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Inclusive Sex Education

Narratives of Good Practice from Ireland and Sweden

Thesis submitted to the School of Social Work and Social Policy

Trinity College Dublin

In fulfilment of the requirement of the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2015

By

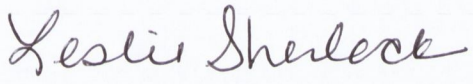
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Leslie Sherlock

May 2015

Summary

Sex education for young people can take many forms and can promote diverse theoretical, political and social perspectives on sexuality and the body. The ways that sex education modalities function, the challenges they meet, the contextual circumstances they operate within and the discourses they put forward are varied and complex. School-based initiatives can be particularly politicised. Professionals who work in the area as researchers, facilitators and employees of government and society-based initiatives hold unique perspectives on the sex education milieu within their national context.

This cross-national qualitative research project explores concepts of 'good' and 'inclusive' sex education through narratives from sex education professionals in Sweden and Ireland. It critically examines discourses using feminist and queer methodological design and theoretical lenses, intersectionally interrogating norms about gender, sexuality and the body. It contextualises sex education and youth sexuality within wider national and cultural frameworks, resulting in unique reflections for both countries and further afield.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 18 participants in Sweden and 17 participants in Ireland. Participants were asked about their experiences of sex education in their national context. All interviews were transcribed. Data were collected and analysed using manual coding and Nvivo software. Reflexive and theoretical notes from interviews supplemented transcribed data. Data were situated within theoretical and research literature. Analysis particularly interrogated narratives for their conceptualisations of politics, culture, inclusion and the body within and related to sex education.

Sweden's social democratic welfare state, reputation of gender equality and sexual liberation contrasted sharply with Ireland's postcolonial nationalism and historic links to Catholic discourses of sexual shame and repression. Participants in Sweden often took a certain ownership of Sweden's 'sex liberal' reputation, while many of those in Ireland were quick to distance themselves from repression discourses. The interviews conducted in Sweden illustrated complexities underpinning Sweden's reputation, revealing a cultural hesitancy to address ethnic diversity and colonising discourses within international sex education aid endeavours. The study perceived participants in Sweden as having a broad 'critical hopefulness' for their political and legislative context in relation to sex education policy and practice. Participants in Sweden critiqued perceived governmental and school-

level failures in implementing policy directives and saw a 'queer potential' within equality law; they expressed optimism for law's potential to facilitate inclusive sex education. On the other hand, participants in Ireland widely cited a lack of legislative support for sex education, and expressed a sense of 'hopelessness' that government policies might strengthen in this area. Participants in both countries expressed a *qualified satisfaction* with the official curriculum, but articulated a variety of barriers to programme implementation.

While aspects of diversity such as gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, class and religion were considerations for most participants; their narratives of 'good practice' and inclusive pedagogies were themselves diverse. Approaches to diversity inclusion could be conceptualised as comprising of 'add-on' lessons, 'tolerance' promotion and pedagogies which 'Ask the Other' to educate a presumably normative majority. In Ireland, many participants described challenges to sex education implementation, including poor programme supports and barriers associated with the religious ethos of most schools. In Sweden, most participants enthusiastically advocated 'normcritical pedagogies'. This queer educational perspective exposes oppressions by demonstrating the instability of societal norms, such as sexual orientation and gender norms. Participant narratives indicated that these approaches meet complications when attempting to achieve an intersectional notion of inclusion. Participants in Sweden largely articulated the presences of a pleasure discourse, whereas in Ireland participants strongly argued that there is an absence of pleasure or desire within current curriculum and practice. Participants in both countries held diverse views about the role of 'personal' or 'private' discourses within sex education pedagogies, and their reflections position themselves interestingly within the legislative and policy contexts and the sexualisation of culture in both countries.

This study reveals that the landscapes of sex education are more nuanced and complex than national stereotypes would have us believe. Inclusive sex education is a widely held aspiration but strategies to achieve this goal can vary significantly according to the discourses of inclusion that are available in each national context. In both Ireland and Sweden, sex education requires increased support structures such as teacher training, 'whole-school' implementation, pedagogical development, legislative and political support and professionalisation within the field. Particularly in Ireland, basic level programme implementation is required as a fundamental first step. Inclusive strategies for sex education will necessitate action on behalf of governments, civil society organisations and schools to ensure 'good' sex education practice in both Ireland and Sweden.

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Introduction

Sex education is one of Western society's most institutionalised technologies for young people to make meaning of their bodies. This thesis is about sex education in Ireland and Sweden. It explores the discourses within narratives of 'good' and 'inclusive' sex education practice present in interviews with professionals working in this field. Queer and feminist methodological approaches and analytical perspectives offer a critical engagement with practices, politics and histories. This research posits that narratives from those who have dedicated significant portions of their career to sex education endeavours can offer unique insights on good and inclusive practice, and that these insights are more meaningful when situated alongside those from another context.

Sex education refers to the pedagogies and modalities, formal and informal, intentional and accidental, which serve to educate and inform young people about sex, sexuality, sexual diversity and sexual expression. Sex education information may be provided by the media, peers, parents, caregivers, religious groups, youth organisations, public health campaigns, health care practitioners and schools. Sex education functions in multiple ways, varies between cultural contexts and does not exist in isolation. It is informed through, and continually influenced by, theoretical perspectives, pedagogical practices, historical legacies, political landscapes and cultural nuances.

The contrast between the sexuality education discourses within Ireland and Sweden is, arguably, perhaps the starkest in Europe. As Inglis puts it, '(i)f Ireland is exceptional in being so late into the field of sex education, Sweden was exceptional in being so early' (1998, 82). Sweden introduced a school based curriculum in 1933 and is often hailed as a 'global leader', while Ireland's more recent introduction in 1994 could be classified it as a 'late bloomer'. Myriad societal influences contribute not only to the priorities and values of a nation's – or indeed an individual school's – sex education discourses, but also to the challenges and constraints practitioners encounter in their work (Alldred and David, 2007).

Research Questions and Background

This research asks:

- What are the historical and socio-political issues impacting upon professionals' reflections of and endeavours towards good and inclusive sex education?
- What cultural norms, hierarchies and power structures impact upon views of and notions of what constitutes good and inclusive sex education?
- How is inclusivity conceptualised, and what do these notions say when unpacked using a queer and feminist analytical framework?
- What role do discourses on the body and embodiment play within concepts of good and inclusive sex education for participants?

This study uses queer theory and feminism to analyse qualitative interview narratives of good and inclusive practice from sex education professionals in Sweden and Ireland. Professionals such as independent sex educators, 'outside facilitators[1]' in schools, researchers, NGO employees and civil servants with sex education remits offer a perspective that is not captured within research conducted in school settings. Situating these narratives from professionals in comparable positions in Sweden and Ireland in dialogue with each other allowed interesting revelations about contexts and pedagogies to emerge.

Aims, Objectives and Scope of the Study

This study aims to critically engage with sex education politics, cultural influences and pedagogical discourses. The use of queer and feminist approaches gives rise to a methodology which simultaneously seeks to highlight under-researched topics and experiences whilst also aiming to empower participants, recipients of the research and the researcher herself (Stanley and Wise, 1983). This research ultimately strives for dialogue, collaboration and new insights into inclusive social justice in sex education. Postmodern feminist and queer theoretical perspectives see privileges as based on norms and identity markers, and attempts to make visible these systems of power and oppression. This research is grounded in an understanding that gender and sexuality function as norms which are reproduced in limiting and oftentimes oppressing ways (Butler, 1999). It posits

[1] Any individual or group coming in to a school from the outside to deliver part or all of the sex education curriculum.

that bodies and sexualities are informed through and created by sex education, and seeks to unpack why and how this operates through an exploration of narratives from professionals. It seeks to explore how, which and why discourses of good and inclusive sex education develop differently in two distinct European contexts. Resulting data provide insights into national policy contexts, cultural discourses, societal and interpersonal power relations as well as conceptualisations of identities and the body.

Terminology

Queer theory sees the authenticity and efficacy of terminology, categories and identities as always under construction, in a 'permanent state of becoming' (Jagose, 1996: 125). Postmodernism questions rigid definitions of terminology and finite proclamations on the meaning of language (Murphy, 1988). In its use of poststructuralist feminist epistemologies, this project rejects any notion that an overarching truth about any social phenomena exists to be uncovered through research (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). As a queer and feminist researcher, I see that language and conceptualisations of reality are situated within and have been (re)produced by hetero-patriarchal systems of privilege and oppression (Butler, 2006). A quintessential queer methodological dilemma is the requirement within research to commit to certain terminology and written expressions of concepts which queer approaches would see as fluid and ever-changing (Browne and Nash, 2010). Terms such as 'good' and 'inclusive' have various meanings attached, depending on who is using them, in which context and at what historical moment.

Narratives are the stories told by project participants in response to interview questions and through dialogue with the researcher in the context of interviews. A difference must be acknowledged between narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). This project utilises the latter, in that it sees the interview data as the created story of the participants' experience of the topic's phenomena at that particular moment in time (Clandinin, 2006). My postmodern feminist and queer approach sees each participant as having particular 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988: 575) which are put forth uniquely given the time, scenario and circumstance of the interviews (Halberstam, 2005). The term 'narrative' is not used in a way which invokes a particular set of research methods, but rather is chosen as a feminist conceptualisation of stories told through relational dialogue as constituting research data (Bloom, 1998). As this project's data was anonymised and sought to glean personal perspectives, but focused on professional experiences, the

situatedness of the interview narratives are complex and unique to the individual research participants.

This study's research questions requested participants to focus on stories and examples of what they considered to be ***'good practice'*** in sex education. The queer and feminist underpinnings of the project acknowledge that there is never simply one best or even good way of doing anything (Sullivan, 2003; Browne and Nash, 2010; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Rather than quantifying or seeking to proclaim a universal, national or participant-specific conclusion on what constitutes 'good' sex education, this project seeks to unpack conceptualisations of 'good practice' in dialogue with one another, focusing specifically on the differences and similarities among individuals and national contexts. The definition of 'good' in this study is unique and specific to the individual participant, interview and professional scenario.

Given the queer and feminist underpinnings of this project, participants were asked to specifically provide narratives on ***'inclusive'*** sex educational pedagogies and approaches. Here again, the use of the term 'inclusive' can have meanings as diverse as the participants to this project. Adherence to queer and feminist methodological and analytical perspectives necessitates that the researcher constantly strive to see outside of that which is constructed as 'normal' (Warner, 2000; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Use of queer and feminist analysis enables the research to perpetually interrogate aspects of inclusion which have been taken-for-granted or overlooked. Feminism sees my analysis of the data as limited by my own reflexive positionality (Haraway, 1988), which nonetheless enables me to analyse conceptualisations of 'inclusion' for their fit within my use of feminist and queer interpretive paradigms.

The use of terminology within this thesis is unique and specific to this project and to my positionality as a reflexive researcher. The meanings attached to frequently used concepts can be found in the Glossary of Terms (see Appendices: Figure 5).

Placing the Research in Context

Sweden has a population of over 9.5 million people, most of whom are concentrated to the south part of the country and around three major cities; Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö. High priority, governmentally, historically and socially, has been given to equality in

social and public health service provision (Edgardh, 2002). Healthcare is provided by the State, though subsidies are required and health insurance is available privately. Schools are run primarily by municipalities and tuition is free (Edgardh, 2002; Bambra et al., 2014). The Republic of Ireland has a population of nearly 4.6 million, the majority concentrated in Dublin and Cork and the surrounding areas. Public health care is provided for all residents by the State, but subsidies are required and many choose to finance health insurance privately instead (Bambra et al., 2014). First and second level education is free from tuition fees, unless a private school is chosen. Over 90% of primary schools in the Republic of Ireland are under Roman Catholic patronage, while the remainder are under the patronage of other religious organisations or are multidenominational or Irish language schools (Bacik, 2013).

'Sex education' and 'sexuality' or 'relationships' education are terms which hold a variety of meanings to different people (e.g. educators, young people, parents, medical personnel, academics) and in various contexts (e.g. home, school, youth groups, clinical settings). In the school setting in Ireland, 'sex education' mostly refers to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme, which is a component of the wider Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum for Junior and Senior Cycle pupils which was introduced in 1994 (Mayock et al., 2007). In Sweden, 'sex education' generally refers to the National Agency for Education's mandatory school curriculum which began in 1933 and became compulsory in 1955, with significant updates having occurred in 1977 and the latest update taking place in 1994 (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001).

This thesis concentrates the sex education experiences of the research participants, but focuses narratives on young people within the age range of 13 – 18. The ages and equivalent school levels taught by project participants varied by indificual, by organisational affiliation and by the professional remit of each participant. Data were not delineated by age as such. Both school-based provision of sex education and other provisions (such as NGOs, online sex education supports and sexual health clinics) are examined though the existing literature in this area and this study's participant narratives focuses mostly on school-based options.

Structure of Thesis

This introduction has explained the rationale for the study, outlined the research aims and objectives, briefly situated the research and explained some key terminology. Chapter 1 outlines the historical context of sex education in Sweden and Ireland. It reviews the relevant English-language literature on youth sex education and sexual health, as well as inclusive pedagogies. Chapter 2 details the use of a queer and feminist theoretical approach, and outlines how these are applied within this research. Chapter 3 outlines this project's use of methods and methodologies, details the specificities of the research and reflexively positions the researcher. The findings are presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 4 focuses on the participants' narratives on the political and legislative influences on sex education. It situates these narratives within national policy and educational contexts. Chapter 5 explores participants' understandings of the role of power as it exists within cultural discourses in society and in the classroom from a feminist and queer perspective. In Chapter 6, I begin to explore participants' conceptualisations of inclusion, specifically unpacking 'good practice' narratives and notions of inclusive pedagogies related to gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. Chapter 7 continues the discussion on inclusion, examining intersecting notions such as race, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability and class. Chapter 8 takes these 'good practice' narratives into a wider frame, exploring discourses on the body, embodiment and pleasure from participants. Chapter 9 synthesises the research findings, outlines key theoretical and conceptual contributions and makes research recommendations.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

Within Europe, there are few greater disparities in national histories of discourses in sexuality than between those of Ireland and Sweden. Sweden introduced school–based sexuality education in 1933 and is often hailed as a global leader (Brown, 1983), while Ireland's 1994 introduction could classify it as a late bloomer. Sweden's policies within a social democratic state system, and their reputation of sexual liberalism contrasts sharply with the Republic of Ireland's postcolonial nationalism, historically and discursively linked to the Catholic Church (Bacik, 2013). Ireland's continued lack of provision for safe and legal abortion services (Dillon, 2014) juxtaposes Sweden's historical role in the eugenics movement (Rudling, 2014).

Few researchers have made efforts to explore cross–national accounts of sexuality education within Europe (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010). Sex education in Ireland is relatively under–researched, though cultural dialogue and studies have increased in recent years (see also O'Higgins–Norman, 2009; Roe, 2010; Drury Research, 2010). While sex education in Sweden is more established and has been more extensively researched, their English-language research-base is a more recent phenomena. Historical English-language research on Sweden's sex education and sexuality landscape was largely initiated from abroad (see Brown, 1983; Boethius, 1985; Inglis, 1998). More recent English-language studies coming from Sweden provide extensive critiques of discourses, with some utilising feminist and queer theoretical perspectives (see Schmitt et al., 2013; Bromseth, 2009; Bredström, 2008).

To fully understand the ways in which historical remnants of colonisation, religious traditions, political regimes and the foundation of nations remain influential for globalised Europe, we must begin by examining societal trends and political events from hundreds of years ago. This chapter begins by exploring an historical analysis of sex, sexuality and sexual orientation. It continues with a review of more current research in these fields for Sweden and Ireland. All are analysied within a feminist and queer theoretical frame. Literature and discussion from each country are presented variously so as not to reflect or imply any sort of hierarchy between Ireland and Sweden. The resulting literature review is not intended to produce equal or comparable sets of information on the two contexts, but

rather aims to situate and discursively contextualise participant narratives and analysis contained within the forthcoming chapters of this thesis[2].

1.1 Selection Criteria

Articles and reports were identified through a multi-pronged approach, modified from Slavin's best-evidence principle (1986)[3]. Social Sciences databases[4] were searched and relevant[5] results were examined and included where they support the research questions of this study. I included reports and articles that had been referred to me through participant interviews, bibliographies and websites of relevant governmental departments and NGOs. Although there is a substantial base of English-language research on Swedish sexuality and sex education, the Swedish-language research base is more expansive[6]. For the Irish research base, and within this study, I concentrate only on the Republic of Ireland[7].

This review is not a meta-analysis. It focuses comprehensively on key developments as they relate to the aims and theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. Emphasis has been placed on published work, though key unpublished texts have also been examined. Research reports produced by government departments and NGOs have comprised the vast majority of the sexuality research base in Ireland, whereas the English-language research base in Sweden exists more in the form of academic journal articles and books. Where pieces of research or policy documents were identified as relevant to this thesis, but perhaps not suitable to the broad aims of the literature review, they are discussed within the findings chapters. Policy documents are brought in to assist in situating and analysing empirical data from participant interviews[8]. It is important to note from the outset that this

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[2] Sweden and Ireland are discussed in random and diverse orders throughout the thesis, in an attempt to prevent either country from receving a more favourable positioning.

[3] Slavin differentiates 'best evidence' from 'meta-analysis' by arguing for an approach which identifies a broad base of literature firstly, and then organises this literature carefully, highlighting in detail those studies upon which the primary arguments of the research depend upon most strongly. This approach focuses on the quality and nature of the most relevant or 'best evidence' literature, rather than synthesising hundreds of studies.

[4] Including Social Sciences Citation Index, Social Science Resources Network and SpringerLink

[5] Search terms: 'sex education Sweden', 'sexuality Sweden', 'sex education Ireland', 'sex education Ireland (eliminating Northern), and 'sex education Republic of Ireland'.

[6] Throughout the duration of this project, colleagues and research participants frequently referred to Swedish-language academic publications. I was unable to access a portion of the body of research relevant to this work due to my own language limitations in that I do not read or speak Swedish.

[7] This choice was practical in that much of sex education is rooted in social policy, and this differs in significant ways between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

[8] For example, sex education policy and curricular materials are not examined as empirical data, but are referenced to illustrate participant narratives within findings chapters.

literature review is not intended to be a reliable base for any equal comparison of the two countries[9].

