suicide'
>
> '[the Scottish Government's decision] is not only appropriate it is necessary'
>
> 'we need to be pro-active in changing the world for our LGBTI children'

Dana (who did not respond to the demographics questions):

> children will 'struggle' unless 'we introduce [LGBTI identities] as a normative in the classroom'
>
> 'Your sexual expression and awareness of your identity is not a right your parent should be deliberating.'
>
> 'When students grow older and are working with someone who is LGBTI then they do not have the option to "Opt out". This just teaches pure ignorance.'
>
> 'if not now, then when will someone teach that pupil the awfulness of their ways'

Eva (who taught at a non-denominational secondary school):

> 'In order for pupils to be prepared to be constructive members of society, it is essential that exposure to "alternative lifestyles" occurs within school education.'
>
> 'Children understand what they are exposed to when they are given the opportunity to ask questions. Deciding that "children cannot understand" without giving them adequate exposure is sheltering young people in a damaging way.'

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[12] See Protocol No. 1, Article 2, of the European Convention on Human Rights (2013) and Article 28 of the CRC (United Nations, 1989).

> 'Dealing with sensitive issues only in the home allows young people to be exposed to only one set of ideas- those of their parents. Young people need to be furnished with information on all responses, meaning sensitive topics also have a place within school.'

Grace (a Catholic and 'Specialist Support Teacher' for P1–S6):

> 'Teachers' jobs are to challenge children and young people to look beyond their own context to empathise and sympathise with the lives of others unlike them, in order to see the humanity in all of us.'
>
> '[It is] important that teachers help children and young people expand their vision of people to outside their own personal experience.'
>
> '[It is] important that children and young people develop awareness of other opinions and feelings in order to challenge their own. We don't want children and young people only existing within their comfort zone and not widening their perspective on people not like themselves, this is essential for developing tolerance in social life and questioning familial expectations.'

The belief that this education is a right can be inferred from the language used by participants, all of whom wrote about these matters firmly and with conviction, as the above quotations illustrate. Words such as 'essential' and 'need' imply that these lessons are absolutely necessary and indispensable. These responses construct teachers as having a duty to teach LGBT+ inclusive lessons and frame LGBT+ education as an entitlement – not something children *should* receive but *must* receive. Not only do the participants recognise this education as a right, but they also believe it should be privileged over the right of parents to decide the nature of their children's education.[13] The following quotes illustrate this finding:

[13] Legal provisions in relation to parental rights and children's education include Protocol No. 1, Article 2, of the European Convention on Human Rights (2013), which says that 'the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions'; Section 9 of the Education Act 1996 ('pupils are to be

Chris:

‘we cannot let parents negatively stop us from supporting and including our children’

‘keeping things dealt with at home stops young people looking for support from teachers and others which can lead to more isolation, depression and suicide’

Dana:

‘Your sexual expression and awareness of your identity is not a right your parent should be deliberating’

‘if not now, then when will someone teach that pupil the awfulness of their ways’

Eva:

‘In order for pupils to be prepared to be constructive members of society, it is essential that exposure to “alternative lifestyles” occurs within school education.’

‘Dealing with sensitive issues only in the home allows young people to be exposed to only one set of ideas- those of their parents. Young people need to be furnished with information on all responses, meaning sensitive topics also have a place within school.’

Grace:

‘Teachers’ jobs are to challenge children and young people to look beyond their own context to empathise and sympathise with the lives of others unlike them, in order to see the humanity in all of us.’

‘[It is] important that teachers help children and young people expand their vision of people to outside their own personal experience.’

‘We don’t want children and young people only existing within their comfort zone and not widening their perspective on people not like themselves, this is essential for developing tolerance in social life and questioning familial expectations.’

---

educated with the wishes of their parents’); and Section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (‘pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents’).

The view that children should learn about LGBT+ identities and issues in school (versus at home) is aligned with the position of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on comprehensive sexuality education. In particular, UNESCO noted in 2015 that most curricula rarely acknowledge 'young gay, lesbian and transgender people' and that effective comprehensive sexuality education 'has to be both inclusive and non-stigmatising' (UNESCO, 2015, p. 34). The participants in Study 3 argue for LGBT+ inclusion and a recognition of LGBT+ students, and that educators have a professional obligation to implement LGBT+ literature and perspectives.

Sexuality is, therefore, no longer a private matter for families to deal with (or not) however they see fit. The participants in this study imply that schools are *the* key site to ensuring the right to inclusive education is met rather than undermined. This position is particularly interesting given that Parliamentarians cited the beliefs of parents to justify children not having access to information about LGBT+ people and families. As discussed in Chapter 4, parents were first allowed to exempt their child(ren) from sex education precisely because politicians believed so strongly in this position, which led, through the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, to 'shift[ing] control [of sex education] to school governors and head teachers [with] enhanced accountability to parents' (Monk, 2001, p. 272). Making sex education more accountable to parents emphasised the family's role in regulating children's sexuality. Yet the teachers in this study argue that the views of parents *cannot* be allowed to prevent teachers from doing their duty by teaching LGBT+ education and enabling the rights, not of parents, but of students ('we cannot let parents stop us' – Chris).

Implicit in the right to LGBT+ inclusive education is the right to identity, including the right of the child to preserve their identity without unlawful interference, as set out in Article 8 of the CRC (United Nations, 1989). Aspects of 'identity' mentioned in that Article include nationality, name, and family relations. As Sandberg (2015) noted, while sexuality is not explicitly included in the CRC, the Committee on the Rights of the Child – made up of independent experts who monitor and report on implementation of the CRC – published a definition of identity that includes sexual orientation, and sexual orientation can therefore be read into Article 8(1) (see also United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). In essence, the participants in Study 3 argue that LGBT+ inclusive education is necessary to enable LGBT+ children's to learn about their identity. The right to identity is, at least in part, the right to have status before the law and to be recognised as a citizen by the state or government; it can also be argued that it is about recognition in curricular content and classroom practices. Inclusion, after all, is a recognition, as Grace said, of the 'humanity in all of us'.

The right to LGBT+ inclusive education can also be read as the right to not be discriminated against. The Equality Act 2010 specifically recognises sexual orientation and transgender status as protected characteristics. The exclusion of LGBT+ identities in and from schools can this be interpreted as an inherently discriminatory absence. With an inclusive curriculum, however, LGBT+ students are potentially equally recognised along with their heterosexual counterparts. However, this would depend on the extent to which a curriculum is actually inclusive. A merely cursory inclusion of LGBT+ texts which are simply made available to students, rather than engaged with in and through lessons, is only a nominal

representation of LGBT+ perspectives. This type of 'inclusion' is discussed further in the next theme.

The Scottish Government's decision to mandate LGBT+ inclusive education can be read as enabling the right to such education and non-heteronormative sexual and gender identity, and as a recognition of UNESCO's call for greater recognition of LGBT+ people in curricula. It also demonstrates that, while Foucault argued the discipline of 'pedagogy' had 'as its objective the specific sexuality of children […] the sin of youth' (Foucault, 1976/1978, pp. 116–117), education actually has such an objective not because non-heterosexuality is a 'sin' but precisely because it is *not*: it is beneficial for children, who should therefore learn about it through texts and inclusive lessons in order to be better protected from harm. Thus, while Section 28 was based in part on the ideology that government intervention was necessary to protect children, these teachers are telling us, over 30 years later, that it is educators who must intervene to enable the right to LGBT+ inclusive education.

But even in the progressive views of the participants, heteronormative and heterosexist beliefs – in particular, resistance to LGBT+ identity as a 'norm', which in turn perpetuates a hierarchy of sexuality – is still evident in some of the responses, which at times also reassert binaries or dualisms such as us/them and straight/gay. Eva, for example, wrote: 'for pupils to be prepared to be constructive members of society, it is essential that exposure to "alternative lifestyles" occurs within school education'. Thus, even while she is calling for recognition of LGBT+ identities, those identities remain 'othered' by her – they are constructed as non-normative, as 'alternatives' to the norm. Similarly, Dana wrote: 'When students grow older and are working with someone who is LGBTI then they do not have the option to "Opt out."'

Framing LGBT+ identities in this way (as something that will be encountered when one is older) constructs young people as never themselves LGBT+, and sexual diversity as something only adults experience.[14] In other words, young people are constructed as inherently heterosexual (the very belief inverted by Parliamentarians in the debates). This mythology is also present in Grace's response about the necessity of teaching LGBT+ texts. She wrote: 'We don't want children and young people only existing within their comfort zone and not widening their perspective on people *not like themselves*' (emphasis added). Like Eva and Dana, Grace constructs children as heterosexual only. These responses suggest that sensitivity training may be necessary to help educators learn about and recognise their own implicit bias in how they (mis)understand childhood and sexuality and may, as a result, perpetuate certain normative ideologies about sexuality and gender.

The participants also construct young people as having agency and the capacity for self-determination, again recalling, as we have seen throughout this thesis, the Foucauldian notion of reverse discourse. Further, the participants argue that such capacity should be fostered through LGBT+ inclusive education, which will ultimately empower young people. By extension, they argue also for the empowerment of teachers themselves, especially those who identify as LGBT+, to no longer fear repercussions for teaching LGBT+ perspectives and addressing homophobia and heterosexism in the classroom. This empowerment of both students and teachers alike is a counter-current to, and the reverse discourse of, the social/sexual hierarchy constituted by the Section 28 debates over 30 years ago, in

[14] While Dana implied that only adults, and not children, have LGBT+ identities, she did not say that LGBT+ lessons are only for older students. She argued that students will encounter LGBT+ people later in life and all must therefore learn about them.

which reproductive, heterosexual family life was framed as the pinnacle to which all children should aspire (and recalling Rubin's hierarchy, as discussed previously). A curriculum that fully recognises sexual diversity must interrogate and challenge that hierarchy and its continued prevalence in society today. Such a curriculum cannot, of course, completely undo that hegemonic culture, but the willingness of these eight teachers should not be discounted given their ability, through their positions as educators, to affect the lives of at least some of their students and thereby achieve change at the individual, if not the societal, level.

Finally, while none of the teachers identified as LGBT+ themselves, they called for all teachers, regardless of sexuality, to adopt LGBT+ inclusive lessons into their pedagogical practice. This recalls N. N. Govender's (2017) reflection on the positionality of educators and the assumptions made by their students in relation to sexuality, and the blurring of professional and personal identities. In a course on critical literacy that included issues of sex, gender, and sexuality, Govender was asked by one student about his sexuality and 'why a straight man would want to teach a course like this', implying a concern over 'who is allowed to be invested in certain topics' (N. N. Govender, 2017, pp. 34–35). This question raised, in turn, another question: 'Surely […] anyone working within a human rights agenda might be invested in such a topic?' (N. N. Govender, 2017, p. 35). The teachers in Study 3 – again, all of whom identified as heterosexual – seem to have answered this question in the affirmative by framing LGBT+ education as a pedagogical imperative for all teachers, regardless of personal or professional identity.

Theme 2: Silence Harms

The second theme is 'silence harms', an extension of the first theme in that it justifies the recognition of the right to LGBT+ inclusive education. All eight teachers agreed that a curriculum which excludes LGBT+ texts harms students. This finding is primarily the result of responses to this prompt in Group E: 'a curriculum that excludes texts about LGBTI children or child with LGBTI parents is unjustified and harmful'. It was not anticipated that many participants would actually agree with this statement, but it was nevertheless included because it is so antithetical to the core ideology of Section 28 (i.e., that LGBT+ texts pervert and harm children). Yet there was agreement on this statement from all participants: three (Bella, Eva, and Faye) chose group E and therefore explicitly agreed with the position; three others (Chris, Grace, and Helen), while choosing a different group, highlighted the statement in agreement; and while the remaining two participants, Ally and Dana, did not make any specific reference to the statement, given that they crossed out or otherwise indicated the statements they did not agree with allows for their agreement here to be implied.

The theme can be stated another way, one which further illuminates this position: student engagement with LGBT+ texts can help support students' wellbeing and protect them from harm. The following statements illustrate this position:

Chris:

> 'agree with this[,] higher risk of suicide in LGBTI community due to being excluded from society'
>
> 'keeping things dealt with at home stops young people looking for support from teachers and others which can lead to more isolation, depression and suicide'

Eva:

> 'The targeting of specific groups will not reduce without the next generation being invited to question the way things have always been. Exploring LGBTI literature is a non-intrusive ways [sic] of raising these questions, and the more seamlessly this is done throughout the curriculum, the fewer battles there will be.'

Grace:

> 'We need to be careful that we are not creating a climate for literature in schools which is only politically correct or acceptable to all faiths. Schools have a duty to expose children to imaginary worlds and contexts beyond their ken.'

There are three types of harm referred to here by participants. The first is that LGBT+ students will have a higher risk of suicide if they see their own identities not included in the curriculum. This position recalls the words on Bishop (1990), who argued that

> when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part. (para. 4)

Substitute 'curriculum' for 'books' and we have the argument that children who do not see themselves reflected by the curriculum may learn or believe that they are devalued in and by the society and community in which they live. Similarly, in writing of the period immediately following the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act 1967, S. Sanders (2018) observed that 'the personal challenge to come to terms with one's sexual and gender identity is daunting and painful when there is a pernicious atmosphere' (p. 219). Participants in Study 3 are, in effect, arguing that it is the duty of educators to dismantle the 'pernicious atmosphere' facing LGBT+

students in schools today, and to mitigate heterosexist devaluation (and higher risk of suicide) by ensuring lessons are LGBT+ inclusive.

The second type of harm is evident in Eva's response above that LGBT+ students will continue to be targeted unless literature that portrays sexual diversity is used to raise and answer questions in the classroom about heteronormativity as the very basis of society. In other words, unless inclusive texts are taught, children will continue to be ignorant of the contingent nature of hegemonic norms, that is, of the understanding that things as they are now were not inevitable, that other ways of being and existing have been and are still possible. This greater awareness would help reduce the targeting of students perceived as different once the contingent nature of different itself is foregrounded and interrogated.

The third type of harm is less about physical risk and more about the risk of failing to educate students about cultures and ways of life different to those in which the student has lived experienced, which is evident in Grace's response above. This risk is also about hegemonic beliefs and exploring possible ways of being and existing that are marginalised by that hegemony. As Grace wrote, it is important for teachers to 'help children and young people expand their vision of people to outside their own personal experience.' This risk circles back to the first and second types of harm discussed above: failing to include students' own identities in the curriculum may increase the risk of suicide, and marginalised students will likely continue to be targeted unless those students and their perspectives are fully reflected in the curriculum. What this theme, and the data clustered around it, suggests is that education professionals have duty to teach inclusive lessons and texts so as to reduce the harm to students, which further establishes the view that children have a right to

inclusive education. To silence that inclusivity, to have a curriculum that reflects only the majority, is to participate directly in injuring young people and undermining their rights and wellbeing.

Implicit in these arguments is the belief that LGBT+ texts can reduce harm. Of course, being attacked is a different sort of risk (one located entirely outside the individual, unlike suicide) to the one cited by Chris, but it is one with potential consequences just as dire. And, again, there is the implicit argument that LGBT+ literature can have a healing effect – contributing, as Chris wrote, to 'fewer battles' (i.e., fewer attacks and therefore fewer deaths). It can be inferred that Chris views LGBT+ literature as potentially helping LGBT+ students cope with victimisation (although clearly there are limits to what an individual should have to, or even can, cope with) and help would-be attackers (bullies, homophobes, transphobes, and so on) learn empathy, thereby reducing the risk of their subjecting others to harm. A similar need for empathy and understanding is implied in Grace's response as well: while she does not say why children should be exposed to other worlds 'beyond their ken', the implicit argument is that literature can have transformative effects and, furthermore, that it is precisely because of such potential that there exists the educational imperative to infuse LGBT+ perspectives across the curriculum, in addition to the duty established by the right to such an education.

These positions – that literature can improve students' lives, teach them coping strategies and empathy, and indeed help protect them – are consistent with the research showing that LGBT+ students are indeed particularly vulnerable to being threatened, harassed, and physically attacked at school, in the home, and on social media (Horn et al., 2008, p. 792). In other words, what the teachers reveal is that

LGBT+ literature is a *necessity* in education (a 'duty', according to Grace) because of these (often life-threatening) risks, and thus the failure to include that literature in the curriculum means children will be harmed. In other words, LGBT+ books can help save children, and educators have a duty to make them available to their students. It is also worth noting that these responses construct LGBT+ young people as vulnerable by justifying the use of LGBT+ inclusive lessons and texts in terms of victimhood, bullying, and suicide (similar to deficit constructions of sexual diversity in the earlier YA novels, as discussed in the previous chapter). While those reasons are of course valid, lessons and texts about LGBT+ people are also valuable simply by virtue of their potential to teach students about LGBT+ life and history as a culture like any other. A praxis that approaches lessons and literature from this perspective would celebrate multiculturalism and the benefits of sexual and gender diversity (recalling the ways diversity was portrayed in the YA corpus). While it is important for educators to be informed about homophobia and heterosexism, they should also be informed about the positive benefits of sexual and gender diversity. The types of training that can support teachers in this regard are discussed in the next theme.

Significantly, none of the teachers identified LGBT+ texts as being only for older students, a rejection of the myth that young children in early years and primary phases cannot and should not learn about sexual diversity (even while that myth is suggested by some of the responses discussed above). In other words, all children, regardless of age, are entitled to learn about sexual and gender diversity. Two participants commented directly on age, both affirming that young children should have access to LGBT+ information:

Bella (a primary teacher in a non-denominational school):

> 'I […] strongly agree LGBTI issues should be addressed regardless of the child's age'
>
> 'I disagree that children cannot understand LGBTI identities. I believe children can easily understand that human beings can form relationships with one another'

Chris:

> 'nursery […] is where we need to begin with having books showing LGBTI people in stories. The younger the child the easier they accept differences – they don't see colour[15] and in my nursery children play games where they see no problem with having more than 1 mummy or daddy -or puppy!'

These responses construct even early years spaces as site that produce sexuality and gender. Additionally, Helen and Faye, while not making any specific reference to ages, highlighted the statement that 'LGBTI texts must be made a part of every child's education', constructing younger children as having the right to LGBT+ inclusive education. This position contrasts the parliamentary constructions of young children as easily corrupted by literature and thus requiring indoctrination into the only 'legitimate' way of life (i.e., the heterosexist privileging of heterosexuality, heterosexual marriage, and a reproductive family). It also is an implicit recognition that educational spaces for even very young children nurture and produce sexuality. As Wallis and VanEvery (2000) argued, heterosexuality is 'crucial to the organisation of primary schools' (p. 411) and, I would argue, nurseries and other early years education. Study 3's participants implicitly acknowledge schools as

[15] The claim that her students do not see colour appears to be a claim that they do not see race. Such a claim is, as many others have noted (e.g., Stafford, 2015), a racist ideology. To 'not see colour' is to ignore the lived experiences of people of colour and the injustices they face as a result of the racist systems and institutions on which our society is built. Further, it allows those who claim not to see colour to ignore the ways in which they themselves are implicit in racism.

sexual sites for all ages and, further, affirm that LGBT+ texts and lessons are matters for every child, regardless of age.

Before discussing the next theme, I want to briefly consider the comment of one participant, Grace, who wrote that texts do not 'necessarily need to be labelled LGBTI or heterosexual' and that she found 'it discomfiting to describe texts for children as being LGBTI or non LGBTI because I don't think LGBTI texts should fit a particular stereotype'. These comments are interesting in that they are aligned with how some of the characters in the Study 2 corpus resisted labelling and with the research by Savin-Williams (2005) and others (discussed previously) that young people reinterpreting and renegotiating the meaning of sexuality to their identity and sense of self. If that is the case, then it makes sense, as Grace suggested, that LGBT+ literature and heterosexual literature be referred to instead as simply literature, unmarked by sexuality just as teens themselves (both in reality and in recent YA fiction) are unmarked by sexuality (or as unmarked as possible in a society that still gives significant currency to labels and binary divisions). If one's identity and community are no longer defined by sexual attraction, then perhaps LGBT+ literature can itself be conceptualised and categorised in different terms.

Theme 3: Continuing Professional Development for LGBT+ Inclusive Education

Whereas the previous themes were focused on empowering young people through LGBT+ inclusive education, the final theme to emerge is continuing professional development (CPD) to aid teachers in delivering LGBT+ inclusive

education. All participants agreed that such training is necessary.[16] The responses clustered around four areas of training in particular: (1) identifying and using LGBT+ texts, (2) combating homophobia, (3) dealing with backlash from parents and adults, and (4) supporting LGBT+ students. The following statements illustrate this theme:

<u>Ally (who described herself as having had a 'Catholic upbringing')</u>:

> 'I am a teacher of English and, admittedly, my knowledge of LGBTI texts is thin. Guidance would be useful to help our department stock suitable texts.'

<u>Dana</u>:

> 'The only training I think would be beneficial is how best to support a pupil struggling to identify with LGBTI identities. Not how to combat homophobia. I think a teacher should already know the appropriate sanctions for language and terminology as such.'

<u>Eva</u>:

> 'Given that this is the first wave of teachers to deliver content relating to LGBTI, it will likely promote confidence if training was offered'.
>
> 'Personally, I feel that I would struggle with the line between allowing pupils to hold their own opinions, and tackling opinions which could potentially be damaging to society, and so relat[ed] training would be welcome.'

<u>Grace</u>:

> 'If I swapped "female equality" or ["]ethnic minority" for "LGBTI" I might feel far less concern since I would feel I know how these issues might be dealt with in literature. It is the lack of knowledge about how LGBTI issues could be dealt with in literature that will concern some people'.

[16] The statement six participants (Faye, Eva, Chris, Ally, Grace, and Helen) explicitly agreed with was the following: 'I do think there needs to be training and guidance on how to respond to challenges from parents or others in the community. There should also be training on how to respond to possible homophobia and protect students, without which the government's changes could actually cause more harm than good. I am also concerned that many teachers, librarians, and others who work with children's literature may not be aware of LGBTI texts or even have the funding to acquire those texts in the first place'. While Bella and Dana were the only participant who did not explicitly agree, neither crossed out or indicated any disagreement, and their agreement can thus be inferred.

> ‘This is probably one of the main points’ [written next to the prompt: ‘I am also concerned that many teachers, librarians, and others who work with children’s literature may not be aware of LGBTI texts’]

While Grace’s statement that some teachers may be unsure as to how LGBT+ literature can illuminate LGBT+ perspectives, it suggests that some educators are unaware of how literature can develop an understanding of LGBT+ perspectives. Similarly, Ally said that her ‘knowledge of LGBTI texts is thin’ and that guidance on stocking ‘suitable texts’ would be useful. In other words, she lacks knowledge about what LGBT+ texts are available and how to find those that are ‘suitable’ (whatever that may mean). There are thus two types of training that appear to be useful in relation to literary pedagogy: how literature can address LGBT+ perspectives and students, and on how to identify relevant books.