Historical literature and resources are rooted in specific positionalities (hooks[10], 2014). A feminist view of historical literature exposes, in many cases, the privileging the stories of men and patriarchal structures (hooks, 2014). Historical accounts of women, queer people, ethnic minority experiences, feminist political struggles, subversive sexuality discourses and activist movements in sexuality education, for example, may pepper a more comprehensive analysis; however, the feminist body of historical research is too small to comprise the express focus of this historical account. Without consulting an archive oneself[11], it is impossible to assess where, precisely, the gaps and shortcomings of a historical literature overview lie and which perspectives are missing. In accessing pieces of research which do not incorporate researcher reflexivity, it is impossible to determine which positionalities and, perhaps, biases each author has brought to their account. A queer and feminist perspective on history seeks to expose the underexplored (hooks, 2014). Presenting succinct information on socio–political histories of sexuality is impossible without appearing generalising, glossing over points and leaving holes. In this literature review, I knowingly reproduce these quintessential queer–feminist dilemmas. Simultaneously, I contest the validity of historical accounts when working within a post-structuralist and postmodern framework[12].

1.2 A Brief History of Sexuality

Foucault (1978) argues that through prohibition and regulation sexuality appeared to be silenced following the Victorian era, but in actuality sexual discourses have 'exploded' within societies. He argues that, through their prohibition, Western societies became overly focused on discussing sexuality, often through religious and medical establishments. For Foucault, these establishments have become 'regulatory regimes' which exert power within the nation state to 'make live and let die'. He calls this 'biopower' – literally, a

[9] It is perhaps interesting reflect on how language differences as well as vastly differing bodies of sexuality research translate into comparably sized literature bases for these two countries.
[10] Feminist author bell hooks does not use capital letters in her name, in order to encourage the reader to concentrate on what is being said rather than who she is as the writer (hooks, 1989).
[11] Indeed, even when accessing an archive, it is certain histories which are accounted for, documented and remembered.
[12] Throughout this literature, the placement of sections which review Ireland and Sweden are not intended to imply a hierarchy or to communicate particular meanings outside of those directly discussed. Attempts have been made to achieve a balance between the two countries within presentation of literature and findings throughout this thesis.

technology of power over bodies – and argues that it has been made possible by the emergence of nation states and capitalism, allowing for control of populations through managing people as a group.

1.2.1 Ireland

The 17th century[13] saw attempts to Protestantise and Anglicise Ireland, in order to achieve English domination over the Irish Catholic elite (Inglis, 2008)[14]. Catholicism combined with poverty and mass emigration to become the Republic's distinguishing attributes post–Great Famine (1845–52) and, particularly, after a violent and challenging break from the British Union in 1922 (Kennedy, 1996). Centuries of British and, largely, Protestant colonisation lead to nationalistic symbolism of the Catholic religion playing an increasingly central and overt distinguishing role in Irish culture (Fennell, 1989)[15]. With a colonial past and devoid of historic monarchic reign or democratic self–sufficiency, the Republic of Ireland was a late-comer to the age of nation–states.

The Catholic Church played an instrumental role in post-1922 nation-building, supporting ideals of class-based social organisation and rejecting egalitarianism (Kennedy, 1996)[16]. The Republic's political system was established in a similar capitalist democratic structure as to that under Britain, though Education and Health sectors were taken on by the Catholic Church, establishing links which remain to this day (Bacik, 2013). Catholic 'ethos' ensured that sex remained largely taboo until the late 20th century, and the residue of this continues today (Inglis, 1998). A veil of Catholic sexual morality persisted through the 1920s, and the 1930s brought Ireland's abortion trail to England as well as emergence of a

[13] Celtic pagan religious traditions thrived in Ireland starting around 500 BC (Hutton, 2014). Ireland took on a more Roman influence after around 50 BC (Fennell, 1989). Missionaries to Ireland in the 5th century converted most inhabitants of what is now the Republic of Ireland from Celtic spiritual traditions to the Roman Catholic religion. Pagan traditions persisted for centuries alongside Catholic influences. These traditions were upheld by indigenous Gaelic and early Viking settlers through centuries of conquests beginning in the 8th century (Fennell, 1989). Historical artefacts dating back to the eleventh through thirteenth centuries indicate strong representation of feminine, Goddess and fertility symbols, including the sexually explicit Sheela-na-gig (Hutton, 2014; Concannon, 2004). Sheela-na-gigs are 'grotesque' carvings of women exposing exaggerated vulvas. These figures can be found throughout Ireland, though their origins have been a topic for debate. Some scholars argue that they arrived in Ireland from France and Spain during the 12th century Anglo-Norman conquest (Jerman and Weir, 1986), while others assert that the Sheelas played an earlier role in pre-Christian Goddess worship (McMahon and Roberts, 2001; Concannon, 2004).

[14] Penal Laws were modified in the 18th century to exclude Catholics from property ownership and civil society (Kennedy, 1996).

[15] Some Irish converted to Protestantism, but many of those who remained Catholic began to embrace the most rigid and strict forms of Catholic rules, particularly those related to self-mortification and denial (Inglis, 2008).

[16] Colonisation, as well as economics, politics and religion, had already influenced the language movement away from Irish to English, but Gaelic revival attempts inspired linguistic and cultural restoration efforts.

'Republican' movement fighting for all–Ireland reunification (Inglis, 2008)[17]. Catholic efforts in Irish chasteness were credited with producing economic, social and political stability, though failure in industry and entrepreneurism sparked a flight from the land and increased emigration post–World War II (Kennedy, 1996). Between 1920-1940, sexuality and, particularly, a 'pure' and 'moral' view of female sexuality became an icon of Irish national identity (Leane, 1999)[18].

In following Catholic Church teachings, contraception and condoms were banned in 1935 and remained illegal until after a Supreme Court ruling in 1978 (Inglis, 1998)[19]. Despite feminist activism and organising, condoms were not made available without a prescription until 1985 and still then many General Practitioners (GPs) would only prescribe hormonal methods to married women (Inglis, 2008). Illegitimacy was abolished in 1987, homosexuality was decriminalised in 1993, sex shops arrived in 1996 and divorce became available in 1997, each of these arriving late by Western European standards (Ferriter, 2009). In 2011 a form of emergency contraception was made available over the counter in Irish pharmacies[20]. Abortion was illegal at independence, and effectively remains so[21], persisting as a divisive issue; access to contraception can be complex and challenging for young people under age 18[22] (Sherlock, 2008; IFPA, 2011).

The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) formed in 1969[23] to provide an alternative to Catholic family planning services, while Catholic institutions such as the Magdalene

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[17] The Irish Republican movement began with the 1780s United Irishmen and continued under the leadership of Robert Emmet and Ann Devlin from 1803 (Geoghegan, 2002).

[18] The institutionalisation of 'wayward women, 'unmarried mothers' and 'prostitutes' enforced wider societal norms and mechanisms of social control (Leane, 1999; 1).

[19] In 1979, the Health (Family Planning) Act legalised contraception and condom restrictions had been lifted.

[20] A legal loophole found under the Patient Group Directions (PGD) authorised pharmacies to administer the tablets without prescription (IFPA, 2011).

[21] In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights ruled Ireland's failure to implement the existing constitutional right to a lawful abortion when a woman's life is at risk violates Article 8 of the European Convention. After much political and societal debate following the death of Savita Halappanavar from septicaemia in Galway in 2012, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 was enacted in January 2014 to allow for abortion where there is a real and substantial risk to a woman's life and when all procedures mandated by the act have been carried out. In 2014 Ms Y, a migrant woman who was suicidal and requested an abortion, was forced to undergo a caesarean section at 26 weeks. This case has raised questions about Ireland's abortion provision (see also http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/timeline-of-ms-y-case-1.1951699)

[22] Ireland's infrastructure for young persons' sexual health testing is sparse, with the only free youth STI clinic for the general public nationwide situated St James hospital in Dublin.

[23] Poverty and cultural Catholicism largely prevailed throughout the 1960s and 70s. Through the 1960s, increases in communication brought influences from abroad, primarily from England and the United States (Inglis, 2008). The 1968 Northern Irish Civil Rights Movement confronted British governmental and police oppression, and soon after 'The Troubles' began, a period of violence primarily between Northern Ireland's nationalist Irish Catholic community and its unionist British Protestants (Prince, 2007). Through desire for

Laundries housed unwed mothers and rape victims up until 1996 (Pérez, 2009). The 1980s and 90s HIV/AIDS epidemic increased public awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and brought criticism on the Church's chastity ethos, inspiring questions about the government's role in health and education (Mayock et al., 2007). A 'Gay Liberation' movement began in Ireland in 1972 and resulting groups and organisations worked to campaign for legislative reform[24]. These efforts formed the basis of the sexuality NGO[25] and activist movements which continue today. Gay Health Action was launched in 1985 to provide non-judgemental sexual health information, and the resulting Gay Men's Health Service remains one of Ireland's few gay-inclusive[26] sexual health efforts. The 2010 Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations on Cohabitants Act recognised same–sex unions[27]. In 2013, twenty-six years after Dr. Lydia Foy began battling the Irish state to recognise her gender on her birth certificate, a Gender Recognition Bill was proposed to officially recognise transgender people (IHRC, 2014)[28].

Catholic 'morally appropriate' sex education had existed for decades before official curriculum was introduced, but more liberal movements encountered societal and political barriers (Inglis, 1998; Kiely, 2004; Ferriter, 2009). The 1970s Lifeskills programme introduction is what Kiely (2004) coins as the 'first disruptive moment' in the series of shifts from traditional to a more progressive sex education discourse[29]. In 1991, a controversial 'Stay Safe' abuse prevention programme was introduced in Irish primary schools as a response to cases of child abuse (Inglis, 1998, Mayock et al., 2007). A series

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increased economic independence from Britain, Ireland joined the European Commission in 1973. (The European Commission later became the European Union.) By the end of the 1980s the Irish state sought to attract foreign investment, providing incentives to transnational corporations and offering low corporation tax. Struggles in the North continued until the Belfast 'Good Friday' Agreement of 1998, and sporadic incidents and some tensions persist today (Prince, 2007). State–driven development efforts gave rise to the Celtic Tiger period of rapid economic growth from 1995 through 2005, which included an influx of immigration and industry and created major changes in Irish social and cultural life (O'Riain, 2000). For three years, from 2002-2004, the Republic of Ireland ranked as the most globalised country in the world by *Foreign Policy* magazine, due to the open economy, foreign trade and investment, modern technology, communications, and involvement with global issues (Inglis, 2008). Expansion continued at a slower rate until 2008 when Ireland fell into recession as the result of the banking crisis.

[24] These groups advocated for change in legal restrictions on abortion, contraception and same-sex practices.

[25] Non-governmental Organisation

[26] The language of 'gay-inclusive' here, and throughout this thesis, is deliberate. A queer approach strives for full LGBTQ+ inclusion, but – as in the example of the Gay Men's Health Service – this is not yet a reality.

[27] Civil Partnership, limited to same-sex couples, affords fewer rights than marriage (Knill and Preidel, 2014).

[28] This law has not yet been enacted and, as such, transgender individuals remain unrecognised by the Irish State.

[29] Lifeskills began in the voluntary youth sector, while statutory health boards provided resources and training for teachers as the programme moved into schools throughout the 1980s; while it did not address sexuality it is widely credited with having paved the way for RSE through relationships with government and by introducing some of these discussion in the classrooms (Kiernan, 1992; Inglis, 1998; Kiely, 2004).

of tragic events through the late 1980s and early 90s, including the death of a fifteen year old girl and her newborn baby, lifted the lid on a decades–long Irish tradition of sexual secrecy (Mayock and Byrne, 2004). The events provided impetus for the official school–based Relationships and Sexuality Education (hereafter, RSE) in 1994 and contributed towards the start of a diminishing role for the Church in health and education (Inglis, 1998). RSE is not currently implemented evenly in all schools, and is adaptable to fit within a religious 'ethos' (Mayock et al., 2007)[30]. In 2009, *The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse,* also known as the Ryan Report, revealed evidence of thousands of children who suffered systematic physical and sexual abuse at the hands of clergy between the 1930s and 1970s. The introduction of RSE has been widely recognised as a pivotal moment in Ireland's history of sexuality (Inglis, 1998; Ferriter, 2004; Kiely, 2004)[31].

Inglis (2008) posits that, over the past 50 years, Catholicism has become a cultural lifestyle choice, no longer inherited as a taken-for-granted aspect of identity. Historically, Catholic culture was characterised by guilt, secrecy and oppression in relation to sexuality (McLoone-Richards, 2013). Many Irish people had grown up and became adults without having ever been educated on the biological facts of sex, resulting in difficulties with relationships, confidence, and sexual negotiations (Inglis, 1998)[32]. Giffney (2006) asserts that a small but dedicated community of queer scholars and theorists have existed for decades, having brought some of the world's most renowned queer theorists to speak openly about and theorise on sex, sexuality and queerness. The movements Giffney refers

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[30] Today, over 90% of primary schools in the Republic of Ireland have Catholic patronage, though the government has recently acknowledged a need to redress this imbalance. In 2008, following criticism resulting from reports of institutional sex abuse scandals, Catholic Bishops stated that the current level of Catholic schools as no longer necessary. In 2011, Minister for Education and Skills Ruari Quinn formally recognised and began awarding increasing patronage to Educate Together (a multi–denominational school patron).

[31] Inglis (1998) asserts that the 'Stay Safe' and RSE programmes represented the first time that sexuality was not exclusively taught by bishops or priests. Ryan (2012) disagrees, pointing out that Angela MacNamara's popular agony aunt column in the *Sunday Press* provided Irish readership with guidance on relationships and intimacy issues from 1963 to 1980. Kiely (2004) also questions Inglis' assertion that the Church wielded more power than agents of the state, and argues that in the very act of introducing RSE, the state violated the teachings of the Church. Kiely argues that Stay Safe constituted 'wider governmentality constructing normal sexuality and punishing abnormal sexuality in Irish society' (2004; 7). Stay Safe and, later, RSE were strongly resisted and seen as highly contentious; opponents of the programmes argued that child abuse existed precisely because of the permissive climate created by young people's exposure to the earlier Lifeskills programme (Kiely, 2004).

[32] Inglis (2008) argues that, through globalisation, the rules of sexual morality have been rewritten, and fear of being too sexual has been replaced recently in Ireland with fears of not being seen as sexual enough. Several researchers argue that globalisation has served to increase a culture of sexualisation in Ireland (Altman, 2002; Inglis, 2008; Mays, 2005). Giffney (2006) argues that academics and activists had maintained thriving queer and alternative sexuality discourses for much longer than the more-recent economic boom.

to, however, have existed on the fringes of academia and activist circles, receiving little mainstream recognition or participation[33].

1.2.2 Sweden

The Scandinavian countries have long histories of economic stability and mostly–peaceful neighbouring alliances, but also of colonisation, wars, revolts, famine and political struggles (Roberts, 2001). The Protestant Reformation successfully converted previously–Catholic Scandinavia into world leaders of Lutheranism, a religion with educational and self–help values which uniquely shaped Sweden politically and remain characteristic of the social democratic state today (Mead and Hall, 1972). A Swedish monarchy has existed for many centuries and the monarchic absolutism movement helped Sweden to pioneer Scandinavia in early abolishment of Church/State co-mingling (Sejersted, 2011). Mass emigration, economic alliances with neighbouring nations, emerging industry and modern financial system characterised Sweden's development prior to and throughout the 19th century (Roberts, 2001).

Women's leadership and advocacy efforts[34] led to, in 1884, single women over age 21 to be granted the same general rights as men (Kent, 2008). In the mid 1800s 'bundling' was a customary sex education technique for the rural, peasant societies by which young couples were allowed to sleep together and engage in intimacy, fully clothed, with younger siblings in the same bed (Kent, 2008). During the late 1800s, health educators lectured about the damaging effects of masturbation, advising parents on how to eliminate the practice (Kent, 2008). Abortion was not uncommon at the time, though procedures were undertaken at great risk as it was a criminal offence (Kent, 2008). During the mid 19th century the incidence of 'Stockholm marriages[35]' emerged, seen partially as a reflection of inverse relation between men's diminishing financial means and the increased social position of women (Matovic, 1986).

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[33] These queer and feminist movements prioritise a critique of, rather than a contribution to, the more 'raunch culture' (Levy, 2006) inspired sexualisation to which Inglis (2008) refers.

[34] Domestic corporal punishment of adults within a household was abolished in 1858, and in that same year single women over age 25 were granted property rights (Kent, 2008).

[35] Informal arrangements in which men and women lived together unmarried (Matovic, 1986).

The Social Democratic Party in Sweden was formed in 1889[36] and held much political prominence thereafter; generally credited with forming the basis of Sweden's welfare state (Sejersted, 2011). Compensation schemes were developed for loss of income due to illness, age, unemployment and other reasons, as well as a health insurance system. An active and early feminist movement played a global role in gender politics. Pre–World War II, Sweden was hailed as having found a 'middle way' between socialism and capitalism, providing governmental interventions while encouraging private industry (Mead and Hall, 1972). Birth–rate ebbs and flows sparked European discussion on birth–control in the 1930s; by 1936 Sweden was financing contraceptive clinics and legalised some cases of abortion starting in 1938 (Clark, 2008). European advances in birth–control technologies quickly gave way to a movement in eugenic sterilisation practices for the 'unfit' (Ferriter, 2009).

Sweden enacted a sterilisation law in 1934 with broad political support (Roberts, 2001; Clark, 2008). More than 44,000 thousand sterilisations were performed, sometimes through coercion, for the prevention of undesirable genetic traits such as 'mental illness', 'feeble–mindedness', disabilities and nomadic[37] ethnic identities (Sejersted, 2011). Sweden's sterilisation law remained effective until 1975[38], and sterilisations remained a requirement for transgender individuals until 2013[39] (Bremer, 2013). Until recently, transgender sterilizations constituted one important legacy from the once–'sexually liberal' eugenics movement which continues to haunt Sweden. Abortion became free on request starting in 1975[40], and parental consent is not required for a young person to have an abortion

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[36] Mid 20th century political movements campaigned to end the monarchy, and the King now presides as a neutral, non–political figurehead (Mead and Hall, 1972). Post–World War I and until the early 1990s, Sweden grew into a self–sustaining economic leadership position within Europe, crediting industrial society, neutrality during World War II, English-language education, systems of welfare and international aide (Sejersted, 2011). The 1929 global economic slump effected Sweden less than the rest of Europe (Roberts, 2001).