It is interesting to note that Ally is an English teacher, as that position implies substantial knowledge on, and experience in, identifying and using texts to educate students. Describing her knowledge of LGBT+ texts as ‘thin’ constructs those texts as different to ‘mainstream’ literature – otherwise, no training or guidance would be necessary. This construction is an othering of LGBT+ texts (and implicitly LGBT+ people themselves): they are separate and therefore require additional training and guidance even for those experienced in teaching literature. Similarly, Bella wrote that ‘LGBTI issues should not be obvious in literature’ because such issues ‘may take away its purpose of entertaining and interesting readers’ (although it is unclear why ‘LGBTI issues’ could not in and of themselves be entertaining and interesting). This framing suggests that ‘LGBTI issues’ should never be the focus of the curriculum or proactively discussed but, rather, that they should be raised only incidentally as students draw attention to them. Thus, while some teachers seek to be

inclusive, they may inadvertently still ‘other’ – that is, fragment or differentiate (Thompson, 2019) – non-heterosexual identities (as we also saw in Theme 1), suggesting that sensitivity or implicit bias training may be helpful.

In relation to addressing homophobia, two conflicting positions are presented by Dana and Eva. Dana wrote that such training is not necessary because ‘a teacher should already know the appropriate sanctions for language and terminology as such.’ Eva, however, said she would welcome exactly that kind of training because she ‘would struggle with the line between allowing pupils to hold their own opinions, and tackling opinions which could potentially be damaging to society’.[17] Dana’s assumption that teachers already understand how best to interrupt discriminatory situations is belied by Eva’s admission that she struggles with identifying the line between freedom of expression/opinion and protecting other students from harmful language and opinions. Dana did not answer any of the demographic questions in this study, but the words ‘should already know’ suggests a difference in the experience levels between Dana and Eva (one claims to already know what to do while the other admits she does not). Any training on the new LGBT+ inclusive curriculum might,

[17] This dichotomy (often framed as free speech versus censorship) is indicative of a wider cultural debate taking place today, in which those facing the consequences of their past speech (consequences often referred to as ‘cancel culture’ by those facing the backlash) claim that there is an ‘intolerant Left’ that makes people afraid to share their thoughts and prevents good-faith debate. The most recent and prominent example is J. K. Rowling and her anti-trans tweets. Facing backlash from fans (see, for example, J. Hoffman, 2020), Rowling signed, along with other notable figures, an already-infamous open letter decrying, amongst other things, an ‘intolerance of opposing views’, ‘public shaming and ostracism’, and ‘restrictions of debate’ (Ackerman et al., 2020). The letter is, ironically, an attempt to cancel the so-called ‘cancel culture’ and demonstrates that their views are anything but ‘cancelled’ given the letter’s high-profile publication in Harper’s Magazine and circulation by Rowling to her 14.3 million Twitter followers. Rowling’s views, which denigrate the existence of other humans and correlates their existence with abuse and sexual violence, echo the Section 28 conflation of homosexuality with abuse and violence, revealing how discrimination is never really quashed but recycled and reformed into yet other iterations of prejudice. A future avenue of research extending the work of this thesis would involve comparing the ideologies circulating in the current trans ‘debate’ and examining those in relation to Section 28 and YA literature with trans characters.

therefore, be more effective if different areas of focus are offered for different ranges of experience.

Participants also identified other types of necessary training. As stated previously, five participants (Faye, Eva, Ally, Grace, and Helen) explicitly agreed that ‘there needs to be training and guidance on how to respond to challenges from parents or others in the community’. Dana also called for guidance on supporting LGBT+ students themselves: ‘The only training I think would be beneficial is how best to support a pupil struggling to identify with LGBTI identities.’ The remaining participants did not ask for similar training, suggesting that they already felt competent in dealing with parents and in supporting LGBT+ students, and that they have experience doing so. This is a significant departure from the existing literature, discussed in Chapter 2, that primarily frames teachers as inexperienced in such matters. What this suggests is, again, that a range of training should be offered, including different areas of focus for different levels of experience.

Regardless of the particular training needed, none of the participants cited their lack of knowledge as justification for resisting the implementation of LGBT+ literature into their classroom practices. This finding was unexpected in light of the studies by Clark (2010), Thein (2013), and others discussed in Chapter 2. In Clark’s (2010) study, for example, one educator said she would not even attempt to change homophobic views because a teacher should be ‘non-biased’ and ‘keep her personal beliefs to herself’, while another participant said that ‘teaching students to be accepting of homosexuality […] is not part of the normal realm of teaching’ and teachers should not ‘correct students’ thoughts about homosexuality (pp. 707, 708). Similar resistance was not apparent in Study 3: instead of using the lack of training

or inexperience to justify the continued erasure of LGBT+ perspectives, they called for relevant training to be provided so as to enable their pedagogical practices to include and reflect sexual and gender diversity. Whether there is a cultural difference that contributes to the difference in these findings as compared to the existing research in other countries, primarily the U.S.A., is a possible avenue for further research.

The participants' comments also reveal that they are unaware of guidance already available from organisations on the very issues that concerned them. For example, guidance is available on implementing an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum, including a 'list of modern age-appropriate books and authors' (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2018, p. 6) and training on how to challenge homophobia (LGBT Youth Scotland, n.d.-a). Similar resources and training have been made available online through the Schools OUT U.K. charity (http://www.schools-out.org.uk). The lack of awareness about existing guidance and resources suggests that the tools being published by organisations should be more widely publicised amongst education professionals to ensure that they reach intended users.

The comments also suggest a lack of training provided directly by school leaders and teacher education programmes. Indeed, Ally was the only participant to note that her school had undertaken any sort of training with regard to LGBT+ inclusion, writing: 'My school has already started this process – LGBTI training has taken place and a full [in-service training] day will be dedicated to this in August. I think it's important that all staff receive this training.' The fact that she was the only participant to comment on existing training suggests that teachers have yet to receive guidance even while schools are, at least in Scotland, presumably in the midst of

adjusting their curriculum to implement LGBT+ inclusive lessons. If there has indeed been a lack of training (can only one full day of training provide teachers with sufficient skills and knowledge?), one wonders how successful the inclusive lessons will actually be and what level of support can really be made available to LGBT+ students.

The call for training to better equip teachers may stem from the recognition that simply introducing LGBT+ texts into the curriculum is not enough to achieve an inclusive curriculum. In other words, the curriculum requires more than just 'positive images' of sexual and gender diversity, as 'merely introducing texts with same-sex couples or nonconforming gender and sexual identities does not automatically ensure that students, teachers and school curriculums are transformed' (N. N. Govender, 2019, p. 357). Socially-just pedagogies require 'findings ways for students to negotiate *meaning* and come to terms with diverse perspectives' (N. N. Govender, 2019, p. 357). The inclusion of LGBT+ literature as part of the curriculum is necessary but not in and of itself sufficient: it is only the start of necessary change and pedagogical practice must also include the production of meaning from those texts by connecting students empathetically with other perspectives through analysis and imagination. Such transformative practices are what the participants called for when they identified a need for pedagogical training on not just how to identify LGBT+ texts but how to use them productively and engage students with thinking critically about how LGBT+ identities are portrayed and what is being said through those portrayals. These strategies call to mind Freire's (1968/1972) argument that teaching relies too heavily on 'banking' – a system in which students are essentially just empty containers waiting to memorise and repeat whatever the teachers 'fills'

them with (p. 58) – and instead should focus on dialogue that generates critical thinking.

Teachers should be supported in understanding how to enable such dialogue, including through the use of LGBT+ literature. This dialogue can be a productive means for interrogating not just what is in a text but what is absent from it. As Kumashiro (2002) argued, using novels to teach about 'the other' can be problematic if they privilege 'certain ideologies over others' and portray 'only a partial perspective' (p. 43). If those differences are not interrogated or otherwise engaged with critically, students may believe that because they have understood what happened in the novel, they have also come to understand a culture or identity (Kumashiro, 2002). Thus, 'while using popular media is more likely to engage young people's interest', there is the risk of that media 'merely reinscribing […] dominate discourses' (D. Epstein et al., 2003, p. 68). This risk is avoided in large part by using literature that portrays LGBT+ characters, but it does not completely remove the risk given that all stories – even those about LGBT+ perspectives – contain ideologies like any other text and are only ever partial perspectives. This problem is evident in the YA novels discussed in Chapter 5: the pedagogical use of, for example, earlier novels to teach about LGBT+ people, might lead students to understand that sexual diversity makes one vulnerable, which might entrench the stereotypical view of non-heterosexuality as different and therefore as not normal. Teaching any of the novels from the corpus would also necessarily privilege lesbian and gay identities over those not portrayed in the narratives. Teachers must therefore be empowered with the pedagogical tools, strategies, and knowledge to engage students in critically examining LGBT+ literature through conscientious inquiry.

Given these issues, teachers must not only ask what a certain novel says about a particular sexual or gender identity, but rather interrogate the stereotypes that are reinforced and those that are challenged by the story; and what is not said in the novel about that identity (Kumashiro, 2002). In other words, 'the value of lessons about the Other comes not in the truth it gives us about the Other, but in the pedagogical and political uses to which the resulting (disruptive) knowledge can be put' (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 43). Such pedagogical uses, therefore, are key to teacher training on the curricular inclusion of LGBT+ texts and perspectives without inadvertently reinforcing heteronormativity and deficit constructions of sexual and gender already embedded within education. This work could include:

> presenting young people with some of the work of thinkers on sexuality in an accessible form, work which questions some of the values embedded in youth media discussions of sexuality. […] It would mean young people were given knowledge about how sexuality has come to be thought about in the ways that it has.' (D. Epstein et al., 2003, pp. 68–69)

One particular strategy, for example, could include pairing fictional stories and novels portraying sexual and gender diversity with nonfiction about sexuality, thus presenting students with depictions in popular media and coupling that with work on the contingent nature of sexuality and gender.

The texts used by teachers will necessarily play a part in influencing students, portraying to them the possibilities of the world and ways of existing in it. 'Heteronormative and patriarchal ideologies not only enable a particular way of seeing the world, but also influence the kinds of futures that can be imagined' (N. N. Govender, 2017, p. 28). The influence of world views and future possibilities seems

particularly important in an educational context where there is an imbalance of power between young students and the teachers who guide their education. Additionally, the texts chosen for education can affect the ideals and values regarded by both teachers and students as permissible (Govender, 2011, as cited in N. N. Govender, 2017, p. 26). As discussed, literature exists as a key site of education and pedagogy, underscoring the importance not just of using texts that contain LGBT+ themes but of using them in ways that are meaningful and productive without inadvertently reinforcing the marginalisation of LGBT+ people.

Teacher training is key in this regard. Just as presenting factual information and texts about LGBT+ people to students is not, by itself, sufficient, presenting teachers and student teachers with information about LGBT+ people, homophobia, and so on is also not sufficient to enable them to implement inclusive perspectives and practices. As King (1991) noted, 'merely presenting factual information about societal inequity does not necessarily enable preservice teachers to examine the beliefs and assumptions that may influence the way they interpret these' (p. 142). Understanding how to navigate these matters is, therefore, a necessary part of teacher education and pedagogy.

Discussion

This chapter has detailed the views of educators in Scotland on the pedagogical potential or affordances of LGBT+ children's literature, thus answering the final research question posed in this thesis (i.e., what are the views of current educators in Scotland on the pedagogical potential of LGBT+ children's literature?). It is important to understand these views given that schools operate as spaces in

which sexuality and gender are (re)produced and disciplined consciously and unconsciously (see Allan et al., 2008). Even when sexuality is not an explicit or overt part of the curriculum, it is nevertheless pervasive and invasive, a form of the compulsory heterosexuality identified by Rich (1980). As Mac an Ghaill (1991) argued, sexuality and hierarchies of gender are never really absent in schools: they are reinforced and policed through the marginalisation of LGBT+ identities, bullying, staff preconceptions, and so on. Given this pervasiveness, it would be 'ridiculous to assume that children don't draw conclusions from the visible, invisible and imagined behaviour of the adults and children around them' (D. Epstein & Johnson, 1998, p. 96). That socialisation process teaches students the norms of society, and it occurs within a system of institutional biases and hetero-patriarchal structures that discipline, subordinate, marginalise, and otherwise define the experiences of LGBT+ (and indeed other minority) people. Even within sex and relationships education where matters of gender and sexuality would seemingly be explicitly addressed, a hidden curriculum inevitably reproduces and perpetuates heteronormativity and the stereotyping and marginalisation (if not the outright erasure) of LGBT+ people (D. Epstein et al., 2003; B. Smith, 2015).

What the results of Study 3 suggest is a curriculum that proactively addresses gender and sexuality (i.e., actively foregrounds sexuality and gender) is preferable to an informal or hidden curriculum wherein students are unconsciously socialised by peers and teachers (for an overview of the hidden curriculum, see Kentli, 2009). A curriculum explicitly and proactively inclusive of LGBT+ perspectives is a necessary circuit break in an otherwise relentless educational and socialisation cycle that teaches children that what is normative and what is dominant are the same. As we

have seen, LGBT+ children's literature in particular can also operate as a site of cultural learning about sexuality and gender that counteracts heteronormative ideals. The results of Study 3 tell us that such literature is a vital part of an education that foregrounds sexuality, gender, homophobia, and heterosexism. The results also demonstrate the belief amongst participants that failing to implement an LGBT+ inclusive education, including LGBT+ children's literature, can actually be harmful to *all* students: not only is a safer learning environment fostered by such education, but students are also better prepared for encountering difference in and out of school, in and beyond childhood. In other words, they learn how to be a part of a multicultural society. LGBT+ inclusive education is thus a countermeasure that normalises difference itself. This framing constructs the problems faced by LGBT+ young people as being the result of a knowledge deficit (knowledge about the self and about difference) and that those problems can be addressed by educating young people about sexual and gender diversity and difference.

This study ultimately speaks to the changing nature of childhood itself as a social construct, one that opens up childhood to the social possibilities and benefits of diverse family and relationship patterns and sexual choice beyond the hegemonic and heteronormative man/woman and even gay/straight dualisms. In particular, while the protection of children remains a common motif, the nature of such protection has changed. As we have seen, the Section 28 debates constituted children as innocent, vulnerable, and unsafe, requiring protection most of all from their inner, latent (and therefore natural) homosexuality. Section 28 was the culmination of the political attempt to select and organise the 'right' kind of knowledge to which children should have access (i.e., knowledge which would suppress rather than activate latent

homosexuality). This study thus demonstrates a very different narrative about young people and how to best protect them over 30 years later, with Study 3's participants constituting children as knowing and intelligent and, further, recognising children's agency and their capacity for self-determination, self-identification, and non-heteronormative sexualities and genders – all of which requires knowledge of sexual and gender diversity. The construction of children as competent rejects the logic of child protectionism that dominated the parliamentary debates and the wholesale failure to recognise the child's competency or right to self-determination. This logic is evident in the ways that politicians constituted children as easily lured or perverted (as discussed in Chapter 4) – terms which imply a docile mind and body without any agency. Because children could be so easily lured, they implicitly lacked the capacity for self-determination and, accordingly, their innocence had to be protected through legislation. Study 3 tells us that there has been a significant and telling shift in what constitutes a child's best interests, namely, that knowledge of sexual and gender diversity is no longer the 'wrong' kind of knowledge. In other words, children must be empowered through knowledge rather than controlled through its suppression. Inherent in this shift is the recognition that children should be exposed to information and ideas that help them better understand themselves, the world around them, and their future in it. In sum, innocence is no longer the brightline distinction between childhood and adulthood that has been so clearly embedded in society and institutionalised in schools.

Framing such education in this way constitutes it as a right – a right to read LGBT+ literature and to learn about sexual and gender diversity and the systems that seek to contain and discipline them – and it should therefore take place in the

classroom rather than the home (where there is the risk of that right being undermined by parents who would refuse to teach their children about such matters themselves, or indeed found themselves unequipped to so teach their children). To that end, LGBT+ inclusive lessons and literature are not dangerous but, rather, facilitate the students' citizenship education and identity development. The danger to children is no longer their latent homosexuality but the potential violation of their right to learn about sexual and gender diversity and LGBT+ literature, and thus potentially about themselves as well.

We can therefore see that Section 28's legacy has indeed been significantly eroded. In fact, it has been eroded to the extent that none of the participants made any reference to that law in their responses. As a litmus test, the study itself deliberately did not mention Section 28: if the legacy of that law continued today, then the presumption was reasonable that participants would reference it without a prompt, especially in light of Lee's (2019) study. The fact that none of the participants in Study 3 mentioned Section 28 (even across the range of ages from 24 to 57 years) reveals that, to the extent the law is still impactful today, it was not significant enough to consciously impact participants' beliefs. This finding is not necessarily incompatible with that of Lee, as her work was focused on the experiences of teachers and how comfortable they would be with mixing their personal and professional identities. But that is distinct from the findings of Study 3, which focus on the sexuality of children, not teachers. It can be argued, therefore, that educators, even while reserved about their own sexuality, might nevertheless be more open to supporting their students' own development in gender and sexuality. That being said, none of the participants in Study 3 identified as LGBT+, which

limits what can be said on whether non-heteronormative identity of a teacher would impact her support of students, an area for future research.

In sum, Study 3 has demonstrated a shift in how children are constituted (a shift reflected by the YA literature in the previous chapter). Three decades ago, children were constituted by Parliamentarians as powerless, dependent, and particularly vulnerable to material that would tempt and incite their latent same-sex desires. Section 28 was a means to disempower and control others (children and, by extension, those who teach them) by cutting off access to texts that discuss or portray sexual diversity and by imposing what was effectively a prohibition against supporting LGBT+ students in schools. In justifying the legislation, children were constituted as innocent and docile. The teachers in Study 3, however, argue for empowering children through knowledge of sexual diversity and the literature that portrays it precisely because children are capable of exercising agency and self-determination. This construction of youth is similar to how young people were constituted by the novels examined in Study 2. In those novels, children were portrayed as knowing and capable people whose diverse experiences of sexuality, rather than being detrimental, were actually beneficial to their self-development. Study 3, by engaging the views of eight professionals responsible for educating children, confirms that those narratives are more than fiction and that LGBT+ texts and inclusive lessons can no longer justifiably be excluded from the curriculum (if indeed any real justification ever existed in the first place). Accordingly, schools and educators have a duty to provide that education and to make LGBT+ literature available to all students.

LGBT+ Inclusive Education in Scotland

The Scottish Government (SG) has adopted 33 recommendations for developing and implementing its new policy for LGBT+ inclusive education, including those pertaining specifically to initial teacher education and career-long professional learning (SG, 2018). One such recommendation is that 'new learning resources should focus on LGBTI curricular inclusion and should include materials for all levels of the curriculum from early years to senior phase' (SG, 2018, p. 11). These new resources

> should include a variety of teaching materials (such as short films and displays) and address a range of thematic areas including: LGBTI terminology and identities; LGBTI history, addressing prejudice and homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying; LGBTI literature and lives; as well as examples of LGBTI inclusion for the context of subject specific teaching. (SG, 2018, p. 12)

In addition to those materials, teachers will also be supported by a new toolkit for 'building staff confidence in addressing prejudice, dealing with incidents of bullying, engaging parents and carers, case studies and scenarios, and an overview of related policy and legislation' (SG, 2018, p. 12). The focus of these materials and their support for teacher learning addresses the issues raised by Study 3's participants, who were concerned with how to identify and use LGBT+ literature effectively, and how to address homophobia and the concerns of parents. As a result, Study 3 is additional evidence that the training, guidance, and policies committed to by the Government are necessary measures. The Government has also committed to 'engag[ing] with LGBT young people, learning from their views and experiences and

working with them through a co-production approach to take account of their views on how best to implement these recommendations' (SG, 2019). This inclusion of young people is an explicit recognition of their agency, is aligned with participants' constructions of children as capable individuals, and is a refusal to continue with a curriculum that, through the erasure of LGBT+ perspectives, may make LGBT+ youth feel as though they are unimportant or, worst of all, should not exist.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the final study comprising the core of the thesis. The goal of the study was not to capture and summarise all possible teaching philosophies about LGBT+ literature but to engage teachers in thinking about the pedagogical potential of that literature and to do so by using various prompts or descriptions. The fact that most participants elected to respond as they read through all of the descriptions, rather than just the one they most identified with, resulted in richer data confirming the societal shift suggested by the analysis of literature in Chapter 5. In particular, applying a thematic analysis approach to the data has revealed three key findings or themes: (1) that young people have the right to LGBT+ inclusive education and literature; (2) a curriculum that is not LGBT+ inclusive can actually harm students; and (2) continuing professional development for LGBT+ inclusive education. The next chapter, the final one for this thesis, synthesises the major findings of all three studies and identifies their wider implications.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

> 'The Government have made quite clear that any teaching about homosexuality must never, in any sense, advocate or encourage it as a normal form of relationship. To do so would be educationally and morally indefensible.' – Lord Skelmersdale, 1986

> 'In order for pupils to be prepared to be constructive members of society, it is essential that exposure to 'alternative lifestyles' occurs within school education.' – Eva, secondary teacher in Study 3, 2020

This interdisciplinary thesis has examined the legacy of Section 28 in cultural and educational contexts, using insights from the fields of law, children's literature, and education. It has done so through analyses of the 1986–1988 parliamentary debates, 16 British LGB YA novels published since the debates, and the views of eight educators in Scotland on the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature. This final chapter discusses the key findings of these studies, their primary implications, current challenges, and further research.

Study 1 has contributed to shifting our understanding of the motivations behind Section 28. As discussed in Chapter 2, existing research has framed the law as being predicated on the presumption that children were understood to be innately heterosexual and the belief that homosexuality was as an outside force threatening the nuclear family but remaining distinct from it. This thesis, however, has demonstrated that Section 28 was actually premised on an inversion of the heterosexual presumption. This ideological motif – previously unidentified –

constituted children as innately or latently homosexual, not heterosexual. Section 28 was motivated by this inverted perspective and the related belief that texts could incite this latency and that children must be instructed and educated *against their nature* to adopt and be ushered into heterosexuality. The child, in sum, did not stand as some innocent spectre in opposition to the homosexual but *was* the homosexual. This framing of the legislation calls into question the presumption that heterosexuality is the 'natural' state of childhood.

As discussed in Chapter 2, existing research has also characterised the 'threat' of homosexuality as something external to the family and poised to act upon it from outside the home. Notwithstanding, Study 1 showed that homosexuality, constituted as being embodied within children, necessarily existed already within the home. Stated differently, politicians constructed the child as embodying not innocence but the very threat that was to be eradicated. This is a subtle yet distinct shift in how we have understood the motivation that propelled sexuality to the centre stage of 1980s British politics: while the New Right believed individuals and families had primary responsibility for their own well-being (Evans, 1993, p. 135), the (re)production of the homosexual threat by and within the family itself compelled the government to intervene where it would not ordinarily do so.

Study 2 analysed 16 British LGB YA novels, revealing a progressive evolution in cultural constructions of sexual diversity and young people in popular media. While many of the novels emphasised trauma, linking sexual diversity with harm and echoing the argument that homosexuality was inherently dangerous, others constructed sexual diversity as unremarkable in the lives of young people and young people themselves as having the capacities for agency, self-awareness, and

independence. These constructions are in sharp contrasts to the notions of innocence and protection that dominated the Section 28 debates. Furthermore, the very existence of these texts suggests that they are understood, at least by the publishing industry, to help rather than corrupt young readers, the very antithesis of the ideologies that motivated the political effort to suppress lesbian and gay texts as 'harmful'. These findings, while unsurprising, were important to establish given the political claims about the content and nature of children's texts.