[37] The possibility of sterilisation for these populations was greater than for wider society, though this must not be construed as wholesale ethnic cleansing. Nomadic peoples were subjected to extreme discrimination and oppression, and their way of life was generally seen as at odds with the 'rest of society' (Sejersted, 2011).

[38] In 1934, Swedish couple Gunnar and Alva Myrdal published the influential text, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (The Population Crisis). The Myrdals confronted German Aryan political fascism and introduced a belief that scientific developments such as sterilisation and contraception should be enjoyed, but argued eugenics practices as socially unnecessary (Sejersted, 2011). It took time before their ideas were accepted.

[39] Sweden was the first country in the world to introduce transgender medical and legal designation in 1972. Despite having specific protections under anti–discrimination legislation, until 2013 transgender people were still required to be unmarried and to be sterilised as a prerequisite to legal gender recognition.

[40] Abortions are accessible on request in Sweden, up to and including the 18th week of pregnancy; abortions per 1000 women has remained about the same in Sweden since it was legalised in 1974 and in the majority of cases, abortions are procured early in the pregnancy (Danielsson et al., 2012).

(Edgardh, 2002)[41]. Sweden's divorce rates were high in the early 20th century, and divorce legislation was revolutionary for its child–protection and gender equality provisions (Millett, 1977). Industry had boomed since post–World War II until a banking crisis struck from 1991–1993, rendering Sweden an ordinary small state in Europe and giving way to a 1995 reluctant joining of the European Union (Sejersted, 2011). The criminalisation of the purchase, but not selling, of sex was unique in Sweden when first enacted in 1999 and remains somewhat unique globally[42].

During the 1930s and 40s, while homosexuality was being re-criminalised under Nazi regimes, it was being legalised in Sweden and other Nordic countries[43]. It was at this point, amidst the global political discourses of Nazism and Stalinism, that sexual liberalism became explicitly linked to Social Democracy (Rydström, 2003). Immigration has increased since 1970, and particularly the more recent influx from the Global South has invoked discussions on racism and integration as well as fears for some: both of breakdown in social democratic norms, and of the production of a new immigrant underclass (Bredström, 2008)[44]. Swedish politics have been characterised by strong trade union organising and political representation, with the social democratic party having held governmental power from 1932 through 2006, with the exceptions only of 1976 – 1982 and 1991 – 1994 (Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010). The 1991 election of a conservative government marked, for many researchers, a decline in the welfare state and the beginning of a neo-liberal turn in Swedish policy which was furthered by the 2006 and 2010 election results (Harvey, 2005; Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010; Sejersted 2011)[45]. Swedish political mentality combined with a sexually liberal attitude to cause sex education discourses to

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[41] The rate of teenage abortions is higher in Sweden than in other Scandinavian countries, and the rate of teenagers giving birth is one of the lowest in the world (Danielsson et al., 2012). One reason cited for the increase in abortions by young people in recent years is the decline in usage of the contraceptive pill, combined with inadequate sex education in schools. Emergency contraceptive pills have been obtainable without prescription at pharmacies since 2001, yet more clear information regarding the limitations of its usage is required by the general public (Danielsson et al., 2012).

[42] Sweden's criminalisation of sex-purchasing rather than sex selling is not unproblematic, but it is outside the remit of this thesis to address the debate here.

[43] Sweden was peculiar within the West for having included women within its earlier legislation against homosexual acts, though few women were ever prosecuted under such legislation (Rydström, 2003).

[44] The early 2000s were characterised by an increase in research on racism and progressive integration policy running alongside the increasingly neo-liberal economic political progressions (Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010). Bredström (2005) points out that public health discourses made strong differentiations between 'Swede' and 'immigrant' experiences. Mulinari and Neergaard (2010) argue that such divisions contribute to political reliance upon simplified notions of 'social cohesion' and 'core values' (Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010:136).

[45] In 2006, the Centre-Right Alliance came into power for the first time since the 1990s, and in 2010 they were re-elected over the Social Democratic Party's Red–Green Alliance with the Green Party and the Left Party in an historic election (Kuisma and Ryner, 2012).

develop rapidly in Sweden from the 1930s onward[46]. The contradictory picture of a socially disciplined and mildly coerced yet sexually liberal and morally relaxed society is one that characterises Sweden (Rydström, 2003).

A shift in Swedish attitudes towards sex as pleasure took place during the 1920s, and in 1925 the Board of Education highlighted the need for instruction on personal hygiene and sexual matters (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001). In 1933, RFSU, the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education was established[47], and sex education in schools was introduced and became compulsory in 1956 (Inglis, 1998)[48]. In 1977, after a decade of research, The Swedish National Board of Education commenced curricular revisions designed to take into account the lived experiences of young people and acknowledge differing sexual 'values' (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001)[49]. Sexuality education is compulsory from pre–school (age six) and recommends a school-wide approach as well as direct and ongoing collaboration with Youth Sexual Health Clinics and sexuality organisations (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001). RFSU played a significant role in the development of sex education as well as legalisation of abortion and decriminalisation of homosexuality (Hagy, 2013); the well-established national NGO has local branches and works to provide school-based sex education, distribution of publications, management of sexual health clinics and youth groups as well as international aid. RFSU is a large and influential institution with feminist, sex positive and inclusive aims, and works in tandem with LGBT organisations[50]. RFSU believes, in feminist fashion, that sex is personal as well as political (Hanisch, 1970), acknowledging that sexual and reproductive rights are controversial in many spheres but maintaining that sexual rights apply to all (RFSU, 2009)[51].

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[46] The past several decades have seen a drastic transformation of the workforce and labour conditions in Sweden coupled with a marked decrease in public expenditure on welfare related services (Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010). Critics of the welfare state, such as Mulinari and Neergaard (2010), point out how its pragmatism and disproportionate reliance on science translate to unnecessary social control and argue that the core of the 'Swedish model' of health and education has continued within the context of the recent neo-liberal turn, but has done so through system increasingly dominated by privatisation, profits, outsourcing and companies more in line with capitalist Western economies, and that immigration is central to this shift. Rydström argues it was the overt medicalisation of Swedish society that inspired Foucault to pen *History of Madness* while working as a visiting scholar at Uppsala University (2003).

[47] RFSU has remained the primary driving force between Sweden's national sexual health and sex education programmes and services ever since.

[48] During the period of economic stagnation in the 1990s, sex education provision also slowed (Edgardh, 2002). Implementation of a sex education remains mandatory but inconsistent today (Nilsson and *Sandström, 2001)*.

[49] The resulting manual introduced topics such as sexual orientation, contraception and abortion (Inglis, 1998).

[50] RFSU's work is centred around the 'freedoms' to 'choose', 'enjoy' and to 'be oneself' with the condition that these freedoms may not impinge on the freedoms of another person (www.rfsu.se).

[51] RFSU acknowledges that sexual health is more challenging in the context of poverty and they demand political action for recognising contraception and abortion as a fundamental human right (RFSU, 2009). They

During the early era of HIV in the 1980s, Chlamydia was recognised as increasingly prevalent amongst adolescents in Sweden, and a 'safer sex' movement emerged to educate young people about sexual safety and protection from STIs (Edgardh, 2002)[52]. In the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Sweden was among the few Western countries which listed HIV within their Communicable Disease Act (CDA)[53]. When diseases become classified as dangerous to public health, both testing for and treatment of the disease is made free of charge to the patient. As has been the case in much of the Western world, the AIDS epidemic was taken quite seriously by LGBT activists (Bredström, 2008). In 1950, RFSL, the Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights was founded, beginning one of the first gay rights movements in the world. RFSU and RFSL work as 'sister organisations', both adhering to feminist principles and working together in sexuality education efforts. LGBT rights movements in Scandinavia have been noted for their reformist, rather than revolutionising strategies, working for rights in a manner which mimics that of trade union movements (Rydström, 2010).

The Registered Partnership for Same-Sex Couples Act was adopted in 1995 and in 1999 the law against discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation came into effect. In 2002, agitation against people on grounds of sexual orientation was criminalised through amendments to the Penal Code concerning agitation against a national or ethnic group. In 2003, the Right to Adoption Review Act for same-sex couples who have entered into a partnership was approved and in 2005 a law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the social services was implemented. In 2009, a gender-neutral marriage law was enacted, and Sweden's Lutheran Churches led the way in welcoming

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work through an information provision approach and take as a starting point the fact that young people are sexual beings and engaged sexually (RFSU, 2009).

[52] The primary sexual health concern at the time was HIV (Edgardh, 2002) and the HIV prevention movement was highly politicised (Rydström, 2010). Every household was sent a pack of information explaining HIV transmission, dispelling myths and educating on prevention strategies (Herlitz and Ramstedt, 2004). Targeted prevention efforts have increased since that time, focusing within urban areas on 'risky' groups such as adolescents, immigrants, MSM (men who have sex with men) and those living with HIV, yet no national campaign has targeted the general public since then (Herlitz and Ramstedt, 2004).

[53] Activists in Sweden have challenged the homophobic discourses around HIV/AIDS transmission and the CDA; RFSL (the Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights) was particularly noted for their reluctance to mandate testing of their membership and for their controversial stance that unprotected oral sex be considered as safer sex, a stance the organisation maintains to this day (Rydström, 2010). The CDA dictated that all diagnosed cases had to be reported to the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control (SMI) and that all people with HIV are compelled to disclose this to their sexual partners, effectively criminalising HIV transmission and exposure (Bredström, 2005). The CDA has had a lasting influence on public and societal discourse around the sexual lives of Swedes in other ways as well, having outlawed gay bathhouses until 2004, for example, and additionally requiring disclosure of gonorrhoea and syphilis since 1988 (Danielsson et al., 2012).

same–sex weddings within their doors (Rydström, 2010). Rydström asserts that, ever since they were first introduced, civil partnerships and same-sex marriage legislation was connected to national identities for the Scandinavian countries (2010). He offers a queer analysis that Sweden's seemingly politically progressive attitude towards non-heterosexual experiences is not necessarily one of increased societal tolerance, but rather constitutes a re-drawing of the boundaries of 'permissible sexuality' which has been coupled with a more strict policing of newly-redefined sexual transgressions (Rydström, 2003)[54]. In 2005, a group of queer and feminist activists, scholars and teachers introduced 'normcritical pedagogies', an educational movement which advocates an alternative to widespread societal 'tolerance' discourses, promoting an approach which aims to teach on sexuality and diversity intersectionally and inclusively (Bromseth et al., 2009)[55].

1.3 Introduction to Research Literature

The body of research literature and policy documentation on sex education in Ireland is small. In contrast, Sweden has a vast collection of published work on the topics, mostly in the Swedish language, but a sizeable amount of literature is also available in English. This scenario resulted in comparably sized bodies of relevant literature in the two countries, though the content, perspective and types of analysis within the research literature from the two countries do not constitute a basis for a direct comparison. Feminist and queer theoretical perspectives are more fully established and more widely supported in Sweden, while in Ireland overtly queer and feminist research is mostly limited to unpublished theses and academic journal articles. The majority of funding for sexuality related research in Ireland has come from the Irish HSE[56] Crisis Pregnancy Programme, and most of the research literature on sexuality and sex education in Ireland has emerged from this governmental body.

The literature bases of these two countries sit within wider social policy contexts, which will be explored here as well as within the findings chapters as they situate in dialogue

[54] Rydström asserts that much of the tolerance and acceptance has been achieved within a patriarchal paradigm that favours the institution of the marital family, and that behind these 'obedient, well-defined practisers of 'good sex' lurks an army of disobedient lovers: the bisexuals, the crips, the polyamorous, the sadomasochists, the transgendered, who are living and loving without asking for permission and without demanding official recognition, just the absence of harassment and persecution' (2010; 177) .

[55] Norm–critical sexuality teachings aim to expose the ways gender and sexual oppressions operate by displaying how norms work and why they are unstable, pupils are engaged to think critically and question their own oppressive actions and positions (Bromseth et al., 2009).

[56] Health Service Executive

with participant narratives. The sexuality and sex education histories of Ireland and Sweden are both situated within an international sex education context, and they play roles within categorisations of these discourses. Although the two contexts appear to differ greatly, on a global scale they are both firmly classified as 'Western' and 'European', and this foundation is central to an analysis of discourses within the two countries. Situations and solutions for sexuality education that exist in one country cannot always be translated or even fathomed in another, due not only to current cultural and political climates, but also history. While sexuality education dilemmas faced in Sweden and Ireland may seem, on the surface, to only differ by their historical positioning in time, further exploration elucidates the vastly differing circumstances from which these emerged, delineating disparate discursive trajectories. Exploring Ireland and Sweden alongside each other serves to expose taken-for-granted aspects of each country. It is not a simple task to liken or contrast the two, though the insights that arise in attempts to do so open up a space to imagine opportunities for social change in both contexts.

1.4 Socio-political Influences on Inclusive Sex Education

Divergences in sexuality education timing and discourses across Europe have been strongly shaped by the role of the State in promoting the health of its citizens through legislation (Sauerteig and Davidson, 2008). Sweden's legacy as a monarchy, an empire and a social democracy provides a counterimage of Ireland's British/American economic, political and postcolonial influences and history. Sweden's social democratic welfare state, long reputation of sexual liberation and strong human rights discourse contrasts sharply with the Republic of Ireland's postcolonial[57] nationalism, historically linked to the Catholic Church[58]. In spite of the recent national and international scrutiny of the Catholic Church in light of child sex abuse scandals (Subotsky, 2012), a religious 'ethos' exemption to Ireland's equality legislation remains applicable in the majority of Irish schools (Neary, 2014)[59], impacting sex education delivery on a practical level (Mayock et al., 2007).

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[57] While labelling the Republic of Ireland as 'post–colonial' is not uncomplicated, I use the term to refer to countries which have gained political independence from colonial rule, acknowledging that connotations of 'independence' are fraught and that the Irish situation is multi–faceted and unique (Moane 1996). Another analysis of 'post–colonial' Ireland can be found in Kennedy, 1996: 167–181.

[58] While positioning Ireland as 'postcolonial' alongside British colonies in Africa and Asia is not unproblematic, Ireland's continued resistance to a European human rights discourse (Bacik, 2004) indicates some implications of 'postcolonial' status have relevance (Moane, 1996).

[59] Neary (2014) explains that the majority of Irish schools are under religious patronage: 96% of primary schools (91% Catholic) and 52% of second-level schools (48% Catholic). The 'religious ethos' of these schools provides protection whereby curricular content, classroom practices and employment procedures are exempt from anti-discrimination mandates within Irish equality legislation (Neary, 2014).

Sweden has long boasted a reputation of sexual liberation and equality, though an emerging body of feminist and queer research literature demonstrates shortcomings in the area of inclusion of diversity within sexual health (Lindén, 2011; Bolander, 2001; Bredström, 2005; Orre and Gäredal, 2012; Bromseth, 2009). Tenacious politically–motivated critiques have long characterised sexuality movements in Sweden (Rydström, 2010), possibly elucidating factors that have enabled queer–feminist sexuality pedagogies and analysis to emerge.

Sauerteig and Davidson assert that, 'in each society, this balance of power was continually being redefined and that sex education was a powerful indicator of social and cultural change' (2008: 6). Social commentators have historically remarked that Sweden's early and extensive sex education efforts are only possible because of the 'unique tolerance' and 'openness' they possess which cannot be found in 'more complex, more heterogeneous societies, such as the United States' (Boethius, 1985: 276). This perception of Sweden as homogenous and 'peopled by healthy, sexually athletic blondes' (Boethius, 1985: 276) is problematic both in and outside of Sweden. An increasing body of scholarship is exposing Sweden's welfare state as having a specific nationalist discourse which relies upon being seen as gender equality and social policy leaders, but also necessitates an insidious subordination of immigrants under the guise of inclusivity (Rydström 2003; Bredström, 2005; Bredström, 2008; Schmitt 2009; Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010). These scholars theorise that a global increase in immigration has effectively been blamed by the Swedish state for the political and economic pressures that the welfare state now faces. Rydström points out in his 2003 book *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950* that the foundations of the Swedish welfare state were built upon a privileging of strong medical science, pragmatic views on sexuality and extensive degrees of social control. Rydström (2003) theorises that it is these foundations which have given way to Sweden's progressive views on sexuality, sex education and acceptance of sexual minorities, but also to policy and medicalisation which border on puritanical.

The perpetuating legacy of the Catholic Church on Ireland's gender and sexuality milieu has been widely documented (Bacik, 2013; Bacik, 2004; Ferriter, 2009; Inglis, 1998). Bacik traces that this legacy was firmly in place well before 1922, but Ferriter (2009) argues that an increasingly moralised view of Catholic sexuality was adhered to more rigidly post-independence as a marker of Irish identity. In his 2008 book *Global Ireland: Same Difference*, Inglis examines what he describes as the shift from a moral, Catholic

Ireland to a more self-consumed media and capitalist driven society through and in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger[60] economic boom. He asserts that this progression has also been a sexual one (Inglis, 2008). According to Inglis (1998), the Irish are characterised by a lack of physical affection and a simultaneous obsession with sex combined with an 'ethos' of self denial; he argues that these legacies of the Catholic Church's role within the state have become chosen attributes of Irish culture. Kiely's (2004) PhD thesis traced discourses within the Irish sex education curriculum for their role within neo-liberal public health movements. She argued that while Irish sex education has experienced significant Catholic-affiliated opposition, more liberal and secular forces in Irish society have been overly occupied with defending the programme's existence, rather than having space to provide a useful critique or demand curricular improvements (Kiely, 2004).

Thrupp discusses a 'politics of blame' which increasingly constructs educational failure as the sole responsibility of teachers and schools in a neoliberal context, helping to uphold and maintain the power positions of governments and governmental departments (1998: 196). Thrupp (1998) posits that situating the tendency to 'blame' teachers facilitates a simplistic approach on the part of governments in executing their duties of evaluation and provision of educational supports. Kumashiro's (2012) book *Bad Teacher!: How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture* argues that neoliberal and neoconservative political contexts have increasingly produced a discourse which shifts blame for educational failures away from governments and policy makers and places it on to teachers. Alcañiz and Hellwig (2010) assert that democratic responsibility is attributed based on a premise that within principles of representation, elected officials are granted power to carry out policies that enhance public welfare, and assumes that citizens are aware of who holds responsibility for policy outcomes. Their article elucidates the ways in which political responsibility is more complex and nuanced than it may seem to voters, and these type of complexities can be seen within national sex education milieus.

Duggan and the late Muñoz, in 2009, published their queer theoretical conversation 'Hope and hopelessness: A dialogue' as an article in *Women and Performance.* They argue that hope and optimism are concepts associated with race and class privilege, operating as the reward for conformity to social norms, an endorsement of domination under the guise of

[60] Refers to the rapid period of economic growth in the Republic of Ireland between 1995 and 2000. This was fuelled by foreign investment and a property bubble. The Irish economy expanded at an average rate of 9.4% between 1995 and 2000 and continued to grow at an average rate of 5.9% during the following decade until 2008, when it fell into recession (and has largely remained) (Allen, 2000).

freedom (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009). Duggan and Muñoz's musings on hope and optimism can be readily mapped onto the dilemmas of sex education professionals attempting to work within the neoliberal and neoconservative political frameworks. In other words, it could be seen that those who seek to escape the shackles of oppressive socio-political situations utilise the discourses of betterment which have been made available to them, sometimes through mechanisms of privilege. For privileged individuals who hold an understanding and awareness of societal norms, their complicity with the very power structures they seek to dismantle may be inevitable. They posit that that the opposite of political hope is actually complacency, not hopelessness, and argue that while a non-critical hopefulness may never be the right thing to do, an 'educated hope' might be the necessary affect for queer activist and academic movements (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009).

1.5 Queer and Feminist Influences on Sex Education

Foucault's (1978) *History of Sexuality* has been widely credited as contributing to the foundations of queer theory, as well as more recent conceptualisations of sex within a postmodern frame. Sex positive feminism (see also Califia, 1981) is especially concerned with the politics and discourses produced within sex education modalities. Queer and feminist theories both readily lend themselves to, and speak explicitly about, sex education; though these theories are underused within the more mainstream body of research literature. Government-funded research reports are often conducted within a health promotion paradigm which, interstingly, Foucault's concept of biopower seeks to critique and deconstruct.

Segal (1994) argues that recent 'liberal' sexuality movements have produced discourses which serve to separate the connections between personal lives and politics from a sexual perspective. She argues that the dominant perspectives promoted by movements such as those for abortion access, gay rights, sex education and sexual autonomy have managed to abandon the formerly feminist enthusiasm for pleasure and desire which were present in the 1960s (Segal, 1994). Fine (1988) argues that a failure to assert agency through knowledge about desire and pleasure in young women effectively puts them at risk for various types of victimisation.

Berlant sees the fears around (what she describes as) an affective 'intimate pedagogy' to be in part, 'a professional/queer/feminist complaint about the pressures of managing

privilege' (1998: 143). She asserts that these pedagogical crises are 'not personal', but rather reflections of structural societal and political relations between and among people and nations (Berlant, 1998). Berlant asserts that feminist, anti-racism and anti-homophobia movements have served to homogenise oppressed experiences at the expense of a conceptualisation of individual pleasures and desires as well as notions of selfhood.

1.5.1 Sweden

Only 50 years span the difference between a total ban on 'fornication against nature' and the introduction of same-sex marriage legislation in Sweden (Rydström, 2003). Although it is perceived that attitudes towards homosexuality have become more accepting[61], homophobia persists (Danielsson et al., 2012)[62]. In 2012, Orre and Gäredal published an English summary of the results of their 2010 online survey on transgender sexual health needs. Most respondents expressed frustration regarding the lack of trans*-competent sexual health care services and reported having experienced a reluctance from health care providers in speaking with trans* patients about sexuality. The researchers argued a need for HIV prevention resources which are trans*-aware and inclusive (Orre and Gardal, 2012).

Bredström (2005) references Bolander's (2001) Swedish-language queer-feminist work on school-based sex education discourses in Sweden which found a strong tendency of heteronormativity as well as exclusions to representations of diverse gender and sexuality experiences. Bredström (2005) furthermore points out how most sexual health materials in Sweden neglect to educate on and deconstruct the ways in which norms of 'proper heterosexual' identities and behaviours pose challenges to young people's abilities to negotiate and practice safer sex. Reimers' (2007) study on Swedish teacher training demonstrated that LGBT experiences are presumed to exist outside of the classroom in question. Reimers (2007) argues that the concept of 'homotolerance[63]' underpins the

[61] With increased openness towards same-sex experiences comes increased instances of such, and one study found as high as 8% of the general population in Sweden to have experienced a same-sex sexual encounter (Danielsson et al., 2012).

[62] Young homosexual and bisexual people experience lower rates of mental health than the general population and are twice as likely to experience suicidal thoughts and attempts; those young LGB people who are harassed in school engage in more risk behaviours, including sexual risk behaviours (Danielsson et al., 2012).

[63] The concept of homotolerance constructs the highest aim for LGBT inclusion as one of 'tolerance', rather than acceptance or celebration (see also Røthing and Svendsen, 2010). A queer understanding of tolerance reveals that it is not necessarily a positive sentiment when one is on the receiving end, or 'being tolerated' (RFSL Ungdom, 2009).

Swedish national identity. A large and vocal grassroots activist movement in Sweden has been critically influential within sexuality education theory and pedagogical practices, though this phenomenon remains drastically under-researched (Bromseth, 2009).

1.5.2 Ireland

Kiely argues that gay advocacy groups were well positioned to expand upon the increased legitimacy that the 1993 decriminalisation of homosexuality had brought, and take part in the discussions on inclusion of sexual orientation within the sex education programme (Kiely, 2004). In 2000, O'Carroll and Szalacha published *A Queer Quandary*, highlighting issues with the Irish sex education programme implementation plan, particularly regarding concerns about sexual orientation. Gay and lesbian advocacy groups had unsuccessfully bid the Department of Education to have a voice in the development of the RSE programme, yet O'Carroll and Szalacha proceeded to obtain EU funding to commission research which focused on inclusion of material addressing sexual orientation in the sex education programme (Kiely, 2004)[64]. O'Carroll and Szalacha's (2000) research surveyed implementation of the RSE programme, and could not identify a single school which had both implemented RSE and addressed topics of sexual orientation. Mayock and Byrne's (2004) study of the sexual attitudes and behaviours of early school leavers found gay young people in the study reported having to depend almost exclusively on informal sources of information around sex and sexual health.

Kiely's 2004 unpublished PhD thesis used a poststructuralist approach to examine RSE curricular materials[65]. She found the resources to contain only a condensed portion of one lesson on sexual orientation, along with only brief portions on sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape and sexual abuse, so that all of the sexual dangers and perversions are relegated to one lesson (Kiely, 2004). Kiely found that the reader of the RSE curricular materials is presumed to be heterosexual, sexual relationships are confined to the context of marriage, the martial family is asserted as existing for the purpose of procreation, and any sexual expression or identity outside of these frames is constructed as marginal. Kiely

[64] Kiely's research (2004) reviewed correspondence between LEA, the Minister for Education and the RSE office, and elucidated that then-Minister Niamh Bhreathnach explained reasons for not engaging with gay and lesbian advocacy as being linked to the sensitive nature of negotiations around RSE policy and practice and the Department of Education's efforts to maintain key educational partners, referencing the various pressures from interest groups that she was experiencing as Minster with the introduction of RSE.

[65] Keily's study comprehensively examined curricular materials using a poststructuralist lens. As such, this thesis does not focus on curricular contents, but rather examines sex education more holistically (including many types of sex education) and does so from the perspective of professionals working in the field.

additionally revealed how the RSE guidelines are actually optional rather than compulsory, in order to allow variations in accordance with the religious 'ethos' of the particular school. In 2004, Norman surveyed Irish teachers about homophobic bullying and found '90% of teachers reported that their school's anti-bullying policy did not include any reference to (sexuality) related bullying... (and) 31% of teachers said that their school had failed to meet the requirement to put an RSE policy in place' (Norman, 2004: 7). Norman found that most teachers were unaware of any LGBT pupils at their school, and many reported hesitancy in dealing with homophobic bullying due to 'fear of a possible negative reaction from parents, other staff and pupils if they are seen to act to protect the pupil who is perceived to be lesbian or gay' (Norman, 2004: 10). In 2009, the *Supporting LGBT Lives* study of mental health and well-being of LGBT people by Mayock et al. was published, comprising data from 1,110 online surveys and 40 in-depth interviews with LGBT identified individuals aged 14-73 (with 35% aged 14-25). This study, along with several others conducted around the same time, found LGBT relevance in Irish sex education to be non–existent (Mayock et al., 2009; O'Higgins–Norman, 2009; Roe, 2010; Kiely, 2004; Drury Research, 2010).

1.5.3 Theoretical and Empirical Arguments

Puar's seminal text, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times,* defined homonationalism as 'historical and contemporaneous production of and emergent normativity, homonormativity, ties the recognition of homosexual subject, both legally and representationally, to the national and transnational political agendas of U.S. imperialism' (2007: 133). For Puar, the favourable association between LGBT rights and the national identity of some countries has become an increasingly widespread phenomenon globally. She argues that heteronormative assumptions underpin much of the advocacy work for increased recognition of LGBT experiences, and argues that it is critical to explore 'tolerance' discourses within campaigns for LGBT inclusive sexual health programmes and legislation. Feminist scholars have also critiqued medical and biological discourses about reproduction and pleasure as strongly heteronormative (Martin, 1991; Edelman, 2004; Segal, 1994). Blank's (2012) exploration into the history of heterosexuality argues that conceptualisations of 'straightness' are bound up with discourses of marriage and reproduction, and ignorant of gender diversity, including trans* and intersex experiences. Blank's work serves to destabilise the historically reified concept of heterosexuality. Fausto-Sterling's (2000) work interrogates the social construction of gender in-depth, and

the social and medical treatment of intersex people, arguing that widespread conceptions of biology have been largely ignorant of the true biological diversity of human gendered experiences.

Grey's (2013) research argues that schools (re)produce heteronormative discursive practices and, thereby, construct LGBT teachers and students as 'Other' within educational spaces. Education which focuses on diverse sexual realities and sexual pleasure challenges investment in what Edelman (2004) calls 'reproductive futurism' in sex education. In other words, as Epstein et al. assert, 'sexuality in the secondary school is still primarily a discussion about heterosexually imagined futures' (2003: 21). Rasumssen (2006) employs Foucault's (1978) concept of 'subjectivity' to examine sexuality within the educational setting. For Rasmussen (2006), the process of the student 'becoming subject' is inseparable from the discursive production of both sexual and gendered identities within the school setting. In Sedgwick's (1993) essay 'How to bring our kids up gay', she argues that the work of gay and lesbian movements to de-naturalise sexuality has actually served to solidify normative conceptualisations of gender. Sedgwick traces that the concept of homophobic bullying has strengthened alongside gay liberation activist work, and argues that young people subjected to these oppressions commonly suffer due to their inability to conform to normative gender roles rather than because of their sexual orientation. In her influential essay 'Thinking Sex', Rubin (1984) interrogated value systems which define certain manifestations of sexuality as 'good/natural' and others 'bad/unnatural'. She introduces the concept of the 'charmed circle' of sexuality, asserting that there is a societally sanctioned hierarchical value attributed to different sex acts and proposing that these systems of privilege must be interrogated and dismantled within a movement for sexual freedom.

1.6 Efforts and Pedagogies for Inclusion

Sweden has a growing body of sex education research that is informed by queer theory and feminism (Bromseth et al., 2009). Research on diversity inclusion in education in the Nordic context has increased substantially in recent years (Svendsen, 2013). These concepts and theories have only begun to be explored and utilised in Ireland in recent years (see also Devine, 2005; Bryan, 2008).

1.6.1 Anti-oppression

The notion of a universal Nordic welfare state system as a model of social progress has, according to some, become destabilised when concepts of racism and immigration are factored in (Mulinari and Neergaard, 2010). Mulinari and Neergard argue that 'diversity (rather than equality or social justice) became a cornerstone of migration policies in the 1990s' but that more recently 'multicultural policies are in retreat [and] at the same time neo-assimilationist policies are growing' (2004: 131-2). Bredström's (2008) book *Safe Sex, Unsafe Identities* discusses how the widely held conception of Sweden as sexually liberal and homogeneous, up until post–World War II immigration, works in tandem with the Swedish reputation as global 'gender equality' leaders to sustain the myth that Sweden is free from racism as well as patriarchy and sexism (see also Schmitt, 2009). Hagy's unpublished Bachelor's thesis (2013) conducted a postcolonial feminist discourse analysis of RFSU's international development materials and advocacy work. Her work analyses that the goals of international sexual health aid work has focused primarily on trying to empower females in postcolonial nations. She asserts that these efforts utilise discourses which serve to emphasise and construct religious and cultural differences in way that contributes to colonialism vis-à-vis globalisation. Hagy (2013) argues that the goals of RFSU sit in contradiction with the aims and actions of the welfare state.

A 2010 govermental report, *Sexual Rights: Sweden's Comprehensive Response to HIV/AIDS*[66] outlined efforts of the National Strategy Against HIV/AIDS and the Communicable Disease Act (CDA), asserting aims to halve new incidents of HIV by 2016. The document traced the HIV epidemic in Sweden as having been driven by MSM, with instances in intra-venous drug users (IDU) peaking in 2007, and stated that, since 2002, the majority of all instances have been found in immigrants to Sweden (Socialstyrelsen, 2010)[67]. The strategies take a rights based perspective, rooted in the assertion that everyone deserves equal access to information about their body and to sexual health services, but falls short of critiquing the norms and structures which give way to higher instances of

[66] This is the English-language title. This report was published by Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), along with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden (Regeringskansliet).

[67] Asylum seekers and their relatives must be offered HIV testing and counselling within two months of arrival in Sweden, and these must be offered within 6 months to individuals arriving from endemic areas. The strategy states that populations for targeted prevention efforts include MSM (men who have sex with men), IDU (intra-veneious drug users) and migrants, with information for the general population being targeted towards young people.

HIV amongst certain populations. Their 'rights-based' perspective could be interpreted as a 'blame' discourse, in the name of health promotion.

Bredström's (2005) article conducts a feminist discourse analysis in a case study of two HIV prevention leaflets targeting immigrants and refugees in Sweden. She theorises that 'gender equality' campaigns have served to strengthen perceived racial divides between 'Swedes' and 'immigrants'[68], constructing a binary between Swedish and immigrant sexual discourses which insinuates that following the Swedish way of life leads to safer sex[69]. Bredström cites Henriksson and Ytterberg's 1992 work which theorised that Sweden came to develop restrictive laws, like the Communicable Disease Act (CDA), through moralising discourses around 'proper sexuality' which helped to actually form the Swedish welfare system and social democratic state. Bredström (2005) asserts that 'immigrants' as a group are homogenised by national policy as well as by sexual health discourse, and argues that sex education information is delivered in a way which is condescending and perpetuates negative stereotypes meanwhile ignoring the nuances in knowledge bases and 'risk factors' among diverse groups. Bredström references Stefan Jonsson (2004) who argued that it is not easy to convince people that Sweden is a racist society because what has manifested is more of a 'cultural racism' which legitimises racial hierarchies in the name of social policy 'progress' and situates 'Otherness' in contrast to 'static' notions of non-Swedish cultural traditions (cited in Bredström, 2005: 523)[70]. Sweden's paradoxically named 'integrated school system' remains heavily segregated for those with intellectual or physical disabilities and 'socially deviant' pupils (Sejersted 2011, 274). Towns (2002) traces Sweden's history in becoming conceptualised internationally as 'gender equality' leaders and argues that the building of a 'gender-equal' state has coincided and relied upon conceptualisation of 'immigrants' as 'gender un-equal' 'Others'.

A research base focusing on intersectional inclusion within education and/or sexual health discourses has not yet emerged in Ireland, though research and resource materials on

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[68] It is important to clarify that the terms 'Swedes' and 'immigrants' are not those of Bredström or myself, but rather are reflections of terms used in the source materials examined by Bredström (2005).

[69] Bredström argues that rises in rates of HIV are implied as being associated with increases in immigration to Sweden, and that such associations and 'risk factors' rely on dubious sets of statistics, much in the way that early HIV/AIDS policy campaigns singled out and demonised gay men.

[70] Mulinari and Neergard (2004) argue that Swedish educational research widely contains strong influences of Bourdieu's theories, which understand schools as institutions that reproduce social discourses. They argue that class and gender have long been central categories of analysis within education, but that the intersections of these categories with notions such as ethnicity and sexuality are relatively new and remain under-researched (Mulinari and Neergard, 2004).

specific aspects of inclusion are increasing[71]. Devine (2005) traces immigration as a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland, and argues that the ways in which schools respond and adapt to a changing societal context has important implications for Irish society. She asserts that Irish State polices are underpinned by a specific conceptualisation of national identity which relies upon positioning minority ethnic groups as 'Other', and argues that these policies and discourses have direct implications for the inclusion of immigrant experiences in particular within schools (Devine, 2005).

McDonnell (2010) argues that Irish special education for young people with disabilities has prioritised the voices of 'experts' within a psychological and medicalised discourse, and has excluded the perspectives of people with disabilities. In 2012, the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme published a report examining the attitudes towards fertility, sexual health and motherhood among non-Irish national minority ethnic women aged 18-30 living in Ireland (Conlon et al.). This in-depth qualitative study found those participants who attended school in Ireland reported having received varying levels of sex education and participants reported sex education approaches as having been ineffective, resulting in many migrant women feeling uninformed and lacking skills to take charge of their sexual lives. Lack of knowledge around topics such as sexual health, contraception, self-esteem and self-care amongst young women were found to contribute to fears and risk-taking behaviour around sexuality (Conlon et al., 2012).

Røthing and Svendsen's (2010) study reviewed Norwegian textbooks, finding that conceptualisations of sexuality were linked to a specific set of constructions related to national identities, ethnicities and concepts of cultural diversity. Svendsen's (2013) PhD thesis argued that the Norwegian sex education model can be improved upon through increased teacher training and a critical pedagogy, as well as through sustainability of civil organisations which work to challenge societal norms. Ahmed (2008) constructs the vision of multiculturalism as a promise of happiness for an envisaged future which celebrates diversity. She argues, however, that a 'happy diversity' demands an interaction with the

[71] In 2004, the National Youth Council of Ireland published a support pack for addressing sexual health with young people in a youth work setting. This publication focuses on sex, sexuality, contraception, diversity, teenage pregnancy and sexual health facts as well as practical advice. The pack, unlike RSE support materials, discusses aspects of sexuality such as pleasure, sensuality, communication, stigma and identities. It strives to be inclusive of those with LGBT identities, members of the Traveller community and people living with HIV, for example. It is clear throughout the pack that there is a focus towards work which aims to prevent teenage pregnancy, and that the information is perhaps geared towards young people from 'at risk' or 'minority' groups, but the resource remains unique within Ireland as a sexual health resource which strives for intersectional inclusion.