Study 3 examined the pedagogical utility of LGBT+ children's literature as understood through the views of eight teachers. The teachers constituted children as knowing individuals who benefit from knowledge about sexual and gender diversity, which is directly contrary to the Section 28 construction of children as vulnerable and unsafe due to LGBT+ literature and 'inappropriate' knowledge. Participants believed that knowledge of sexual diversity can aid the wellbeing and development of young people, such that failing to include it in the curriculum could be detrimental to how they negotiate, construct, or realise their LGBT+ identity. This position, and the desire to work with and use LGBT+ children's literature pedagogically to support students, was shared by all participants. This unanimity, across a range of teacher identities, underscores the value in LGBT+ children's literature.

Considered in tandem, the shifts represented in this thesis are perhaps best illustrated by the juxtaposition of quotes from Lord Skelmersdale and Eva in the opening of this chapter. The polarity captured in their statements – the distinct contrast in viewing LGBT+ inclusive education as morally indefensible versus absolutely 'essential' – reflects a significant socio-cultural shift in the U.K., one that was suggested by the YA novels in Study 2, since the enactment of Section 28. This

shift is a clear recognition culturally and educationally of the existence and value of sexual and gender diversity amongst young people today. While such recognition is in and of itself important, there is another vital aspect of the move away from the patterns of thinking that enabled the suppression of LGBT+ perspectives and support in British schools: the educators in Study 3 tell us that they, as teachers, have a *desire* to educate young people, including the very young, about sexual and gender diversity. In other words, teachers want to implement LGBT+ perspectives into their classroom practices and feel strongly, as we have seen, that doing so would be a valuable contribution to the education of all children. In sum, what was once 'educationally and morally indefensible' is now essential – a pedagogical imperative.

Implications

While ideologically opposed to one another, the enactment of Section 28 and the Scottish Government's decision to mandate LGBT+ inclusive lessons are both the result of a struggle over the meaning of sexual difference in and to young people's lives – two sides of the same coin. They are political attempts to cope with that difference and a perceived moral dislocation. The primary distinction is the nature of that dislocation and the solution. Parliament saw homosexuality as a threat to the moral strength binding traditional families and British society. It thus sought to quash any difference that might undermine those bonds. Decades later, the Scottish Government has located a break not in the family, but in the inequities and discrimination LGBT+ young people face. It seeks to remedy that break and mitigate risk by making sexual and gender difference normal through LGBT+ inclusive pedagogy.

These political responses to the diversity of sexuality and gender identities and expressions are also similar in that their solutions – Section 28 and LGBT+ inclusive education – reveal the diminished role of the family in producing sexuality. As discussed, parliament intervened in that role because of the apparent belief that families could not control the threat of homosexuality being spawned from within the home itself. The Scottish Government has mandated LGBT+ inclusive lessons with no provision for parents to remove their children from those lessons. In parliament's case, a perceived compelling governmental interest was privileged over the right of the family to govern itself. In Scotland's case, a perceived compelling governmental interest has been privileged over the right of parents to determine the nature of their children's sexual education. This diminished role is evident in the three studies of this thesis. In addition to what has already been said about the findings of Study 1 above, the authors of Study 2's corpus constructed a diminished role for the family in terms of policing children's sexuality. The novels have even participated in that diminishment by providing a means for young people to access information about sexuality (as well as gender diversity in more recent YA novels) regardless of parental wishes. The educators in Study 3 confirmed that children should be allowed to learn about sexual and gender diversity regardless of parental objections. This thesis thus forms a yardstick against which we might measure the past and its diminished influence in Scotland today.

The Aim of LGBT+ Inclusive Education

This thesis also has important implications for the aims and content of LGBT+ inclusive education. Specifically, as the YA novels in Study 2 and the

research discussed previously have suggested, this education should not focus on fitting LGBT+ people, including students, into distinct categories with rigid boundaries or inflexible patterns, as some young people are not confined by those categories or labels. The diminished importance of labelling desire recalls this observation of Sedgwick (1990):

> It is a rather amazing fact that, of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another [...], precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained, as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of "sexual orientation." (p. 8)

Years after that observation, Savin-Williams (2005) demonstrated that 'the gender of object choice' is indeed no longer of central importance to how young people form and interpret relationships:

> not all adolescents who experience same-sex desire identify as gay or engage in same-sex activities. Not all adolescents who identify as gay have a same-sex orientation or engage in same-sex behavior. Not all adolescents who have sex with their own gender identify as gay or have same-sex attractions. (pp. 216-217)

This shift in thinking suggests that LGBT+ inclusive education should not attempt to fit adolescent experiences into 'cookie-cutter molds' (Savin-Williams, 2005, p. 214), as that may be contrary to how young people themselves understand and experience desire. Categorising identities may of course help to achieve political and legal aims and to ensure, in this case, that pedagogy is inclusive of certain content and perspectives. But, as Gamson (1995) argued, fixed identity categories are the basis

for both political power and oppression. Fixed models of identity do not necessarily encompass the lived experiences of the young people to whom sexual desire or attraction is less meaningful as a marker of identity, and who see love as dependent on the person rather than the gender (Savin-Williams, 2005). Therefore, for an inclusive curriculum to actually be meaningful to young people, it must be disentangled from the hegemonic, heteronormative system. It must not be oppressive even while it seeks to be inclusive.

This disentanglement raises a number of questions. Crucially, if young people no longer relate to universal characterisations such as ‘gay’ and even ‘heterosexual’ or ‘straight’, what should be the scope of LGBT+ inclusive education? It perhaps seems obvious that such education is a necessary countermeasure to discrimination and prejudice, but what is the particular content that young people will find most valuable and helpful? What would resonate with them? This thesis demonstrates the necessity of asking these questions, and a preliminary answer is that LGBT+ inclusive education should include the ‘alternative perspective’ – one that recognises ‘not only the positive features of being “different from the norm” but also the *ordinariness* of most young people with same-sex desire’ (Savin-Williams, 2005, p. 216).

Accordingly, lessons should not include LGBT+ perspectives ‘to confirm or to catalogue identities’ (Britzman, 1995, p. 162), nor to police boundaries of what is/is not gay (boundaries which appear to have less applicability to young people). Rather, they should seek not only to decentre normative conceptions, but to also expose and unsettle the very production of normalcy and difference and the conditions that make such production possible. In destabilising categories and their

production, a curriculum that is truly inclusive and affirming might ask how subjectivity – based on sexuality and gender, in particular – is fluid rather than static, always shifting and never stable. Such a curriculum entails a focus beyond identity categories toward a resistance of difference itself and the systems in which sameness and otherness are perpetuated.

What seems clear, therefore, is that an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum should be rooted in queer pedagogy, the intersection of queer theory with critical pedagogy. 'Queer' in this sense is not an identity but an analytic process aimed at interrupting and problematising sexual and gender constructs. Queer pedagogy is thus a form of educative praxis that seeks 'to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of "normalcy" in schooled subjects' (Bryson & de Castell, 1993, p. 285), an analytic process aimed at interrupting and problematising sexual and gender constructs. It does not argue that LGBT+ people are 'normal' or the same as heterosexual people (i.e., homonormativity), but instead critiques the very process that normalises some identities and not others, a Butlerian interrogation of how gendered subjects are formed and how society and official discourses work to limit the identities that are intelligible or recognisable. This process involves more than 'merely adding marginalized voices to an overpopulated curriculum' (as discussed previously), but also involves recognising 'difference outside the imperatives of normalcy' (Brtizman, 2002, as cited in Neto, 2018, p. 3). A norm-critical pedagogy would thus enable LGBT+ inclusive education by framing classroom practices through investment in unpacking and analysing normalcy and the conditions of its production.

It should be noted that implementing queer pedagogy does not mean ignoring the ways in which society is still significantly invested in categorising sexuality and gender. The world is clearly not yet ‘post gay’, even if that young people are now experiencing sexuality as a secondary rather than primary characteristic of identity. But a pedagogy attentive to queer perspectives seems key to reducing risk, prejudice, and discrimination, which are all predicated not just on difference but on difference as the very basis for one’s identity. Trans identities, in particular, are a ‘hot button’ issue in the news and on social media, especially within the context of youth. Meanwhile, most government and other official forms insist on documenting one’s gender and even routine job applications ask for sexual orientation. Young people may have begun to resist and subvert these labels, but society overwhelmingly continues to insist on retaining them and using them to categorise people. Given this social reality, a curriculum informed by queer pedagogy should provide space for critical examinations that deconstruct these hegemonic conceptions of identity and the heteropatriarchal hierarchies inherent therein. As Butler (1990) argued, reliance on categories of identity has long resulted in inequality. As a result, questioning and subverting those categories, and the (perceived) differences that make them possible, is necessary work for achieving emancipation from the regimes of power/knowledge that produce and delimit hegemonic conceptions of sexuality and gender.

Finally, the call in this thesis for training on queer pedagogy is supplemental to the advice published by the TIE Campaign, the organisation that lobbied for the Scottish Government to mandate LGBT+ inclusive education. On the Campaign’s website, there are several resources available to help teachers implement LGBT+ perspectives into their classrooms. The resources include, for example, a booklet and

infographic with biographies who they consider to be key LGBT+ people, a learning activity on discrimination, and posters (Time for Inclusive Education, n.d.). These resources, while valuable, do not appear to focus explicitly on queer pedagogy or the deconstruction of identity. Given the potential of those critical lines of inquiry to interrupt education as a site for reproducing heteronormativity, heteropatriarchy, and unequal power relations, it makes sense that it should also inform CPD, which I turn now to discussing.

A Framework for Continuing Professional Development

As discussed previously, the Scottish Government has adopted a number of measures focused on CPD for LGBT+ inclusive education. The results of Study 3 suggest three primary needs in relation to such training: knowledge of LGBT+ children's literature, knowledge of queer theory and queer pedagogy, and group-oriented activities. Taken together, these needs form a framework for designing CPD programmes on LGBT+ inclusion and inform the Government's decision and related policymaking. I discuss each need as one 'component' of the framework and conclude this section by arguing that LGBT+ children's literature should form a core aspect of CPD.

The first component of CPD addresses a knowledge gap in relation to identifying and implementing LGBT+ children's literature into classroom practices. Even Ally, an English teacher, admitted her 'knowledge of LGBTI texts is thin' and called for guidance to help '[her] department stock suitable texts.' As discussed previously, many resources and suggested reading lists are already available to help identify relevant texts as well as classroom activities that facilitate the use of the

texts in generating discussions on gender and sexuality. Stonewall (2015a, 2015b, 2017), for example, offer lists of suggested texts for primary and secondary school libraries and activities centred on those texts. As an example, one suggestion is to read a particular poem by Scots Makar Jackie Kay and discuss why some bookshops have an LGBT+ section. CPD should focus on connecting teachers with these resources to address their knowledge gap and build their confidence in this area by identifying specific activities they can adopt as part of their own pedagogical practice.

The second component of CPD focuses on praxis by pulling in the underlying knowledge and theory that informs pedagogy in relation to sexuality and gender. The need for this training is evident in the doubts expressed by participants as to how, in the words of Specialist Support Teacher Grace, 'LGBTI issues could be dealt with in literature'. In particular, this component is comprised of building knowledge about queer theory and queer pedagogy to provide the knowledge, language, and consciousness-raising tools necessary for critiquing repetitions of normalcy, challenging the foundations of categories of identities (i.e., difference), and exploring constructions of subjectivity.

Queer pedagogy in particular is useful as a means to 'inform pedagogical interventions and [foster] reading practices that are designed to address constraining systems of thought and grids of intelligibility pertaining to the privileging of heterosexuality' (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016, p. 809) and, I would argue, heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy, including cisgenderism (the privileging of identities and behaviours aligned with one's assigned gender at birth). As a praxis, it takes what and who are typically marginalised and folds them into the centre of the

curriculum, juxtaposing ‘normal’ and ‘not normal’ so as to question discourses of difference, what we know and do not know, and what is said and not said.