'Other' alongside a shared loyalty to that which has already been positioned as a national ideal. Furthermore, Ahmed argues, happiness is promised to those 'Others' in exchange for their national loyalty. Ahmed's conceptualisations of diversity and happiness can be readily mapped onto the national discourses occurring within sex education pedagogies.

1.6.2 Intersectionality

Lorde (1984) set out to confront issues of racism within feminist thought, and argued that White[72] feminists simply reinscribed existing systems of racialised oppression. Lorde exposed underlying racism within feminist discourses and practices, explaining that these structures are unrecognised actors for the patriarchy. According to Collins (2004), inclusion of race, class and gender must be examined intersectionally, as viewing each issue separately serves to render many experiences of oppression invisible. Collins argues that, in an American context, the oppression of African-Americans will not be successfully resisted unless the oppressions within these movements, such as sexism and homophobia, are stopped. In the 1980s, sexual health movements in the United States were led primarily by White middle-class women, while the more disenfranchised communities of colour, immigrants and impoverished women most affected by restrictions on reproductive rights were not yet organised to advocate on their own behalves (Sillman et al., 2004). The multiple oppressions which compounded lack of access to services and information had not begun to be unpacked, examined or acknowledged as corroborating factors in individual reproductive landscapes (Smith, 2005). A 'reproductive justice' movement emerged from within these communities, and envisaged what an intersectional model of sexual health and reproductive rights might look like (Sillman et al., 2004). Reproductive justice deliberately names and recognises the intersectional ways in which aspects of positionality and identity such as race, religion, gender, class, economic status, marital status, sexuality and nationality are connected to the control, regulation and stigmitisation of bodies in a sexual health context (Cook et al., 2003)[73]. A reproductive justice model explicitly links together

[72] White is capitalised deliberately, in keeping with the feminist opinion that doing so signifies to the reader the cultural appropriations wrapped up in connotations of skin colour, also known a 'race'. Capitalisation disrupts the reader, causing one ot relect on how the societal meaning attached to race constitutes a status of 'proper noun'. See also hooks, 2014.

[73] Central aims of the movement include situating access to reproductive functions in a culturally and contextually specific milieu, fighting against population control and making visible the links between the right to have children and the right not to. It seeks to organise within race and ethnic lines in order to engage with other movements. It acknowledges the multiple ways that these oppressions function, and deliberately strives for services and campaigns which have been skilled in the areas of marginalised identities such as LGBT. For example, reproductive justice movements in the United States have recognised eugenics laws, immigration reform, refugee and asylum seeker conditions, sterilisation, targeted family planning and welfare

advocacy work for abortion access, LGBT rights and sex education, seeing sexual health as not isolated from other areas of inequalities.

In his (2002) book *Troubling Education*, Kumashiro argues that every educational endeavour simultaneously has the potential to be anti-oppressive and to reinstate or create oppression. He asserts that educators do not feel the need to address societal norms or structures of oppression within schools and argues that pedagogies which aim to target a particular group or identity often fail to address students who are marginalised in more than one way. This American study of anti-oppressive pedagogies reveals that educational efforts frequently serve only to 'educate about the Other', meanwhile upholding and leaving unquestioned the societal norms and structures which create these very oppressions (Kumashiro, 2002: 39)[74]. Freire (1970) proposed a pedagogy with a new relationship between teacher, student, and society. He utilised a Marxist class analysis to explore concepts of colonising within educational discourses and argued for a pedagogy which views students as co-creators of knowledge (Freire, 1970).

Somatechnics refers to technology, power, techniques, disciplines and other processes, all of which (in)form the body and (de)construct it (Sullivan, 2009)[75]. Sex education can be conceived to fit within a somatechnics paradigm in that the discourses contained within sex education pedagogies, approaches and modalities serve to simultaneously inform and construct sexual subjects. Frost (2001) traces the rise in eating disorders, self-harm and dysmorphic disorders among Western young women, and argues that these manifestations do not constitute experiences of only a sick few girls, but rather are the direct result of the definitions of women's bodies as promoted through dominant cultural discourses. Fine and others (Rasmussen, 2006; Kiely, 2005) argue that sex education curricula and pedagogies widely exclude mentions of desire, serving to construct sexuality as functional rather than a means of pleasure. For some (Ingham, 2005; Kiely, 2004), the prioritisation of a health promotion discourse leaves little space for education which seeks to promote bodily comfort, sexual communication and experiences of sex as pleasurable. Zembylas (2007) theorises that a pedagogy of desire could serve to reclaim the concept of pleasure from a

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restrictions as structural efforts for population control containing racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant, classist and cissexist[73] ideologies as core tenets (Cook, 2003).

[74] While Kumashiro's research influenced (and predated) the emergence of normcritical pedagogies in Sweden, his work is considered to focus on anti-oppressive education and might not be seen to be normcritical as such.

[75] Somatechnics is influenced by and works in tandem with Foucault's (1978) concept of 'biopower'.

purely repressive framework and mobilise creative and transformative forces within learning environments.

1.7 Sex Education in Sweden

The extent and frankness of sex education in Sweden is more pronounced than most other Western nations (Herlitz and Ramstedt, 2004). Feminist perspectives as well as queer inclusion have long and established histories, although room for improvement from these perspectives remains. From the beginning of the sex education movement in Sweden, the primary discourse about sexual readiness has been one of love; if the young person was in love and felt mature enough then a sexual relationship was seen as acceptable (Edgardh, 2002). In the past decade, however, gender differences in sexual debut have achieved a more even keel, and young people are less likely to report being in love as a prerequisite to engaging sexually (Edgardh, 2002). The 'Swedish model' of sex education is referred to globally, at times as a progressive beacon to aspire to (Boethius, 1985) and at other times as an overly-radical concept that could never be applicable elsewhere (Lottes and Weinberg, 1997). Sex education provision and content in Sweden is far from consistent or homogenous (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001; Ahlberg et al., 2001). Studies have shown that, although an array of topics[76] including feelings, emotions and sexual negotiations are mandated within the national curriculum, Ahlberg et al.'s (2001) study found many teachers to report only teaching facts about reproduction and the risks of unprotected sex.

Sweden's most recent official sex education curriculum guidelines were introduced in the mid-1990s, and not updated since (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001). Teacher training does not universally take place at a University level, though in some cases this is slowly emerging. Some NGOs offer optional training. 'Outside facilitation' is common, and is often conducted through RFSU and similar non-governmental organisations. Condoms are distributed for free in Youth Sexual Health Clinics, which are in every locale nation-wide (Edgardh, 2002). Uptake of youth clinics by girls far outweighs their attendance by boys, and girls often visit with the sole purpose of obtaining contraception (Ahlberg et al., 2001). RFSU's promotional and educational materials as well as website content display images of diversity in sexual situations, many of the images are comprised of same-sex couples,

[76] Menstruation, for example, aims to be addressed before girls reached age 10, and the topic of infant masturbation is intended to be discussed with very young children so that they do not develop shameful feelings around the topic (Boethius, 1985).

ambiguously gendered individuals, ethnic diversities, people with visible disabilities and drawings of people nude (Edgardh, 2002). Their resource materials include actual photographs of body parts and demonstrate diversity beyond tokenistic inclusion, though the approach taken in their international advocacy work has been critiqued as reproducing the colonising discourses that feminism has historically fought against (Hagy, 2013). Sweden's sexuality education also remains open, with no formal curricular materials as such[77] (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001).

In 2001, Skolverket, Sweden's National Agency for Education, conducted a comprehensive assessment of the school sex education programme and found the quality, focus and sources of provision to vary between and within schools, although this was underscored by finding that '*all* pupils in Swedish schools have lessons in sexuality and personal relationships' (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001: 9, *my emphasis*). In some cases the focus was more on biology, others relationships and dialogue, and still others focused on gender roles (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001). While no comprehensive assessment has occurred since, smaller NGO and academic reviews have been carried out (see Bäckman, 2003). The quality and consistency of sex education provision in schools is highly variable and, according to the National Agency for Education, efforts need to be implemented to improve this (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001). Although sex education has been compulsory for 50 years, a 2004 survey referenced by Danielsson et al. (2012) found that only half of teacher training programmes in Sweden include any course content on sex education and that only 6% of teacher training students receive specific instruction on how to teach sex education, meaning few newly qualified teachers have competence in this subject area.

1.8 Sex Education in Ireland

Irish sex education research widely deomstrates that school-based programmes focus on limited gender and relationship norms, privileging heterosexuality and providing narrow definitions of sex and relationships (Hyde et al., 2004; Kiely, 2004; Mayock, 2007). Teachers overwhelmingly admit fear around teaching sexuality (Mayock et al., 2007) and are reported by students as lacking the necessary skills to adequately instruct sex education (Roe, 2010). RSE lessons are reported as varied, inconsistent, deficient and widely regarded as 'too little too late' by young people (Hyde et al., 2004; Roe, 2010: 5). Research

[77] Rather, a set of guiding principles which aim for pupils' personal development and knowledge of topics including 'sexuality', 'personal relationships', 'gender equality' and 'self–esteem'.

evidence has also shown teenagers and young adults in Ireland to display high levels of sexual risk taking behaviour in general and low rates of condom use in particular (Mayock and Byrne, 2004; Layte et al., 2006). Evidence suggests that school 'ethos', and especially religious ethos, play roles in determining which information is communicated to students within the context of the RSE classroom (Mayock et al., 2007; Roe, 2010)[78]. The moral discourse of the Catholic Church has historically regulated sex and sexuality in Ireland, and its influence may still be seen today (Inglis, 1998; Stokes, 2010) alongside more secular-seeming influences at political and governmental levels (Kiely, 2004).

In Kiernan's unpublished thesis (1992), she highlighted the limitations with school sex education provision at the time (prior to RSE introduction) and welcomed the 'values clarification' approach used in the 1970s Life Skills programme[79]. Kiernan called for the introduction of a mandatory curriculum to be implemented in the Irish context. In 1995, the *Report of the Expert Advisory Group Report on Relationships and Sexuality Education* was published[80], outlining themes for both Junior (ages 12-15) and Senior Cycles (ages 15-18) which have set the tone for subsequent years of curricular development and practice in Irish classrooms. The report recommended that each school develop their own policy and practices in line with their 'ethos' and proposed a 'whole-school approach' with an integrated curriculum[81]. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment published RSE guidelines in 1996, which remain today as the guiding RSE document provided by the Department of Education[82]. In 1997, the Department of Education produced RSE Policy Guidelines which aimed to assist in the development of a RSE policies within schools. Pobal (an Irish NGO promoting social inclusion, reconciliation and equality) later recommend that a paragraph on sexual orientation be included and gave examples for

[78] Including, but not limited to, omissions from information provision related to condoms, contraception, non-marital sexual relationships, abortion and LGBT experiences.

[79] A school-based curriculum which taught on health and well-being but not sexuality.

[80] This document sought to outline the manner in which RSE policies and programmes could be developed and implemented. The government-appointed Group was comprised of a few teachers, parents, Department of Education employees and mental health professionals, and took submissions from a collection of interested parties and individuals.

[81] It set aims for a programme containing minimal content about sex and sexuality as such, with the primary focus rather being friendships, relationships, health, biological aspects of reproduction and developing attitudes towards sexuality within a moral and spiritual framework (Kiely, 2004). This report was published at a time when the introduction of sexuality education in Ireland was being hotly contested, and the report justified RSE's existence by citing national statistics and international research findings around earlier maturation and sexual activity in young people, health issues, family pressures, changing gender roles and increased influences from abroad permeating Irish culture.

[82] The guidelines designate three main themes for RSE: human growth and development, human sexuality, and human relationships. The guidelines for teachers of RSE modules briefly outlines five to six lesson descriptions and resource suggestions per year. RSE recommends that each school begin by developing their own policy on RSE given the specific 'needs' of the school, cultural contexts, and objectives which is approved by staff, parents and management.

including sexual minority students holistically and in a way that does not contradict school 'ethos' (Pobal, 2006). Mayock et al.'s (2007) study found that few, if any, schools take steps to include LGBT experiences.

The Crisis Pregnancy Programme published the first evaluation of the implementation of RSE in 2000, and found both teachers and parents to be overwhelmingly supportive for the existence of school-based sex education (Morgan, 2000). The study also found, discouragingly, significant problems and challenges in the implementation of RSE, with less than 30% of schools indicating they were implementing RSE in all classes, only 2/3 of schools having established an RSE policy committee and less than half of these having a finished RSE policy document in 1999, though these figures increased in 2000 (Morgan, 2000). Some influential factors have been identified as impacting implementation of sex education, one of which is gender, and Irish research consistently indicates boys are less likely than girls to receive sex education (Mayock et al., 2007; Mayock and Byrne, 2004; Morgan, 2000)[83]. Teacher selection and desire to teach RSE is also of influence, as well as timetabling, conflicting standards or targets and teachers' identification of the specific needs of young people in the community (Morgan, 2000; Mayock et al., 2007).

Between 2004 and 2007, Mayock et al. conducted the most comprehensive assessment of the challenges to full implementation of the RSE programme to date in Irish post primary schools (Mayock, 2007)[84]. The qualitative survey found that RSE was in many cases poorly implemented or not implemented at all, and generally lacked in consistency nationwide (Mayock et al., 2007). The researchers found gender norms and stereotypes to be embedded in all levels of the RSE programme, concluding that 'delivery of effective and appropriate sex education requires a grasp of the complexity of adolescent sexuality and its connections to gender and identity' (Mayock et al., 2007: 20). Mayock et al. (2007) found the RSE programme's lessons to be designed in a way which allows for sparse implementation, and teachers overwhelmingly admitted fear around addressing topics of sex and sexuality[85]. Teachers meet difficulty when requesting release for RSE training,

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[83] Over 30% of Irish schools are sex-segregated.

[84] This research, backed by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Department of Education, contained a quantitative survey with a representative sample of second level schools, qualitative interviews with government, national and regional level informants, a case study of individual schools including interviews and focus groups with principals, programme coordinators, teachers, parents and pupils, and individual interviews of outside facilitators. The research data included focus groups, observation, interviews and curriculum and policy analysis.

[85] Key barriers to implementation included the lack of 'supportive whole-school environment,' 'curricular and time constraints,' low status of SPHE[85] and 'perceptions of RSE,' 'teacher comfort with RSE,'

leaving instructors often untrained (Mayock et al., 2007). While the Catholic Church recognises that parents need the support of schools in educating their children about sex and sexuality, in any policy adopted by a Catholic school it is imperative that the school's core values and 'ethos' as defined by the Church are reflected (Mayock et al., 2007).

Mayock and Byrne's (2004) study of sexual health issues, attitudes and behaviours of early school leavers was conducted through qualitative interviews and focus groups with 41 young people aged 13-18. The research found participants generally reported that school-based sex education was inadequate, overly biological and did not address moral, social or emotional issues. Murphy-Lawless et al.'s (2004) study of sexually active women found participants to report that their experiences of RSE delivery had been inadequate, provided little information and was too biologically focused. Delegates to the Irish Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) published youth peer research examining local RSE implementation which echoed previously identified limitations, finding 'understanding sexual orientation' as the least emphasised theme (Roe, 2010). They highlighted, as Mayock et al.'s (2007) evaluation had, that schools themselves decide whether or not to teach RSE, but with exam subject pressures and teacher anxiety, this is rarely a priority (Roe, 2010).[86]

RSE guidelines recommend use of outside of school experts only as supplemental to the established programme[87]. In 2009, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency published a literature review on the use of outside facilitators in school-based sexuality education (de Vries et al.) which stated that 'outside facilitation' of RSE remains completely unregulated. Mayock et al.'s (2007) study found nearly 60% of Irish schools use only teachers within the school to deliver RSE, while almost all other schools provide RSE lessons from outside facilitators. In 2010, O'Higgins and Nic Gabhainn published results of a participatory research project which aimed to facilitate 394 young people aged 15-18 in Ireland to contribute their views towards sex education curriculum development as an academic

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'discrepancies in training,' 'teacher selection,' 'school ethos' and 'resources' among others (Mayock et al., 2007: 24-31).

[86] The study recommended a wider, more detailed and mandatory curriculum and improved teacher training (Roe, 2010).

[87] In addition to teacher-facilitated sex education, both Sweden and Ireland widely use outside facilitators to implement sex and sexuality education, despite the fact that both countries' formal sex education structure specifies that it is best taught in the classroom by the teacher. Outside facilitation in an Irish context is primarily done by the Catholic marital preparation organisation ACCORD, with some other facilitation being done by the Irish Family Planning Association, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and freelance instructors. In Sweden, most outside facilitation of sex education is done by local branches of RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education), but also by other organisations such as RFSL (The Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights).

journal article. The researchers used creative and interactive game-based facilitated methodologies which focused solely around issues of contraception and condom use, so it is perhaps not surprising that the findings of this research reproduced dominant discourses of priorities in sex education content on topics such as condoms and sexual health services. It is noteworthy that this is the only published study in Ireland to date which uses participatory research that aims to creatively facilitate the views of young people in relation to their *priorities* around sex education content, rather than facilitating their reflections on having received sexuality education. It is disappointing, in that context, that this study's structure, and its therefore findings are excessively heteronormative and condom-use-focused.

1.9 Sexual Health Research

The sexual health research base in Ireland is small and recent. It has been primarily limited to government-funded studies. Many government-funded studies are primarily concerned with conceptualisations of 'risk' within a health promotion paradigm. The sexual health research in Sweden is expansive, but most studies have been published only in the Swedish language. A sufficient body of relevant English-language Swedish academic research, underpinned by a variety of theoretical perspectives, has been published in more recent years, however.

1.9.1 Ireland

Hyde and Howlett's (2004) qualitative study on teenage sexuality was conducted through focus groups with 226 school-aged pupils and found that up to one third of school-goers aged 16 may be sexually active, but that sex education delivery to be reported as varied, inconsistent and too little too late by young people[88]. In 2006, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency published a major study entitled The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships (ISSHR) (Layte et al.). The rationale behind the study was that previous research had focused on attitudes towards sexuality in the Irish context, but to date a comprehensive study on sexual behaviours had not been conducted[89]. The study found 21% of men and

[88] Young women, in particular, reported experiencing subtle or overt sexual pressure and may defer decisions about sexual health to the pressuring partner, concluding that conventional beliefs about femininity create barriers to sexual safety for young women (Hyde and Howlett, 2004).

[89] At the survey launch, its design was questioned and problematised for having a disproportionate focus on heterosexual relationships; gay and lesbian relationships were included but are discussed separately to

12% of women first experienced heterosexual vaginal intercourse before they were 17, with some initiating sexual activity at age 12 or 13 (Layte et al., 2006)[90]. The survey found 44% of respondents to report having received no sex education at all, while the remaining 56% received some form of sex education, and women were more likely than men to have received sex education in a formal setting (Layte et al., 2006)[91].

For their 2010 Annual Report, the Irish Family Planning Association (hereafter, IFPA) conducted a survey of their clinic clients under age 18, and highlighted their findings in relation to the ambiguous legal status of young people under age 16 when prescribing contraception. Irish law dictates the Age of Medical Consent as 16, yet this is complicated by an Age of Sexual Consent of 17. The IFPA (2011) found that this ambiguity gives rise to medical professionals refusing to prescribe contraception, including emergency contraception, to young people under age 17 and, at times, reporting consensual sexual relationships between people under age 17 as criminal acts to the Gardaí (Irish police force)[92]. Nixon et al.'s (2010) study examined attitudes and behaviours around sexuality in relation to masculinity in young men coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This qualitative study conducted focus groups and interviews and found the majority of the young men experienced sexual debut prior to age 17, with one third prior to age 13[93]. Most of the participants were unaware of sexual health services available, and the researchers found the young men's lack of willingness to discuss intimate issues had led to lack of access to services, non-usage of condoms and contraception, and poor engagement with sex education (Nixon et al., 2010). Lohan et al.'s (2012) study on adolescent males' attitudes and decision making in relation to unplanned pregnancy. The researchers found a primarily positive response from young men in relation to taking responsibility in the event of an unplanned pregnancy, and supporting the pregnant partner through their options[94].

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heterosexual experiences, and bisexual and transgender realities were invisible or left unexamined due to a survey structure which did not facilitate these experiences to emerge as distinct.

[90] The age range of the 7,668 respondents to the study was a minimum of eighteen, so much of the data is not relevant to an exploration of youth sexuality, however the survey collected data in relation to previous experiences of sex education.

[91] The most common type of sex education received was reported to be basic biological information on heterosexual intercourse, with topics of feelings, emotions and relationships to have been the least emphasised.

[92] The IFPA (2011) report proposed that young people under age sixteen may be able to give their consent to medical treatment on the basis of maturity and a presumption that their parents or guardians will usually be involved.

[93] Less than one-third had used condoms during their most recent sexual intercourse, with reasons varying but focused much around alcohol usage and status of the relationship or perceptions about the partner.

[94] The study made recommendations that the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) curriculum be reviewed and updated in order to better address the needs of young men in relation to unplanned pregnancies (Lohan et al., 2012).

Research into sex education and sexual health services within the Irish context has not yet embraced the use of queer or feminist analysis, or comprehensively explored the concept of inclusive sex education.

1.9.2 Sweden

Ahlberg et al.'s (2001) small qualitative comparative study interviewed young people aged 16-18 in Kenya and Sweden. Their results found the young people in Sweden to have far fewer problems discussing their sex lives in a focus group setting (Ahlberg et al., 2001)[95]. Despite a comprehensive system of Youth Sexual Health Clinics and a 'sexually liberal' society with steadily decreasing rates of teenage pregnancy, a 2002 report by Edgardh elucidated that Chlamydia rates were on the rise and connected this finding to the economic downturn and associated reduction in sex education provision in tandem with the changing circumstances and societal 'scripts' surrounding sexual debut for young people[96]. In 2004, Herlitz and Ramstedt published findings from their longitudinal quantitative questionnaire-based study conducted between 1989 and 2003 on sexual attitudes, behaviour and risk in Sweden. Perhaps not surprisingly, they found the prevalence of multiple partners and casual sex increased over time, whereas agreement with the statement 'sexual intercourse should only take place in a stable relationship' decreased over time (Herlitz and Ramstedt, 2004)[97]. In 2002, Häggström-Nordin et al. published findings from their 1999 questionnaire-based multiple choice survey with first year high school students in Sweden that aimed to investigate sexual behaviours and attitudes, and then compared the results with similar studies conducted in 1979 and 1989. Their results showed almost half of students surveyed had experienced 'intercourse' (their term), which translated to no decrease in age of sexual initiation over the two decades. Many of the studies referenced contain strong heteronormative bias, focusing on 'sexual intercourse' and 'condom use' (Herlitz and Ramstedt, 2004: 220) which undoubtedly skews results.

Sydsjö et al.'s (2006) quantitative study surveyed 206 young people in three cohorts between the ages of 13 and 25 which examined knowledge of anatomy and physiology of

[95] The Swedish young people rarely negotiated sexual risks or preferences in advance of a sexual encounter, though they were concerned with some risks (eg. pregnancy and Chlamydia), HIV was perceived as unrealistic (Ahlberg et al., 2001).

[96] It has more recently been found that this increase is in line with comparable data available in other European countries (Danielsson et al., 2012).

[97] Also during that time period, risk behaviour in relation to HIV/AIDS increased and attitudes became more accepting towards casual sex; HIV infections in Sweden are low by global standards and have remained consistent since the 1980s (Danielsson et al., 2012).

reproduction and fertility. The study found that knowledge levels tended to be higher in older age groups, among women and in young people who had visited Youth Sexual Health Clinics[98]. Over half of respondents reported not having received adequate information on reproductive issues, and the survey concluded that younger respondents were not achieving the level of sexual health and reproductive knowledge that is dictated in national curriculum for students by the time they complete 9th grade (Sydsjö et al., 2006). The Sydsjö et al. study recommended a need to update and strengthen school curricula in relation to sexology, to increase teacher training on these topics and to make regular reviews and evaluations of national sex education content and delivery (Sydsjö et al., 2006).

Ekstrand et al.'s (2011) waiting-room survey was conducted with 225 female patients aged 12-25 at youth and student health clinics in one medium and one large Swedish city. They found that 97% of participants had received some sex education in school, though this varied in content and quality but 60% felt that biological aspects had been sufficiently covered (Ekstrand et al., 2011). Topics of sexual assault, sexual harassment, pornography, abortion, emergency contraception, fertility and pregnancy were reported by the majority of participants as having been insufficiently addressed in school. Younger respondents reported having received more adequate information on contraception and LGBT experiences than older respondents had. Researchers recommended a greater emphasis be placed on sexual diversity and teacher training (Ekstrand et al., 2011).

In 2012, Danielsson et al. published an analysis of Sweden's 2009 *Public Health Report* from a sexual and reproductive health perspective. Youth clinics in Sweden fulfil a useful function for young people; in the last three months of 2005-2006, 23% of women and 4% of men aged 16-26 had visited a youth sexual health clinic (Danielsson et al., 2012)[99]. More than 76% of girls and 98% of boys in the third year of Swedish upper-secondary schools (age 18) had at some time viewed pornography, and young people – boys in

[98] Most respondents knew about Chlamydia, but knowledge was poor in relation to other STIs, and the researchers discussed how knowledge levels which have been replicated by multiple studies have not translated into downturns in numbers of cases of Chlamydia (Sydsjö et al., 2006).

[99] They found condom use has not increased while rates of Chlamydia continue to rise, irrespective of sexual orientation (Danielsson et al., 2012). In 2006, 96% of pregnancies among young people aged 15-17 ended in abortion, and this figure was 76% for those aged 18-19 (Danielsson et al., 2012)[99].

particular – reported obtaining much of their sexual learning through viewing porn (Danielsson et al., 2012)[100].

Lindén's (2011) work uses feminist discourse analysis to explore the ways in which Sweden's recent HPV[101] vaccine campaigns produce new 'healthy' girl subjectivities through their gendered discourses. She argues how such campaigns rely upon and simultaneously produce new notions of adolescent subjectivity which are nationalised and highly gendered, heterosexualised notions of empowerment, risk and responsibility. Lindén (2011) argues that this type of encouragement of populations to assume responsibility for preventative health measures in an era of increased biomedicalisation is quintessentially Swedish, pointing to how a wider construction of 'Swedishness' is based in part on a historical governmental and societal concern with health promotion and intervention. She concludes that the HPV campaigns appeal to the freedom of the individual meanwhile constructing new norms about health, responsibility and girlhood.

1.10 Discussion

A research base on adolescent sexuality and sex education in the Irish context has only emerged in recent years and has primarily focused on arguing for the existence and full implementation of sex education. Sexual health research from Ireland has analysed policy discourses and reported narratives and statistics regarding the sexual lives of adolescents. Some of these studies have used, in part, feminism and related theories such as poststrucutralism to evaluate materials and practice (Kiernan, 1992; Kiely, 2004; Kiely, 2005; Mayock et al., 2007). There has been no research conducted in the Irish context that examines good practice in sexuality education, or that focuses on investigating narratives of professionals working in this field. My work is the only published research in Ireland that examines discourses in narratives of sexuality education using an explicit queer and feminist theoretical frame (see also Sherlock, 2012).

A use of queer and feminist theories within sex education research opens up possibilities for contemplating gender and sexuality confidence and equality, as well as for theorising

[100] Many young people describe porn as simultaneously exciting and disguising and report being inspired by porn to try certain sex acts; those who watch porn report increased experiences of oral and anal sex than those who do not watch (Danielsson et al., 2012). Young people also report being influenced regarding their body image by what they see exhibited in porn, and that porn confirms stereotypical sex roles and proscribes societal norms which can promote bodily insecurity (Danielsson et al., 2012).

[101] HPV = human papillomavirus

an intersectionally inclusive pedagogy. With a current body of research which repeatedly calls for LGBT awareness and inclusion, one might presume that sex education classroom experiences might have progressed on these fronts over recent years. Unfortunately, the most current research continues to find that Irish curriculum and sex education practices fall short of comprehensively and practically addressing the identified needs of young people.

Much of the research literature written in English on the situation of sexuality in Sweden differs significantly in discourse between those written by Swedish and non-Swedish authors. This is something I remain mindful of within my own work, in that I might now or in the future unwittingly reproduce this very dilemma. Historical works written by researchers positioned in institutions 'outside' of Sweden tend to gloss over the nuances of Sweden's sexually progressive reputation and policies, and to overlook intricacies that might contradict their sweeping generalisations of 'sex-liberal' Sweden. For example, United States-based Lottes and Weinberg's (1997) comparison of sexual coercion amongst university students in Sweden and the United States claimed that Swedish men and women enjoy equal rights within sexual experiences and that few double standards exist between the sexes; these are claims which I am doubtful would be made today by a researcher in Sweden, let alone in 1997. The 1985 article written by Boethius, also based in an American institution, similarly discussed Sweden's introduction of sex education as well as curriculum content and policy in a way which did not problematise any of its discourses, but rather upheld them as models and explained their emergence in a simplistic way which did not elucidate the drawbacks or challenging contradictions which have been ever-present in Sweden's history of sexuality. Furthermore Inglis's (1998) work made a brief comparison of sex education in Sweden and Ireland and held Sweden up as a beacon of progressiveness and sex liberalism. It is only those researchers based in Swedish institutions, such as Bredström (2005 and 2008), Rydström (2003 and 2010) Lindén (2011) and Mulinari and Neergaard (2010) who delve into the aspects which paint Sweden in a less-than-favourable light, illuminating anti-immigrant sentiments, gendered notion of Swedish nationalism and LGBT 'tolerance' discourses[102].

International research has examined 'good practice' in sexuality education, but only from a (often quantitative) health-promotion perspectives, not from a qualitative analysis of

[102] This may also be a reflection of these particular researcher's theoretical perspectives which are feminist, queer, poststructuralist and/or Marxist.

discourses viewed from a queer and feminist theoretical lens. The concept of 'good' and 'inclusive' practice in sex education has not been explored in any of the English-language research in either country, and the narratives of those who have made a career out of sex education work have also been previously unexplored. Much of the existing research on sexuality and sex education in Ireland, Sweden and internationally contains hetero- and cisnormative bias in that respondents are often presumed to be heterosexual and almost always presumed to be cisgender. Research on sexuality and sex education which does not account for diverse experiences results in a silencing of these perspectives and serves to further the invisibility of (for example) LGBT, migrant and disabled bodies and sexual realties, to name but a few.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives

Throughout findings chapters of this thesis, qualitative narrative data collected from interviews with sexuality education professionals in Ireland and Sweden are analysed through queer and feminist lenses. Queer destabilises binary assumptions often associated with gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Sullivan, 2003). Queer is used in this study as a fluid practice of enquiry to intersectionally interrogate and expose structures which influence notions such as identities, inclusion and oppression. A postmodern and poststructuralist approach to research results in a design, methodological model and presentation of findings which is unique, innovative and specific to this project (Browne and Nash, 2010).

This chapter introduces the foundational perspectives and theoretical lenses underlying this project. It explores the theoretical concepts of queer, queer theory, feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, inclusion, intersectionality and critical pedagogy. This chapter aims to provide the reader with a broad understanding of queer and feminist epistemologies, justify their use within this project and explain the ways in which they are applied within the analytical findings chapters of this thesis.

2.1 Queer

To describe queer would be paradoxical to its aim of constantly fluidly escaping tangibility and ownership (Sullivan, 2003). Queer functions as a deconstructive practice, which I use to interrogate 'norms' and ideas around identities, bodies, sexuality and becoming sexualised (see also Plummer, 2003). Queer methods and strategies are grounded in a critical engagement and aim to actively challenge identity categories; queer sees identity categories as constructed, unstable, and containing much less meaning than widely attributed to them by society (Jagose, 1996). Queer escapes ownership and is fluid, ever moving, mutating, changing and challenging. It simultaneously re-iterates, re-claims and re-creates itself; its force and uniqueness is in part intertwined with a name reminiscent of past degradation (Butler, 1993).

Queer represents an attitude of enquiring as opposed to a defined method (Sullivan, 2003). Queer's definition and uses are, by very definition, unstable and ever-changing (Watney, 1994). Queer strives to expose assumptions, binary logic and power structures that are packaged as 'normal' (Warner, 2000). The possibilities for using queer and its derivatives are endless (Sullivan, 2003). Queer can be used as a verb to mean a doing ('to queer' something), a position, a methodological framework or a performance (Butler, 1993: 229). Queer can be a noun, as in queer theory, or as in a being, an identity category that – in its usage – somewhat resists identity categories. Queer can be an adjective, to be used in describing just about anything (Butler, 1993).

Queer sees identity categories, such as gay, lesbian and straight, as reductive, singular and reproductions or copies which are 'performed' socially by institutions as well as individuals (Butler, 1990). Queer's resistance to categorisations is grounded in a theoretical striving for inclusion, a recognition that identity categories do not perfectly describe our diverse embodied realities (Plummer, 2003). Queer approaches strive for complete inclusion, while recognising the inevitable failure of ever wholly achieving this (Gamson, 1995). It criticises structuralist theoretical and methodological approaches, viewing structural thinking as limited, generalising and containing unrecognised bias (Jagose, 1996; Culler, 2007). Queer criticises one of its most direct influences, gay and lesbian theories, for (re)producing copies of oppressive societal norms rooted in patriarchal logic, resulting in exclusions despite the fact that these approaches purport to work for inclusion (de Lauretis, 1991).

Queer may be used to achieve an umbrella terminology for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex and asexual, to name but a few (Rotello, 1997). Some queer theorists (Halperin, 1995; Anzaldúa, 1987) criticise the 'umbrella' usage of queer to represent the LGBT+ acronym, arguing that, when used in this way, queer serves to homogenise a diverse group and purports to achieve an idea of utopia, which queer would argue is impossible. Some other queer theorists (Jagose, 1996; Bernstein and Taylor, 2005) consider queer to be 'anti-identity' or 'post-identity'[103]. As queer resists proscription, it may be used as a lens or form of inquiry, or the wider methodological basis and research design of a project may be 'queered' to whatever extent this is possible (Jakobsen, 1998;

[103] Sullivan (2003) argues that 'anti-identity' theorists and activist movements essentially leave queer undefined or indefinable. Queer embraces its imperfections, recognising that intentions behind its reclamation do not resonate with all whom it seeks to represent; some groups and individuals assert they have been effectively excluded by queer's shortcomings or its very attempt to avoid exclusions (Arondekar, 2005).

Browne and Nash, 2010)[104]. Queer theories and queer research have political agendas of exposing socially imbedded power structures[105] (Jagose, 1996), societal norms and oppressive sexual discourses (Butler, 1990) in an effort to invoke shocking revelations and instigate societal change (Kirsch, 2002). Outlets for queer 'disruption' are often creative and non-traditional, as anything 'mainstream' would be antithical to queer.

2.1.1 Queer Theory

As a field and academic discipline, queer theory emerged in the 1990s from feminism, gay and lesbian studies, poststructuralism and deconstruction (Sullivan, 2003; Jagose, 1996; Plummer and Stein, 1994)[106]. Butler (1990) and Sedgwick (1993) were among the first 'queer theorists', most of whom closely followed and drew from the work of Foucault (1970). The HIV/AIDS crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s set the stage within American activist movements for queer to be used as a form of political resistance, particularly in relation to mainstream discourses around gay sexualities and AIDS (Sullivan, 2003)[107]. Homophobic and heteronormative societal discourses increased as the HIV epidemic worsened (Parker, 2002). Queer theory provided a framework through which angry HIV/AIDS activists could deconstruct, theorise and act (DeLuca, 1999).