Queer pedagogy also aids in identifying learning opportunities outside texts and reading activities. This possibility was demonstrated in Study 3: Dana (who did not provide any autobiographical information) said that teachers should not need training on ‘how to combat homophobia’ because they ‘should already know the appropriate sanctions for language and terminology as such’. This language suggests that Dana would respond to negative language with some sort of official penalty (‘sanctions’) against the student, yet queer pedagogy tells us that this is not necessarily the most productive way to deal with such language. Krywanczyk (2007), for example, argued that homophobic language is actually an opportunity to discuss what such ‘insults and words mean literally, historically, and colloquially’ (p. 79), pointing out that terms such as ‘fag’ are not necessarily intended as homophobic insults. It is clear, then, that some educators, including those who may feel they already have sufficient experience and knowledge, may nevertheless benefit from training in queer pedagogy.

While the work of Foucault and others might provide a useful foundation for identifying and using texts (for example, using a text to discuss the social construction of gender), the overall aim of CPD and queer pedagogy should be to guide educators in identifying a range of learning opportunities that may not otherwise be readily apparent, and to foster their ‘pedagogical creativity and flexibility’ (Carlile, 2020, p. 636). As the example above of homophobic insults makes clear, it may be productive to focus learning opportunities on drawing out and discussing educators’ own experiences of similar incidents. Such discussion may, in

turn, encourage further self-reflection and the co-construction of pedagogical strategies to recognise such moments as opportunities to engage students' consciousness-raising and critical learning. Encouraging teacher participation and personal reflection, an important part of this CPD framework, is discussed below.

Related to this component is the need to provide educators with information about the decision to mandate LGBT+ inclusive lessons in Scotland. Not only will this inform teachers as to the training opportunities the Government plan to make available to them, awareness of what that decision entails and where further information can be located will provide teachers with the justification and details necessary for responding to any pushback or criticisms they might receive from students, parents, and others. While none of the participants in Study 3 identified a concern about pushback from others in the community, existing research (as discussed previously) has shown that this has been the concern of some teachers. The legal mandate to require this education could serve to mitigate that concern by serving as a safe harbour from public criticism. The aim of this CPD is to help teachers feel comfortable with delivering LGBT+ inclusive lessons and this measure will likely go some way toward building their confidence. As Carlile (2020) showed, reliance on legislative frameworks can lead to greater confidence in teachers in implementing LGBT+ inclusive education.

The final component of the CPD is a focus on peer-learning through group-oriented activities, open discussions or dialogue, and personal reflections that allow for and cultivate knowledge exchange. As discussed, one participant in Study 3 expressed a desire for training on how to address homophobia, while another said she believed that teachers should already know how to do that. These views suggest the

need for activities wherein teachers with less experience can learn from and engage with those who have more experience, such as in classroom management. While in-person group training might require financial support for resources (e.g., handouts and meeting venues), online forums could provide a cost-efficient means for interactive learning activities, resource-sharing, and discussion of pedagogical practices, strategies, and models. But regardless of whether professional learning takes place in-person, online, or through a combination of both components, fostering competencies and professional learning through dialogue, with the comparison and exchange of ideas across varied personal and professional identities and experiences, allows for the co-construction of knowledge. This sort of dialogue is important as a means for teachers to collaborate and engage with multiple perspectives, including those that may be critical queer pedagogy and LGBT+ inclusive education. Allowing for this criticality is important because it helps to avoid merely replacing one hegemonic framework for another, which would risk perpetuating the power dynamics and dichotomies inherent in oppression.

Furthermore, allowing for periods of reflection may give space for teachers to interrogate and deconstruct their own identities, and perhaps their own complicity in perpetuating systemic and institutional heteronormativity. As Kumashiro (2002) argued, the 'process of learning about the dynamics of oppression also involves learning about oneself' and how one 'often unknowingly can be complicit with and even contribute to these forms of oppression' (p. 46). These interrogations of the self are therefore a necessary part of any CPD programme aimed at a curriculum that is inclusive and affirming of LGBT+ people and perspectives, as inclusion is fostered when we expose not only systems of privilege, but also our own role within those

systems. Without this explicit recognition, the necessary process of subverting social structures (see Butler, 1990) can never be achieved, and the result would be that new forms of identity continue to be suppressed or altogether erased. Indeed, we have seen this demonstrated to some extent in the responses to Study 3 that seemed at times to inadvertently perpetuate heteronormativity and the othering of LGBT+ identities.

Finally, just as it can play a valuable role in educating young people, LGBT+ children's literature may be pedagogically productive within CPD itself. As we have already seen, this literature can serve as tools for problematising and deconstructing heteronormativity and other ideologies about sexuality and gender, and for exposing the conditions in which difference is produced. Similarly, LGBT+ children's literature may help generate the types of dialogue and co-constructions of knowledge discussed above. Furthermore, given that schooling is central to the plot of many LGBT+ books, particularly for teens, teachers who read it may gain insight into the particular challenges facing LGBT+ young people in education, which in turn can prompt further self-reflection and dialogue on how those issues might be addressed in their own classrooms. As with queer pedagogy, the value LGBT+ children's literature can have in CPD on LGBT+ inclusive education does not yet seem to have been identified by the TIE Campaign (based on the materials published on their website) and this thesis thus contributes to expanding the horizon of tools available for opening up learning through CPD.

Research With Young People

This thesis calls for and justifies future research with young people to guide the development of LGBT+ inclusive education and teacher training initiatives. Given the capacities for agency and self-determination that young people possess, their views should be key to developing and implementing LGBT+ inclusive lessons that are meaningful to them. The inclusion of those views would, perhaps, be the final stroke erasing the legacy of Section 28 in schools, at least in Scotland. Indeed, while that legislation directly impacted young people, it was debated and enacted without any input from them. Crucially, then, this research should restore the voice of young people in matters affecting their education. Further, participants in this future research should include not just young people who identify as LGBT+, given the resistance some have to those labels. Participants should therefore be identified from a range of identities related and unrelated to categories of desire.

LGBT+ Children's Literature as a Vehicle for Social and Cultural Change

Chapter 2 of this thesis discussed the importance of children's literature as a research focus, given that such texts are inherently ideological and have the potential to influence young, developing minds. Section 28 was predicated on an awareness of this potential influence, which politicians perceived as necessarily destructive. In Study 3, however, educators acknowledged that LGBT+ children's literature is *con*structive, useful for opening up the minds of students, reducing risk, expanding worldviews, and preparing readers for participation as adults in a multicultural society. This wide range of uses for LGBT+ children's literature contrasts with earlier focuses on destigmatising sexual (if not gender) difference. For example, the

Inner London Education Authority's (1986) *Positive Images* guide recommended children's texts for educators to use in 'deal[ing] with prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals' (p. v). In that context, children's books with lesbian and gay content were used primarily to educate about difference, challenge stereotyping, and raise awareness by, for example, portraying types of families different to the hegemonic nuclear family structure. Section 28 was a response, in part, to efforts to educate children about different family types and structures, effectively barring the pedagogical use of LGBT+ children's books.

Over three decades later, however, Study 3 suggests that pedagogical thinking now recognises the value of engaging with LGBT+ texts outside the frame of stigma to celebrate difference and prepare all students, regardless of sexuality, to live in a multicultural world. Perhaps most striking of all is the fact that the participants expressed not just the desire but the *need* to so engage with LGBT+ children's books. The desire to use these texts demonstrates a progression from the narrative in which teachers felt they could not make any use of LGBT+ literature in schools, to one in which there is now an imperative to use the literature and make it available to all students. Given such an imperative, this thesis confirms the importance of research centred on LGBT+ children's literature and its role or influence in young people's lives.

The Value of Interdisciplinary Research

This thesis demonstrates the value of drawing on multiple disciplinary perspectives to investigate a particular phenomenon. It was this interdisciplinary focus that produced unexpected results, such as the inverted policy position

underlying Section 28, discussed previously. The research could have remained primarily in any one of the fields – law, children's literature, and education – that informed it. As discussed, I had originally intended to study children's literature by engaging young LGBT+ readers with a YA novel. Such an investigation would have focused primarily on reader-response: how I as a researcher understood the literature and how young readers responded to it. Given that narrower focus, it is unlikely that the findings presented in this thesis would ever have been made. An interdisciplinary lens, however, widened the intellectual search and enabled an expanded investigation traversing the boundaries of children's literature to consider not just the content of LGBT+ texts, but also the political and pedagogical uses of that literature.

This expansion also provided the flexibility to overcome the practical challenge faced early on in the research when, as discussed previously, the organisation of focus groups with young readers was unsuccessful. The wider intellectual search allowed the investigation to be redesigned so as to engage the views of teachers instead of young readers. In other words, an interdisciplinary lens enabled the research to be (re)conceived and actualised in multiple ways. Thinking across fields redefined the boundaries of the thesis and provided tools for obtaining a more complete picture of Section 28's legacy culturally and educationally. The traditional compartmentalisation of disciplines would not have fostered this recalibration and synthesis.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research

One particular strength of this work is the number of innovative methods adopted to achieve the research aims, the utility of which is demonstrated by the

contributions this thesis has made. Study 1 has demonstrated the applicability of Foucauldian genealogy to analyses of parliamentary discourse (which, as discussed in the literature review, are often tied to corpus-based keyword analysis). In doing so, it has further contributed to the literature on Section 28 through conclusions, as discussed, that are a departure from that literature (namely, that the law was premised on the construction of children as innately homosexual).

Study 2 applied a directed content analysis (DCA) to a range of LGB YA texts published after Section 28. While a DCA of children's literature is not necessarily a novel approach, there had been, prior to this thesis, no DCA study that I could locate which focused specifically on LGB children's literature. The study shows the utility of DCA as a tool for examining the ideological messages about sex and sexuality contained in YA literature (and indeed any other genre for young readers). Method aside, there also had not been a study of the particular corpus identified and analysed in Chapter 5. Study 2 further has further shown that the corpus has, to some degree, coincided with LGBT+ legal reforms in the U.K. – a finding that, while perhaps unsurprising, also had not yet been established by the existing literature.

Similarly, Study 3 took a novel approach by using Marshall's read-and-response method. As discussed, that method was originally intended for the limited purpose of investigating the teaching philosophies of English teachers. Study 3 expanded on that initial scope by adapting the method to look at teacher positions in relation to LGBT+ children's literature and pedagogy. As far as I have been able to ascertain, it is the first study to apply the method to the pedagogy of LGBT+

children's literature; it thus shows the read-and-response method can be applied to investigate phenomena beyond the context in which it was originally conceptualised.

As with any research, there are some limitations. Study 1 relied on Hansard transcripts, which are 'edited to remove repetitions and obvious mistakes but without taking away from the meaning' (U.K. Parliament, n.d.-b). This mediated process could have resulted in inaccuracies; however, this seems unlikely given that the transcripts are routinely produced as part of parliamentary business. The transcripts were also the best evidence available for the study's investigation of how those subjects were constituted in the debates. Even if another method, such as interviews with members of parliament, had been feasible to collect primary data, it would necessarily have involved certain factors, such as a reliance on memory to discuss events that took place more than 30 years ago, to piece together the constructions of children, sexuality, and children's literature, and therefore might also have been less reliable.

Study 2 relied on subjective interpretations of the YA narratives, meaning that another researcher studying the same corpus might produce different findings. But this limitation is inherent in most qualitative studies, particularly those that, like this thesis, are informed by poststructuralist thought (as discussed in Chapter 3) and the understanding that language constitutes, rather than merely reflects, social reality. In the field of children's literature, which this thesis has drawn upon, research often does not entail a second analyst to engage in intersubjective discussion. Additionally, engaging such an analyst was not a practical option due to time and cost. This potential limitation of subjective interpretation has been addressed by quoting the

literature directly and providing excerpts that support the interpretations and conclusions.

Finally, while the number of participants in Study 3 prevent the findings from being generalised, its aim as qualitative research was not to extrapolate generalisable findings but 'to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases' (Polit & Beck, 2010, p. 1452). Additionally, although the read-and-response method itself did not allow for follow-up questions, and anonymous participation prevented participants from being involved in member checking, as qualitative work, it can nevertheless open up pathways for future research (Patton, 2002). Through Study 3, new territory has been mapped for future work on LGBT+ children's literature and pedagogy.

Challenges to Progress

This thesis has traced, over three decades, a progression from Section 28, which suppressed LGBT+ children's literature in education, to an awareness amongst some educators that such literature is now a pedagogical imperative. Central to this narrative has been the ways in which non-heterosexual YA novels have increasingly shifted away from negative, victim-oriented constructions of sexual diversity and youth, a shift largely coinciding with LGBT+ legal reforms. However, pushing against such progress are 'manifestations of enduring stasis' (Lawrence & Taylor, 2019, p. 588) in which advancement is challenged.

Such moments were discussed in Study 3 in relation to participant responses that seemed to reify heteronormativity even while evincing a desire to support students. Some participants, for example, had constructed children as heterosexual

only, suggesting that young people are never themselves LGBT+, while one participant used 'alternative lifestyles' to refer to, and thus perpetuated the othering of, LGBT+ identities and experiences. Thus, despite the express desire of the participants to be able to teach about LGBT+ lives and literature, heteronormative and heterosexist beliefs seemed to still persist in their responses and in their rationalisations or logic. What such 'enduring stasis' reveals is that ideology and discourse are not easily transformed and that progress may yet be undermined even by those who support or desire change. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of identifying how ideologies operate, so that the particular work required to create or maintain progress can itself be more easily determined, targeted, and effected.

This thesis has discussed the many ways that youth literature in particular can help support the development and wellbeing of LGBT+ young people, even where such challenges persist. It is rather ironic, then, that LGBT+ progress has been rather prominently challenged through public statements by J. K. Rowling, the author of one of the most celebrated and popular children's books series ever published (as of 2018, her Harry Potter books had sold over 500 million copies globally; Eyre, 2018). Rowling has repeatedly made claims, for example, about the dangers she believes are posed by trans women (see, e.g., Mermaids, 2020; and Rowling, 2020), ignoring the fact that violence perpetrated by men pretending to be women is violence perpetrated not by actual trans women but by men, full stop. Anxieties about trans identities in relation to young people specifically have emerged in other contexts, including health, law, politics, and academia, all areas in which efforts have been made to contain diversity and undermine youth agency and self-determination. I will briefly consider each of these areas before providing concluding thoughts.

Challenges in Law and Health

As Stychin (1995) noted, the law 'can be dynamic, unstable, and unpredictable' (p. 140). This characterisation of the law is perhaps evident in the 1 December 2020 decision of the U.K.'s High Court of Justice in *Bell v. Tavistock* (*Bell*), which has had a significant impact on trans young people's access to medical treatment. That case concerned the process of prescribing puberty blocker or puberty suppressing treatment at Tavistock's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), the only NHS-run gender clinic for England and Wales. Asked to determine whether young people under the age of 18 could give informed consent to puberty blockers, the court decided that *Gillick* competence in relation to puberty blockers requires the child to understand not only the implications of receiving that specific course of treatment but also of progressing to additional and subsequent stages of treatment. Significantly, the court also decided that 'it is highly unlikely that a child aged 13 or under would be competent to give consent' and 'doubtful that a child aged 14 or 15 could' do so (*Bell*, 2020, para. 151). For those aged 16 to 17, although there is otherwise a presumption of the ability to consent, 'clinicians may well regard these as cases where the authorisation of the court should be sought prior to commencing the clinical treatment' (*Bell*, 2020, para. 152).

This decision (later overturned on appeal) resulted in two changes to processes at GIDS: (1) the clinic will no longer refer patients under the age of 16 to Tavistock without a court order, and (2) for patients under 16 who are already on puberty blockers, treatment should be withdrawn unless court authorisation is obtained to continue treatment (NHS England, 2020). In other words, puberty blockers in England and Wales will not, at least for the time being, be prescribed, or

to continue being subscribed, absent a court order (although the Court has since acknowledged that parents can provide consent; see Greenhalgh, 2021). This decision appears to have ignored the fact that not allowing young people access to puberty blockers is itself the imposition of an irreversible decision, and that the result might be to force the de-transition of young people who cannot access the courts to continue their treatment. Furthermore, the judgement seems to assume that a person who de-transitions will necessarily regret the experience and must therefore be protected from it, ignoring the improved mental health of young people who are supported and affirmed in their transition socially (Olson et al., 2016) and medically (de Vries et al., 2014),[18] and the link between pubertal suppression and lower rates of suicidality (Turban et al., 2020).

Challenges in Law and Politics

In Scotland, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill was introduced to consolidate and extend existing hate crime legislation protecting certain groups, including trans people, from crime motivated by prejudice (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body [SPCB], 2020, para. 4). Under the guise of free expression, an amendment was tabled by Humza Yousaf, as then Justice Secretary, to exempt from the law any 'discussion or criticism of matters relating to transgender identity' (SPCB, 2021, p. 11). Similarly, Tory MP Liam Kerr tabled an amendment that exempts 'discussion, criticism, or rejection of any concepts or beliefs relating to transgender identity' and protects the belief that 'sex is an immutable biological characteristic' (SPCB, 2021, p. 12). While the Bill was ultimately enacted without

[18] As mentioned at the start of this thesis, not all trans people desire such interventions.

these amendments, there as an evident appetite to devalue trans identities, one which would reassert a hierarchy that constitutes those identities as less legitimate or valid (and therefore open to legally sanctioned criticism).

Legal protections of trans and other minoritised identities have also recently been undermined by the U.K. Government's Minister for Women and Equalities, Elizabeth Truss. Truss claimed recently that discussions of discrimination have been dominated by 'fashion' instead of 'facts', arguing that policy and debate should 'move beyond the narrow focus of protected characteristics' (Government Equalities Offices [GEO], 2020b, n.p.). Protected characteristics, identified in the Equality Act 2010, include both sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Yet Truss argued that the focus on such characteristics 'has led to a narrowing of the equality debate' and the 'neglect' of 'some issues – particularly those facing white working-class children' (GEO, 2020b, n.p.). Distinguishing young people with protected characteristics from young people who are white (as though 'white' is itself a category of oppression) and working-class suggests white and working-class children do not have intersecting protected characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender expression. This construction erases intersectional identity (Crenshaw, 1989; see also Valdes, 1995, 1998) and reinforces rigid categories and binaries of identity. As discussed throughout this thesis, such binaries may be contrary to how some non-heterosexual young people experience and express their identities.

Truss also made clear her views about childhood and gender diversity in particular. Although she acknowledged that the U.K. should 'make sure that wherever people live, wherever LGBT people live, they're safe' (GEO, 2020a, n.p.), she drew the line at trans children, saying:

> I believe strongly that adults should have the freedom to lead their lives as they see fit, but I think it's very important that while people are still developing their decision-making capabilities that we protect them from making those irreversible decisions. (GEO, 2020a, n.p.)

This was an obvious reference to puberty blockers, echoing the *Bell* decision and utilising 'the familiar script of vulnerability and victimization' (D. Marshall, 2010, p. 68) that was evident in Section 28. It is unsurprising, then, that the U.K. Government shelved plans to reform the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) for England and Wales, thus ensuring that legal recognition of trans people under the age of 18 continues to be denied.

Challenges in Academia

Similar anxieties are surfacing amongst educators in higher education. For example, Kathleen Stock, professor at the University of Sussex and an 'affiliate member' of the new higher education 'Gender Critical Research Network' (Open University, n.d.), evoked, like Truss, the script of queer youth as victims who must be saved from themselves, citing *Bell* (Stock, 2021). While research of LGBT+ students' experiences in higher education has shown that more than a third of trans students (36 percent) have faced negative comments or conduct from university staff because of their identity (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018, p. 5), and about half of trans young people have attempted suicide (McNeil et al., 2012), individuals who, like Stock, are critical of trans youth often centre their own experience and the backlash for their views – 'the intense personal toll', as Stock (2021) described it – rather than

focus on the effects that anti-trans views have on trans youth, including trans university students.

The Desire to Suppress Gender Diversity in Childhood

Just as Section 28 signalled political and legal disapproval of homosexuality (D. Epstein, 2000), the examples discussed in the preceding sections signal the same for trans identities and an appetite for questioning the validity of trans identities, which in turn devalues people who are trans and sends a clear message to young people that it is not okay to express gender identity unless it conforms to heteronormative ideals. What we are seeing, in other words, are present-day manifestations of the same protectionist politics, anxieties, and fears about difference that led to Section 28. While there are progressive legal reforms surrounding sexual and gender difference, such as the recent employment tribunal decision finding that non-binary people are protected under the Equality Act 2010 (see *Taylor v. Jaguar Land Rover Ltd*, 2020), children continue to be carved out as an exception. Trans identities are constructed as external to childhood, a 'phase' less preferable to 'normal' gender. Children can be found competent to consent to medical care, but not trans children consenting to trans health care. Trans adults, but not trans children, can obtain a gender recognition certificate. Young people who express that they are trans and who desire medical treatment are told that they are likely wrong and misguided about how they feel. The trans child is no longer the expert in their own lives (it is 'highly unlikely' or 'doubtful' that they can be). They cannot know their own best interests and must therefore be protected. Stated another way, if the child expresses a trans identity, then that child's safety is presumed to be diminished.

The refusal to recognise lived experience is the very definition of gaslighting, a form of manipulation that causes one to question their own judgment or perception; and it is what legal and governmental institutions are doing to trans children. It fuels debates about whether children can indeed be trans and makes the legitimacy of young people's self-knowledge and lived experiences more vulnerable to further legal challenges and discriminatory actions. In writing of gender and recognition, Butler (2004) argued that 'how we do or do not recognize animate others depend[s] on whether or not we recognize a certain norm manifested in and by the body of that other. In this way, the "unrecognizability of one's gender" consequently results in the "unrecognizability of one's personhood"' (p. 58). Children who fall outside the 'grid of intelligibility' (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 93) must be governed or disciplined, in the hope that gender 'norms' will eventually manifest and make the child intelligible and recognisable. What all of this suggests is that it is okay for children to be queer, but not *too* queer. Whereas Sedgwick (1991/2004) described the desire amongst parents, families, and institutions 'for a non-gay outcome' in children (p. 145), the apparent desire in the contexts discussed is for a non-trans outcome.

Concluding Points

In the realm of childhood, some same-sex desires and relationships may have begun to come within the boundaries of normalcy, but gender diversity remains a step too far and continues to be excluded from legitimacy. In other words, there has come to be a certain measure of homonormativity of childhood, the normative emphasis being on LGB, but not gender diverse, young people. Thus, to the extent that certain sexualities are now legible in childhood, others remain foreclosed. What

is particularly striking about this normative emphasis is that trans young people are trying, through the use of puberty blockers, to live their lives as ‘normal’ young men and women.

This socio-political context has led some to argue that we are on a pathway toward the enactment of a ‘trans Section 28’ (e.g., Parsons, 2020b), suggesting that information about gender diversity may eventually be prohibited or suppressed in schools and other institutions. These discourses demonstrate the continued need for youth-oriented resources that are open and affirming of all young people experiencing and negotiating gender and sexual diversity in their own lives. Whether or not a trans Section 28 does come to fruition, the challenges discussed above demonstrate that such resources are more vital than ever in supporting LGBT+ young people’s wellbeing.