Queer theory interacts through dialogue and questioning, encouraging as many interpretations of ideas as there are recipients of information (Butler, 1993; Edelman, 2003). Queer theory is fluid and ever-evolving, impossible to adequately or concretely 'pin down' (Sullivan, 2003). It can often be better described by what it 'does' as opposed to what it 'is' (Jakobsen, 1998). Queer theory works to question binary logic and privileging, sometimes purporting to be a site for unity in identity or positionality, while recognising that unity under the term may erroneously assume its tangibility (Sullivan, 2003). Activist traditions argue that empowerment can be achieved through seizure of language, and assert that the word 'queer' derives its power precisely from its history of abjection (Sullivan, 2003; see also Muscio, 2002). Regulatory institutions which support and construct

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[104] For example, queer can challenge assumptions through narratives from individual lives as well as through critique of discourse in larger sexual worlds (Valocchi, 2005; Spargo, 1999; Halberstam, 2005).
[105] Such as the patriarchy and heteronormativity.
[106] De Lauretis (1991) coined the term, and later separated herself from it as it began to be taken up by more mainstream academic movements which the term was intended to be used to separate from.
[107] For example, US President George H. W. Bush was reported to have likened people with AIDS to car crash victims who refuse to wear seatbelts (Anonymous, 1991).

heteronormativity have been made visible by the use of queer theory (Sullivan, 2003)[108]. Queer theory argues that heterosexuality is produced, reproduced and celebrated in social practice, cultural outlets and other widespread and accepted discourses (Butler, 1990)[109].

Queer as a theory employs Foucault's (1970) argument that sexuality and identities are socially constructed. Queer theorists[110] furthered Foucault's theories and merged them with gay and lesbian studies to produce queer theory as an inclusive, mutable and temporal theory which deconstructs notions of normativity and fixed identities (McLaughlin, 2003). Queer theory incorporates Derrida's (1984) deconstruction - a stripping away of that which we come to see was constructed in the first place – an opening up and exposing of binary oppositions and 'the Other' in society and language. For Jagose (1996), queer theory is ongoing, inconsistent, fluid and engaged. Halperin defines it as 'whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant… identity without an essence' (1995: 62). For Smith, queer theory encourages a 'radical questioning of social and cultural norms, notions of gender, reproductive sexuality and the family' (1996: 280). Queer theory inspires new ways of meaning, thinking, researching, educating and acting politically.

Rooted in postmodernism and poststructuralism, queer theory seeks to deconstruct the historical, cultural and discursive roots of identity categories. Queer as a method of inquiry opens up conceptualisations of sexuality and gender, meanwhile acknowledging their inseparability from other identities such as ethnicity, class, age, religion, dis/ability and more (Rosenblum, 1994; Collins, 2000). Rather than focusing on specific 'categories' of populations, queer challenges the very distinctions which categorise and sees such categories as containing power which is embodied through discourse (Creswell, 2007). Even the term 'queer research' appears oxymoronic indeed such paradoxes and ironies are the intent of queer theory; to expose such contradictions but to proceed creatively with radical critique regardless (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009). Queer turns the inquiry and the research process itself on its head, exposing taken for granted assumptions (Browne and Nash, 2010). In doing so, queer has been known to give preference to the 'deviant', to

[108] Queer theory has given rise to conceptualisations of heterosexist institutions such as heteropatriarchy (Valdes, 1996), compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990) and the straight mind (Wittig, 1992).
[109] Homosexuality is seen to be forced by society to conform to the position of as an abject 'Other' within a homo/hetero binary (McLaughlin 2003).
[110] Such as Butler, 1990; Edelman, 2004; Halperin, 1994; Sullivan, 2003; Smith, 1996; Jagose, 1996; Garber, 2001; Hall, 2003.

overemphasise the traditionally underemphasised, and to remain mindful of insider/outsider perspectives and privilege (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Queer theory, for the purpose of this thesis, is implemented as a deconstructive practice, one which perpetually interrogates concepts such as sexual identities and sex acts as taken for granted norms (Butler, 1990). It self-reflexivity questions, probes rather than prescribes and turns scenarios upside down to critically evaluate their constructedness and expose that which might be seen as 'natural' or 'normal'. Queer theory recognises that we do not actually know precisely what identity categories mean, and exploses binary oppositionings as sources of meaning and power (Butler, 1991). McLaughlin argues that norms are fragile, and require the existence of the so-called 'deviant' or 'Other' in order to be considered legitimate (2003, 141). Queer theory is used as a foundational critical lens through with to locate, gather and interpret research data, while recognising the sometimes contradictory nature of attempting to do so (Browne and Nash, 2010).

2.2 Feminism

Queer theory, in many ways, stemmed *from* feminism and some feminists, such as Martin (1994), argue that a rush to distinguish the two sometimes blurs the ways in which gender remains the primary construct for oppression according to both theories. Despite the fact that queer theory is effectively an offshoot of feminism's groundbreaking, the two have historically had theoretical battles and infighting (Elliot, 2012)[111]. Feminism is a diverse concept, there are as many types of feminism as there are feminists (Brah, 1991). For many feminists, sexuality operates around gender relations rather than other frameworks (Elliot, 2012). Some feminists, however, have interpreted transgender experiences as replicating male and hetero oppressions and hierarchies (Raymond, 1994; Jeffreys, 1997). Some theorists and activists, such as Rubin (1980) and Vance (1984), criticise aspects of feminism for conceiving gay male desire as oppressive, and argue that certain feminists are hesitant to speak of sexual pleasures due to the perceived conflicts this might elicit from those engaged in activism against sexual violence (Duggan, 1993).

Feminism is an umbrella term used for a variety of political, theoretical and social movements or endeavours concerned with exposing sexism and aimed towards increasing

[111] Many academics and activists, however, assert staunch adherence to both simultaneously, despite what some see as their inherent contradictions (Garber, 2001).

equal rights and opportunities socially, politically, economically and culturally for women and girls (hooks[112], 2000). As with queer, the term feminism can be used to describe an identity or a theory (Scholz, 2010). In research, feminism may be used as a critical theory and also as a research methodology, and this study uses feminism for both of these purposes (Stanley and Wise, 1983). Feminism takes a gender analysis as central, and uses a specific focus on oppressed gender experiences (Allen and Baber, 1992). For some, this analysis is based upon notions that there are inherent or essential characteristics defining what it means to be a woman (Greer, 1984), and for others, feminism is more of a critique on the social structures and cultural norms which place women and girls in opposition to, and as 'less-than' men and boys (Scholz, 2010). This project incorporates the later, social constructionist view in tandem with a queer analysis which recognises those with transgender identities, non-binary genders or gender identities or expressions outside of other the cisgender male/female binary as oppressed experiences included within feminist analysis (Heyes, 2003).

Feminist activist movements have campaigned, for example, for women's suffrage, reproductive rights, and equal pay; and have opposed domestic violence and sexual assault (Scholz, 2010). Not all feminist movements or feminists themselves agree with one-another on these, or indeed other, policies and aims (hooks, 2000). Some theorists reject the use of feminism simply because of the multiple ways it has been used (Scholz, 2010)[113]. While some feminists embrace feminism's arguable multiplicity, others, such as hooks (2000), see the increasing number of interpretations of feminism to mean politics has been 'slowly removed' from feminism. This research sees feminism as an overtly political project aimed at revealing and dismantling oppressive structures (hooks, 2000).

A unified history of feminism is difficult to pinpoint, as many movements working for 'women's rights' (historically and today) resist naming themselves as feminist; meanwhile the aims and objectives of these individuals and movements could be seen to encapsulate the aims and objectives of feminist work (DuBois, 1999). Modern Western feminist movements are often categorised into 'waves'. 'First wave feminism' is usually used to describe the women's suffrage movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the

[112] Feminist author bell hooks intentionally spells her name without capital letters, as a method of subverting power and in an effort to encourage the reader to focus on her words rather than on her name (see hooks, 1989).

[113] Many different 'strands' of feminism have defined specific goals and objectives, often in tandem with other theoretical perspectives or activist movements.

West (Banks, 1986). While most of these efforts were concerned with obtaining women's right to vote, other campaigns for women's rights were emerging during that time. 'Second wave feminism' is widely considered to have begun in the 1960s, and was largely concerned with achieving equal rights and ending discrimination (Baxandall and Gordon, 2002). It was during this wave of feminism that sexist power structures came under scrutiny. Second wave feminism is also widely associated with the sexual revolution in the West, and the related movements for sexual freedoms and reproductive rights which continue to present day (Gerhard, 2001). Second wave feminism, in particular, has been criticised as being too White, western and middle class focused. These critiques have led to newer strands of feminism, such as black feminism which emerged in the 1970s in the US, which see various grounds of marginalisation to be inextricably bound to one another, giving rise to the concept of intersectionality (Lorde, 1984; Collins, 2000). In many ways, the theoretical mindset of second wave feminism continues to fight against these struggles using similar tactics today. As such, second wave feminism coexists with third wave feminism, which could be described as a reaction or backlash to the former (Mann and Huffman, 2005; Gillis et al., 2007). Third wave feminism is widely perceived to have began in the 1990s, and sought to challenge essentialist notions of gender and classist or racist exclusions made through second wave feminism (Henry, 2004)[114].

2.2.1 Feminist Theories

Like queer theory, feminist theories expose cultural norms as constructed rather than essential, specifically interrogating power and inequalities through a gender lens. Feminist theories acknowledge patriarchal influences and gender inequalities as unquestioned contributions to the marginalisation of women and girls (McRobbie, 2009). Social constructionist interpretations of feminism examine gender as a system of compulsory practice, an unquestioned assignment which becomes an embodiment of cultural norms, re-iterated and repeated, always held up against a fictional and unachievable 'perfection' of the two-gender binary system (Bornstein, 1994; Weingarten, 1991). When used in tandem with queer theory, feminism has provided the scope and the tools necessary for taking gender analysis further than the two-gender binary system (Weed and Schor, 1997)[115].

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[114] Another follow-on from second wave feminism is what has been described as 'post-feminism', a belief that the goals of second wave feminism have been achieved, and posing criticism to the aims of the third wave (McRobbie, 2004).

[115] Some feminists, however, see the categories of femininity and masculinity as natural and essential, and rely upon this binary as the core tenant of their theoretical perspective (Greer, 1984; see also Fuss, 2013).

Feminist theories emerged from feminist political movements, and may be applied to nearly every area of academic discipline (Lorber, 2001). Feminist theories aim to understand and critique gender inequalities, social and political relations, power, sexuality, oppression, discrimination and patriarchy (Connell, 1985; Firestone, 1970). When adhering to a feminist theoretical framework, it is important to distinguish how this is interpreted and in which way it is applied to a piece of research[116]. The ideologies most closely aligned with this research could be those connected to the other frameworks used, namely postmodern feminism, poststructuralist feminism and queer feminism (Sylvester, 1994; Sands and Nuccio, 1992). This research views and perceives the tenets of feminism through a queer, postmodern and poststructuralist framework. As this research has aims of exploring good and inclusive sex education, it also adheres to a sex positive feminist ideology[117]. Lastly, this work provides a gender critique within the spirit of transfeminism[118], a strand of feminist thought which is knowledgeable of and actively works against ideas of a two-gender binary system (Califia, 1997; Koyama, 2003; Serano, 2009).

Many strands of feminism attempt to engage critically with notions of identity such as class, ethnicity, religion, age, dis/ability, class, sexual orientation, gender and other areas of potential marginalisation (Davis, 2008)[119]. Following on from the poststructuralist tenets of queer theory, this work takes an intersectional approach to identity and, in particular, the ways in which discourses of identity more broadly, and of gender specifically (Collins, 2000). Power, societal relations, sexualities and other inequalities are interrogated while focusing more broadly on gender politics. This research work recognises that identities are

[116] Numerous movements and ideologies have emerged from a feminist frame of reference, such as radical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, lesbian feminism, anarcha-feminism, separatist feminism and eco-feminism.

[117] A view on sexuality which celebrates diversity, desires and sexual choices based on consent (Glick, 2000). A sex positive feminist movement emerged as a reaction to anti-pornography feminism which put pornography at the centre of the fight for gender equality (see also Dworkin, 1985). Sex positive feminism began as a grass-roots movement to critique the patriarchal control of sexuality (see also Dodson, 1974; Rubin, 1984; Califia, 1981) while maintaining pleasurable sex itself as a positive goal, striving to reclaim sexuality as something to be enjoyed everyone, with a particular emphasis on those individuals not identifying as cisgender men.

[118] Transfeminism (Califia, 1997) can be described as the application of transgender discourses and analysis to feminism, or vice versa. Transfeminism questions the gender system, critiques notions of biological sex divisions, and insists that transgender experiences of all types must be actively included in feminist movements for gender equality (see also Bornstein, 1994; Serano, 2009).

[119] Many feminists, for example, have come to view sexism, racism, class oppression, heterosexism, cissexism and able-ism as interacting intersectionally to compound the oppression (Kumashiro, 2002).

multiple, fluid, and rarely represented adequately by attempting to categorise, separate or provide structures for understanding this intersectionality.

Adhering to a feminist ethics of research requires transparency and self-disclosure, honesty and trust-building (Fonow and Cook, 1986). As Stanley and Wise (1990) assert, feminist research is intended to change the world, rather than merely study it[120]. Feminist research does so by analysing relationships in terms of power, revealing inequalities and empowering and affirming rather than exploiting participants (Fonow and Cook, 1986)[121]. Feminist research acknowledges that the researcher is not an anonymous voice of authority but a real and biased individual with desires and interests impacting on the research process at every level (England, 1994). This stands in contrast to traditional research practices whereby participants were called upon to provide their experiences for the researcher to use and produce *their* analysis (Hall and Stevens, 1991; Reay, 1996).

2.3 Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

This thesis takes a postmodernist and poststructuralist view of feminism and incorporates it in tandem with queer theory. Postmodernism is an ideology characterised by a critique of notions of objective truth, and of societal grand narratives (Jameson, 1991). It believes that apparent realities are in fact social constructs which are fluid and mutable (Kvale, 1995). It views language, power relations and discourses as the key influences on our socially constructed worlds (Foucault, 1970), rejecting the use of rigid binary oppositions such as Black/White, rich/poor, old/young, healthy/ill, safe/dangerous, gay/straight or male/female (Anyon, 1994). Postmodernism favours the view that realities are multiple, relative and subjective, and that all human interaction contains biases, motivations and power structures (Foucault, 1970). As an academic movement, postmodernism was conceived after, from and as somewhat of a backlash to modernism, which seeks to make universal sense of an objective reality (Cahoone, 2003). As a school of philosophical thought, postmodernism has influenced a variety of academic, social and artistic disciplines, including queer theory.

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[120] These ethics are characterised by consciously avoiding exploitation, exercising extreme caution with and respect for issues of consent, formulating positive and empowering research relationships, constantly evaluating, recognising power, and demonstrating respect for people, lives and sensitive information (Preissle, 2007).

[121] Feminist research must remain mindful of and reflect upon the participant's welfare as a higher priority than feminist research aims for structural change (Stanley and Wise, 1990).

Postmodernism first emerged during the late 19th century as a genre of painting, then as a critique of religious structures, and was later used in reference to literature and architecture (Jameson, 1985). Postmodernism as a philosophical analysis of society and culture emerged in the late 20th century, working in tandem with a critical theoretical vantage point (Jameson, 1991). Important contributions to postmodern theoretical movements came from philosophers such as Heidegger (1954), who questioned the binary opposition of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'; late Romantic philosopher Nietzsche (1954) questioned the value of truth. Derrida (1976) used Heidegger's theories to introduce the technique of deconstruction; Foucault (1970) sought to explain and unpack the relationships between power, social order and cultural behaviours. Postmodernism reappraises modernist assumptions about culture, society, language, identity, history and power. It most often achieves this through drawing attention to norms and how they operate, or by ironically self-referencing (Diamond and Mullen, 1999). Postmodernism has been critiqued as contradicting itself (Larrian, 1994), though postmodernists would argue that such contradictions are the point they are trying to make (Samuelson, 1997). Derrida's deconstruction is one of the most popular techniques for applying postmodernism to linguistic or textual analysis, working to expose frames of reference and ideological underpinnings (1976). Deconstruction is fundamental to queer theory, as well as many other related critical theories such as crip theory[122] (see also McRuer, 2006), critical race theory and postcolonial theory (see also Fanon, 1963)[123].

Within academia, postmodernism is closely associated with poststructuralism, and many postmodern philosophers are also referred to as poststructuralist[124]. The poststructuralist movement is seen as a movement away from interpretation of the world based on 'structures', preferring instead to emphasise and expose the ways in which differing aspects of culture and society determine one another (Jameson, 1991). This ideology may be applied to politics, identities, economies and other notions of value. Rather than assuming concepts or ideas to be essential or natural, post-structuralism unpacks concepts and views them as component parts, possibly over and over again until oblivion (Larrian,

[122] Crip theory uses a queer analysis of a social model of disability, resulting in a radical perspective on disability analogous to the relationship between queer theory and gay and lesbian studies. Crip theories expose societal norms concerning accessibility, bodies and knowledges as unstable constructions, and privileges diverse experiences of ability (McRuer, 2006). Crip activism and research focuses on the links between disability and other oppressions, striving for an intersectional perspective.

[123] This research takes a queerly holistic approach to this collection of related theories, and the researcher sees postcolonial theory, critical race theory and crip theory as incorporated within her use of queer theory.

[124] See also Foucault, 1970; Derrida, 1976; Bourdieu, 1977; Kristeva, 1986; Cixous, 1994; Irigaray, 1985; Barthes, 1987; and Butler, 1990.

1994). In doing so, concepts become abstract, nuanced, circular and ambiguous (Collinson, 2006)[125]. Halberstam[126] (1991) uses 'postmodernism' to take on meaning in relation to new forms of cultural production that emerge both in sync with and running counter to what Jameson (1994) has called the 'logic' of late capitalism. While postmodernists and poststructuralists do not all agree in all aspects, the founders of the two philosophies are largely the same group of theorists. These bodies of philosophical and theoretical work engage with and reassess one another for the shared purpose of continuing to resist taken-for-granted cultural and societal constructions of reality (Agger, 1991). Postmodernism and poststructuralism both gave way to queer theory and other critical theories, which are used in tandem with feminism to form the interpretive paradigm of this research[127]. These paradigms not only comprise the theoretical bases of this research, but also the methodological underpinnings.

2.4 Intersectionality

One of the tools or perspectives that feminism can use to understand power, is intersectionality. This thesis adopts an intersectional approach to the use of multiple methods, theories, methodologies, critical lenses and approaches. Rather than focusing on one specific and fixed vantage point of privilege or oppression in its investigation of power, intersectionality takes a multiple and simultaneous approach, concentrating on multiple processes that create and maintain power relations and oppression of groups as well as individuals (Collins, 1999). Intersectionality sees identity categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and so on as never existing in isolation, but rather continuously influenced and informed by one another (Nyberg and Gustavsson, 2011).