While certain discourses seek to continue to define the ‘normal’ in children’s lives, children’s literature continues to deconstruct norms and offer alternative (reverse) discourses of gender identities and possibilities and to celebrate intersectional identities, recognising the reality that people may embody multiple characteristics or inherent qualities that are not always neatly categorised or delineated. As discussed in Chapter 5, literature for young people continues to offer roadmaps to help young people understand and embrace sexual and gender diversity. This diversity is increasingly more visible in children’s literature, providing space for trans young people to explore experiences and for all readers to develop empathy (and demonstrating the utility of labels even while some question and resist them). Recent examples include *Dreadnought* by April Daniels (2017), a book about a Black trans superhero; *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi (2019), a fantasy novel about a Black

trans character; and *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender (2020), a novel about a teen who is Black, queer, and transgender.

In addition to children's literature, and now the Scottish state-school curriculum and the educators discussed in Study 3, there is also an increasing number of online resources accessible to any young person with an internet connection. LGBT+ organisations offer a range of publications on their websites (see, for example, Stonewall, n.d.-a), while YouTube (http://www.youtube.com) is a popular platform for 'sex ed vloggers' to give detailed advice on inclusive sex safety and for teen viewers to ask questions they may be unable to ask in more traditional spaces (Jackson, 2017; Saner, 2018). Due to Covid-19, LGBT Youth Scotland are even running all of their regional youth groups online via Discord, providing young people a means to continue engaging with each other across geographic distance (LGBT Youth Scotland, n.d.-b). While none of these resources can replace the medical care that is now out of reach for trans young people unable to seek a court order in England and Wales, they offer a way to find answers and connect with other young people with similar experiences, which perhaps helps to reduce feelings of isolation. These resources have, in the words of Cohler and Hammack (2007), 'enabled a proliferation of discourse communities for youth with same-sex desire' (p. 56). In resisting dominant discourses that seek to exclude trans and other sexual and gender identities from childhood, they open up ways to experience gender and sexual diversity and for young people to recognise themselves.

This reverse discourse demonstrates, in turn, that the effects of heteronormative domination and its interruptions to LGBT+ progress, however widespread, remain fractured and contested, never completely stable. It also, as this

thesis as a whole has done, attests to the value of research that builds knowledge of young people while also affirming the full range of their diversity of experiences and identities, their individual capacities for agency, self-determination, and pleasure, and the literature and other resources that help to enable them.

Autobiographical Reflection

Foucault's hope for his own work was that readers of it might learn to 'think differently'. Undertaking the work of this thesis has led me to think differently. As discussed, I began this journey wanting to know more about literary representations of LGBT+ young people and this doctoral project grew organically from there, bringing with it new understandings for myself as an emerging scholar and researcher. Prior to this thesis, my professional life was oriented around the practice of law and its practical applications. To the extent I conducted any legal research, it was only to build a persuasive case in my clients' favour or to advise my clients how particular laws might affect their day-to-day transactions, rather than to contribute to or create knowledge. Just four years ago, I would not have recognised myself as a scholarly researcher by any means. Through this doctoral journey, however, I have been able to develop my academic identity and better appreciate the relationship between language and power, how discourse constitutes particular subjects, and the nature, instability, and inadequacies of constructed identity categories. In addition to this shift in professional identity, this knowledge has also helped me to better understand and articulate the nuances of my own personal identity as part of the LGBT+ community. My hope is that this thesis leads to a professional path where I am able to work directly with LGBT+ young people to better understand how their

lived experiences and wellbeing intersect with the political, cultural, and educational representations of their lives.

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Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Name of department: Education
Title of the study: 'Law and Literature: LGBTI Children's Texts in Scottish Classrooms'

Introduction
Josh Simpson is a PhD student at the University of Strathclyde's Graduate School of Education. His research focuses on queer identities in fiction. You can email him at joshua.simpson@strath.ac.uk.

What is the purpose of this investigation?
The purpose is to discover what teachers and student teachers think about LGBTI children's literature in Scottish classrooms.

Do you have to take part?
Participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to take part and can withdraw from participation prior to submitting the survey.

What will you do in the project?
Volunteers will be asked to read a set of descriptions about the role of LGBTI literature in classrooms, to select the one they most identify with, and to give feedback about the descriptions.

Participants should open the document and read it, think about the descriptions and, when ready, spend about 15 minutes giving feedback. Because participants will be asked to download a Word document to record their feedback, completing the survey may be easiest at a desktop or laptop computer.

Why have you been invited to take part?
We are inviting teachers and student teachers in Scotland to participate.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
There are no tangible risks.

What happens to the information in the project?
The information obtained will be used as part of a thesis, which may be published, and as part of articles that may be published in journals. Since no personally identifying information will be asked, the researcher will of course not know who you are, and the thesis or articles will not identify you.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

What happens next?
If you would like to be involved, please complete the survey.

If you do not want to be involved, thank you for your attention to this matter.

Researcher contact details:
Josh Simpson
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Dr Vivienne Smith
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E-mail: Vivienne.smith@strath.ac.uk

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Dr. Eugenie A. Samier lassc
Chair of the School of Education Ethics Committee
University of Strathclyde, 141 St James Road, Glasgow, G4 0LT
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Appendix B

Study 3 Read-and-Response Instructions and Statements

LGBTI CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN SCOTTISH CLASSROOMS

Introduction

What you are about to read will help form the basis of research into the use of LGBTI children's literature in Scottish classrooms. An important part of this research involves establishing the different views of educators on the relevance of LGBTI texts in classrooms and the Scottish Government's recent decision to make all state school curricula LGBTI-inclusive.

We want to hear your thoughts and feedback on the different views described below.

Instructions

1. The following pages present five broad views (marked as Groups A through E). Please read each one carefully.
2. As you read, look for words or phrases you agree with and those you do not agree with. Please use highlighting (or any other method, such as comments or simply typing directly onto the page) to point these out. Please also explain why by typing directly onto the page.
3. Next, choose one group that best fits your thinking. <u>An exact match is unlikely, especially if you find yourself sympathetic to more than one view, but please choose the group that is the best overall fit</u>. Please indicate your choice (for example, by highlighting the group).

4. Once you have made your choice, give that group a descriptive name, one that you think best represents or captures the overall position (you might, for example, use the label 'Activist'). You can use any descriptor that comes to mind.
5. Please also suggest rewordings within the group description so that it better reflects your views.
6. Finally, there are a few short questions at the end to help us better understand the demographics of participants.

This document will automatically track your changes, so you do not need to worry about making your contributions stand out from the rest of the text. You can also type your notes or comments anywhere on the document.

Group A

I have strong religious beliefs that guide how I live my life. My faith teaches me the importance of moral values and I believe literature can be an effective tool for teaching children about values. Given this, children should be taught how to search texts for moral lessons that can guide their behaviours and beliefs. In this way, literature helps to develop a child's conscience, their sense of right and wrong. Personally, I would be uncomfortable with LGBTI texts being integrated into classrooms or recommended to children, and I think most parents would react negatively to this as well. Children do not or cannot understand LGBTI identities, which are sensitive matters that should be dealt with at home so that parents themselves can decide what is best for their children. Based on these reasons, the Scottish Government's decision to make all state-school curricula LGBTI-inclusive

does not seem appropriate. Students, as well as teachers, should be allowed to opt out.

Group B

I believe that literature should be used to teach children the skills necessary for literary competence. Those skills include being able to identify the distinctive features of a particular text, such as its literary devices, techniques, and metaphoric or symbolic meanings. Becoming familiar with such features helps children understand how to process, and thus more fully appreciate, literary texts. I am sympathetic toward LGBTI children but would be reluctant to teach or recommend LGBTI texts unless those texts have stylistic features that would make them appropriate. This is especially important given that teaching often centres on excerpts rather than entire novels to teach the technical aspects of narratives. The Scottish Government's decision to make all state-school curricula LGBTI-inclusive seems reasonable if these issues are taken into account.

Group C

Recent policy guidance from the Scottish Government stresses the importance of inclusion of marginalised groups, especially LGBTI people. Since this is what the law will soon require, LGBTI texts must be made part of every child's education. I do think there needs to be training and guidance on how to respond to challenges from parents or others in the community. There should also be training on how to respond to possible homophobia and protect students, without which the

government's changes could actually cause more harm than good. I am also concerned that many teachers, librarians, and others who work with children's literature may not be aware of LGBTI texts or even have the funding to acquire those texts in the first place. One solution might be to allow students (and teachers) to opt out from the new requirements. Allowing this choice benefits everyone: students who choose to participate are less likely to respond in homophobic, immature ways, and participating teachers are more likely to already have the necessary training or knowledge.

Group D

I believe that the point of literature is to widen understanding of cultures and to develop empathy. I therefore think it is important to introduce children to books that reflect not only their lives but those of others as well. Teachers, librarians, and other adults can act as mediators or intermediaries, helping children to learn how to interact with a text and connect its themes to their own personal experiences. Texts can be used to elicit responses and children should be encouraged to express their feelings about a text and to use examples from the text to support their feelings or opinions. I would be comfortable with LGBTI texts in classrooms as they offer a window into the lives of a marginalised group of people, just as any other text about another culture might do. I therefore welcome the changes of the Scottish Government to make the curriculum LGBTI-inclusive.

Group E

I believe that LGBTI people have been marginalised by society for too long and this will not change unless a concerted effort is made to raise awareness about perspectives that are not ‘mainstream’. LGBTI texts can be used to disrupt the status quo and children should be encouraged to express their opinions about the issues in those texts. This creates a dialogue through which matters can be debated and issues that are typically ignored can made a central focus. If we continue to privilege mainstream culture, some young readers will remain at a loss as to how they and their families fit in the world. For these reasons, a curriculum that excludes texts about LGBTI children or children with LGBTI parents is unjustified and harmful. The Scottish Government’s decision to make all state-school curricula LGBTI-inclusive confirms that these beliefs are proper and appropriate, regardless of the classroom and age of students.

Demographic Questions

Please do not include any personally identifying information, such as your name.

1. What is your job title?
2. What type of school do you work in?
3. What year(s) or class(es) do you teach?
4. How old are you?
5. What is your gender?
6. Do you identify as LGBT+?
7. Do you identify with a particular religion or faith?

Appendix C

Study 3 Group Selections and Demographic Responses

Ally	
Group	Chose group D and named it ‘Inclusive’.
Title and School Type	Teacher of English; Secondary, non-denominational (S1–6)
Age	31
Gender	Female
LGBT+	No
Religion	None (Catholic upbringing)

Bella	
Group	Chose group E and named it ‘Inclusive’.
Title and School Type	Primary teacher; non-denominational (Y7)
Age	28
Gender	Female
LGBT+	No
Religion	Not religious

Chris	
Group	Chose group D and named it ‘Equalities rep group’.
Title and School Type	Teacher; Nursery/primary (‘All stages’)
Age	57
Gender	Female
LGBT+	No
Religion	Atheist

Dana	
Group	Chose group D and did not name it, but the word ‘inclusive’ was highlighted at the end, suggesting it was chosen for this group’s label.
Title and School Type	No response
Age	No response
Gender	No response
LGBT+	No response
Religion	No response

Eva	
Group	Chose group E but did not name it.
Title and School Type	Teacher; Non-denominational secondary (S1–5)
Age	24
Gender	Female
LGBT+	No
Religion	No religion

Faye	
Group	Chose group E but did not name it.
Title and School Type	Class Teacher; Denominational high school (S1–6)
Age	38
Gender	Female
LGBT+	No
Religion	Catholic

Grace	
Group	Chose group D but did not name it.
Title and School Type	Specialist Support Teacher / Primary and Secondary mainstream (P1–S6)
Age	55
Gender	Female
LGBT+	No
Religion	Catholic

Helen	
Group	Did not select a group but highlighted the most text in group D.
Title and School Type	PGDE secondary student
Age	28
Gender	Cis female
LGBT+	No
Religion	No religion