The concept of intersectionality can be traced back to 1960's United States, during the time of the Women's Movement and Civil Rights Movements, when Black feminists pointed

[125] Absolutist claims are dismantled and rationalism is rejected by post-structuralist theorists, who often work intersectionally with different critical theories and concepts in order to produce a nuanced and informed dismantling of widely held structures or ideas (Halperin, 1997).

[126] According to Halberstam, formulaic responses to 'logic' produce emotional and even physical responses to time, causing people to feel, for example, guilty about leisure, feel frustrated by waiting, satisfied by punctuality and so on, so that eventually our sense of time becomes 'natural' (2005; 7).

[127] While, in many ways, these theories situate functionally with one another readily and easily, not everyone sees them as compliant and some theorists would argue that a poststructuralist feminism, for example, is an impossibility (Alcoff, 1988). For these reasons, it is important to make clarifications and distinctions regarding the ways in which they oppose each other, and the choices I, as a researcher, have made in navigating these contradictions.

out that the Civil Rights Movement was not recognising the specific situation of women, and feminism did not see it as something specific to be both female and Black (Lorde, 1984). Black Feminism emerged, the first movement to criticise the White hegemony existent in previous (and ongoing) forms of feminism; this movement introduced the concept of examining power relations intersectionally (Collins, 2000)[128]. Intersectionality has activist roots in Black Feminism, theoretical roots in Marxist feminism, anarcha-feminism and postcolonial feminism and has provided part of the inspiration for concepts such as queer theory and norm criticism (Nyberg and Gustavsson, 2011)[129]. Intersectionality as a field of inquiry has fostered a paradigm shift within and across different fields of study concerning a range of topics.

In addition to seeing power relations and oppressions as multiple, tandem and co-constitutive, intersectionality points out that when we choose to see power relations or identity categories singularly, hierarchies become reinscribed through a process whereby the focus on one aspect of identity de-prioritises or invisibles another (Collins, 2000). Intersectionality helps us to see privileges more clearly and to name the norms which function as oppressions. Through this, we can see, for example, that 'White is also a colour, that middle-class is also a class, that heterosexuality is also a sexuality and so forth' (Nyberg and Gustavsson, 2011: 37). In other words, it is aspects such as our race, class and gender which can make the experiences of others invisible to us, unless we do the work to 'unlearn' this perspective and to see norms and how they function more clearly (Spivak, 1995)[130].

Intersectionality is a term, like queer, that by its very nature resists specific definition and cannot be pinned down (Collins, 2012). Collins, one of the individuals widely credited as a key founder of the concept, critiques that, 'many approach intersectionality as if it is *already* defined and thus ignore the points of convergence and contradiction that characterize scholarship that claims to be informed by intersectionality… Is

[128] Queer theory and many branches of feminism had been invested in similar notions, but were and continue to be critiqued for being 'too White' (Halperin, 2003). Queer theory has further been critiqued as being Ameri-centric (Giffney, 2006). In this research, intersectionality is used to address these critiques and to help queer theory and feminism function in ways which are more holistic and more cognisant of the diverse realities of lived experiences.

[129] A series of paradigm shifts took place within these movements as well as in colleges and universities throughout the 1980s and 90s, sparking the introduction of intersectionality as a legitimate and named concept (Crenshaw, 1991).

[130] Spivak (1995) used ideas related to intersectionality to formulate the concept 'Unlearning one's privilege as one's Loss', highlighting that we own certain privileges which give us certain perspectives all based on a value system characterised by norms.

intersectionality a concept? Is it a paradigm, a heuristic device? Or is it a theory? Intersectionality may be one, some, all or none of the above' (2012, 21-22). She warns that intersectionality is at risk of being conceptualised as a narrow theory, and asserts the need to remain mindful of its resistance to definition (Collins, 2014)[131]. Identity category analysis creates not only false parameters around lived experiences which are inevitably more complex than these parameters allow for, but also creates barriers *between* these categories of analysis – at best making them appear as disparate and unrelated, and at worst causing them to be seen as in opposition or competitors for a fictitious piece of equality pie (Collins, 2014).

Activists, educators, researchers and theorists have explored the possibilities of intersectionality as a tool for social change. As intersectional frameworks investigate how race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, religion and citizenship comprise systems of power, it is important that intersectionality is not seen as a battle of various forms of oppressions, but rather a concept to highlight privilege and power, including our own privileged (and possibly oppressive) positioning. In their (2011) book *Do the Right Thing*, Nyberg and Gustavsson discuss having met struggles when attempting to put the concepts of intersectionality into practice in their work at Malmö Women's University. They found the best methods for working, practically, with concepts of intersectionality to be a continual highlighting of the norms and the concepts, and continual awareness of their goals to work intersectionally (Nyberg and Gustavsson, 2011).

2.5 Pedagogical Critique of Norms

One of the ways queer theory has informed education is through pedagogies which make hierarchies and oppressions visible by focusing on norms and how they function (Kumashiro, 2004). Much of the literature and policy discourse on oppression and equality looks singularly at one type of oppression or focuses on equality only for a specific segment of society (Kantola and Nousiainen, 2009). These approaches effectively presume normativity in the areas not in focus[132]. Collins (2004) argues that racism and homophobia, for example, rely on each other for meaning, and that they share a common set of practices that are designed to discipline the population into accepting the status quo. A critique of

[131] In order to do this, she proposes that we always look for what is *not* included, what is invisible in the midst of certain oppressions being 'solved' and therefore seen as hypervisible?

[132] For example, much of the literature on sexuality presumes not only heterosexuality but also Whiteness, Christianity and middle-classness, and ignores how racism and heterosexism influence one another.

norms through pedagogy functions by facilitating the learner to uncover the ways in which gender, sexual and other forms of oppression operate by exposing how norms work and why they are unstable (Kumashiro, 2004). Learners are empowered through knowledge of how power structures operate to create and exclude non-normative 'others' (Warner, 1999). They gain confidence through seeing these structures as open to critique and able to be dismantled by methods of societal as well as personal change (Kumashiro, 2002).

Queer theory has a strong history of activist movements rooted in challenges of norms and normativity (Warner, 1999)[133]. Queer movements have also responded to the construction of the 'naturalness' of (often-heterosexual) reproduction, by exposing how not all people are able to or desire to have children (Halberstam, 2005). Foucault asserts that, 'homosexuality threatens people as a 'way of life' rather than as a way of having sex' (1996: 310), and as such is about more than just sex, though it is about that as well. Irvine (2002) argues that battles over inclusion of diverse sexualities within sex education are about more than queer inclusion, they are about the legitimacy of certain types of sexual citizenship[134]. According to Halberstam, 'obviously not all gay, lesbian, and transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their hetero-sexual counterparts, but part of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space' (2005: 1-2). In pedagogy, a queer approach can open up sex education to new possibilities or to validation of the possibilities already in existence which has been silenced by norms.

Irvine (2002) argues that stereotypes about queer people as paedophiles or child molesters makes queer inclusion within sex education curriculum seem particularly dangerous to the mainstream. Many gay activists have disavowed mentions of sex in exchange for a pursuit of normalisation and an assertion of assimilation (Puar, 2007)[135]. Halberstam discusses the limitations of focusing theoretically on normativity without grounding this theory in the details of how it functions within 'the practices and structures that both oppose and sustain

[133] One example of a sexuality movement which focused on normativity in their activist discourse has been the ways in which, some gay men have responded to the threat of AIDS, for example, by rethinking the conventional societal emphasis on longevity and futurity, and by forming community from a shared experience of increased risk, disease, infection, and death (Bersani, 1996; Edelman, 2004).

[134] For Irvine, '(t)alk about homosexuality alongside discussions of traditional marriage and parenting is destabilizing precisely to the degree that it suggests to children that legitimate sexual citizenship is possible outside of the heterosexual norm' (2002; 167).

[135] Rather than pursue a challenging of hierarchies in identity politics which has historically labelled queers as deviant, many argue that normalisation will bring equality and pave the way for efforts to support gay families, same sex marriage and gay representation in culture (Irvine, 2002; Warner, 1999).

conventional forms of association, belonging, and identification' (2005: 4)[136]. Irvine asserts that none of the approaches to inclusion are mutually exclusive, that they can co-exist (2002).

Pedagogy has mirrored societal movements which, as Warner asserts, had become 'politics of sexual identity, not sex' prior to queer's emergence (1999: 40). Queer activism, queer politics and queer theory actively challenged the normalisation approach. Despite the debate and dialogue about normalisation in the context of queer theoretical debates, until the past few years there has been little of this debate in the context of school curriculum or sex education pedagogy. Irvine calls this '(t)he unspoken consensus to avoid sexuality and stress safely, health promotion and tolerance' (2002: 181). This 'unspoken consensus' has only been challenged in a few places throughout the world (Svendsen, 2012; Røthing and Svendsen, 2010; Bromseth, 2009; Kumashiro, 2002); these movements have emerged only recently and more often take place within academia and research than within classroom pedagogy and activism.

2.6 Discussion

Queer theory, feminism, postmodernism and poststructuralism form the basis of this work's analytical lens, though in keeping with the tenets of all of these theories, their vantage points are supplemented by other relevant theories on the body and sexuality[137]. An intersectional approach allows for the use of all of these theories simultaneously, indeed it mandates that multiple perspectives are embraced together and in tandem (Collins, 2012). Poststructuralism makes visible the societal constructs underlying risk based analysis (Larrian, 1994), and feminism is sceptical of any theoretical practice which creates cultural 'others', rather than empowering (hooks, 2000). Queer and feminist sexuality education would seek to educate young people on sex and sexuality for a host of reasons, with reduction of 'risk' factors being much lower in priority than ideals of empowerment, body confidence, pleasure, consent, communication and learning to negotiate relationships in a satisfying and mutually beneficial way (Frost, 2001). Inclusive sex education is a complex issue, and this complexity must be acknowledged, recognised and engaged with meaningfully in order to remain aware of the diverse experiences it seeks to educate about (Kumashiro, 2002). This queer and feminist piece of research aims to

[136] With this, Halberstam has argued for a more intersectional and pedagogical approach to norm critiques.
[137] Including, but not limited to, crip theory, critical race theory, critical Whiteness studies, Marxist theory.

privilege and prioritise approaches to sex education which are sex positive and intersectionally inclusive. It prioritises a focus on revealing and dismantling norms as sites of oppression and empowering young people with the necessary tools for bodily empowerment and societal change.

Chapter 3

Methods and Methodologies

This research explores narratives about what, according to professionals working in the area, constitutes 'good' and 'inclusive' sex and sexuality education. It is a cross-national study based in Sweden and Ireland which critically examines the qualitative narratives of adult professionals using queer and feminist theories. The participants in this study were sex education researchers, civil servants, NGO employees, 'outside facilitators' and consultants working in Sweden and Ireland. Semi-structured interviews were used to glean 'good practice' narratives of inclusive sex education. In-depth and unique perspectives on cultural specificities, national discourses and pedagogical theories and approaches for sex education in both countries emerged from these qualitative dialogues.

Queer and feminist theories not only comprise the analytical lenses for this research project but also shaped and influenced the methods and methodologies employed. In keeping with feminist and queer methodologies, particular critical attention has been paid to embodied notions of gender, sex, sexuality, norms, privilege, oppression, difference, empowerment and pleasure (see also hooks, 2000; Sullivan, 2003). This project contributes to the international debate in research on sex education by comparing two very different European contexts. The research participant base, methodological and theoretical underpinnings and the cross-national nature of this study comprise some of its distinguishing characteristics.

Methods are the techniques - that which takes place within the research process, whilst methodologies are the rules that guide what is done (Browne and Nash, 2010; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Methodologies are the logic that links the project's epistemological (theory of knowledge) and ontological (theory of being in the world) approaches. From a queer perspective, methods and methodologies are endlessly linked and perpetually intertwined (Browne and Nash, 2010). This chapter establishes an explanation and justification for the approach taken by this project vis-à-vis feminist and queer methods and methodologies.

3.1 Research Objectives

3.1.1 Central Research Questions

This research project aims to gain an understanding of what good and inclusive practice in sex education means to a cross-section of professionals working in the field in Ireland and Sweden, and to situate these in dialogue with each other. Drawing on narrative interviews with a wide range of people working in this area, this project explores how good and inclusive practice is concepualised in both contexts and deconstructs the contextual milieus influencing sex education in both countries. The analysis of these narratives critically investigates sex education content and approaches. It examines individual narratives as a collection and theorises about how these narratives reflect upon cultural and national discourses on sex, sexuality, sexual health and sex education in Sweden and Ireland. The comparative element of the project allows for the discourses within the two contexts to shed light on each other, illuminating how taken-for-granted elements emerged and how they are currently developing now and for the future of sex education in both countries.

This research asks:

- What are the historical and socio-political issues impacting upon participants' reflections of and endeavours towards good and inclusive sex education?
- What cultural norms, hierarchies and power structures impact upon participants' views of and notions of what constitutes good and inclusive sex education?
- How are notions of inclusivity conceptualised by participants, and what do these notions say when unpacked using a queer and feminist analytical framework?
- What role do discourses on the body and embodiment play within concepts of good and inclusive sex education for participants?

3.1.2 Aims

This research has emancipatory aims in that it seeks to use the insights gained from a critical engagement with the discourses at play within the provision of sex education for two very different European countries to reflect on those aspects of good and inclusive practice which may be taken for granted in each locale. The use of a feminist and queer analytical lens focuses on exposing and engaging critically with norms, societal customs,

political landscapes and historical trends; seeing each of these aspects as socially and culturally constructed (Sullivan, 2003; Stanley and Wise, 1990). Feminist methodologies simultaneously analyse under-researched topics and (subject as well as social) positionalities while seeking to empower and motivate research participants, the research audience and the researcher herself (Stanley and Wise, 1983). This piece of feminist research ultimately strives for dialogue, collaboration and new interaction with the research topic and to inspire feminist, sex-positive[138] and inclusive societal change within sex education.

3.1.3 Rationale

This PhD research project is guided by feminist and queer analytical lenses of the social world. This theoretical vantage point reveals the ways in which systems which award privilege may be based on norms related to (actual and perceived) aspects of identity such as heterosexuality, cisgenderism[139], able-bodiedness, Whiteness and the patriarchy, to name but a few (Shotwell, 2012). It attempts to make visible these White-hetero-cis-patriarchal privilege systems of power and the ways in which these structures serve to oppress those who are not at the top of these hierarchies, in particular people who are not cisgender males (Smith, 2006; Valdes, 1996; Otsuka et al., 2014). One of the ways that these hierarchies exert power most prominently is in the arenas of sex and sexuality (Valdes, 1996; Bornstein, 1994; Bornstein, 1998; Butler, 1999). Historically and culturally, women are seen as passive objects of sex, rather than as active agents in their own sexual lives (Rubin, 2009; Irigaray, 1985). The nuances and insidious manifestations and reiterations of such gender norms are taught to young people and enforced through influences such as formal education, peers, parents and the media from a young age (Butler, 1999; Levy, 2006; McSharry, 2009). My methodologies take as given that gender

[138] Sex positivity draws on the work of Reich (1971) who asserted that some societies view sexual expression as positive and healthy, while other societies – including White Western societies – take a negative view and seek to repress sexuality. Queen and Comella expand the definition of sex positivity as a perspective which, 'allows for and in fact celebrates sexual diversity, differing desires and relationships structures, and individual choices based on consent' (2008; 274). I appreciate Queen and Comella's focus on consent, and I attempt to take their definition a step further to acknowledge experiences of asexuality, those individuals who do not experience sexual attraction or an interest in sexual activity; and to recognise the experiences of sex workers who, for a complex variety of reasons, may engage in consensual and transactional sexual activity as a means of survival, which complicates notions of choice and may or may not entail sentiments of positivity, celebration and pleasure.

[139] Cisgenderism refers to a privileging of individuals whose gender identities correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisgender is a way of referring to non-transgender people, which reveals the system of privilege that society affords to people whose sex assignment and gender identity corresponds. Cisgenderism also refers to negative ideologies towards transgender people, which is sometimes also referred to as transphobia (See also Serano, 2007; Ansara, 2012).

and sexuality norms are reproduced in limiting and oftentimes oppressing ways (Butler, 1999). It posits that one of the ways this occurs is through sex education, and seeks to unpack why and how this ensues through an exploration of participant narratives.

Perhaps some of the most damaging effects of patriarchy are the real experiences of rape and sexual abuse, disproportionately experienced by women, girls and transgender people the world over (Smith, 1990; Hester et al., 1996; Chant, 2013). Sexual assault is, in many cases, seen as a taboo topic, one that is often not meaningfully discussed in educational contexts, peer groups, media outlets or families (Fontes, 1993); topics such as acquaintance rape have yet to be addressed on a comprehensive scale in Western cultural contexts (Haaken, 2002).

Young people are as diverse a group as any and sex education needs are by no means universal (Koller, 2000; Epstein et al., 2003). The specific nature of these needs means that sex education must be inclusive. Marginalisation can be compounded when sex education does not acknowledge or speak to the situation or identity of the young people it intends to target; for example, those living in care, homeless youth, HIV+, LGBT, non-traditional family situations, minority ethnicities, cultural or religious background, those with disabilities and people with a history of abuse, to name but a few (Epstein et al., 2003; Messiou, 2012; Milbourne, 2002; Paechter, 2004, Mayock, 2004). Through use of feminist and queer methods and methodologies, narratives of 'good' and inclusive practice in sex education are analysed. Examining the situation in Ireland alongside Sweden helps to reveal taken-for-granted practices, policies and discourses in both countries.

3.1.4 Terminology

The topic of sex education is examined holistically and comprehensively, grounded in a use of this World Health Organisation definition of sexual health:

> …[A] state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual

> rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010).

This study acknowledges that sex and sexuality education can include the formal curricula of institutions, alternative approaches, campaigns, youth groups, as well as informal methods such as mass media, NGOs, activism and family settings. As such, sex education for young people can include inputs which take place as part of formal curricula of educational institutions (schools), NGO, political and governmental campaigns (e.g. HIV/AIDS campaigns), but also informally through mass media, art forms, pornography and peer-education, to name but a few. Sexuality is used in this thesis to describe both sexual orientation and sexual attractions, impulses and desires - a sexual 'being-ness'. Several participants to this study were affiliated with LGBT NGOs which engaged in educational endeavours falling under the remit of 'sex education'. These participants are listed as working for 'Sexuality NGOs'. The language choice here is deliberate and seeks to make a statement about and expose the links between work on sexual orientation and work on sexual health, asserting the inclusion of both within the word 'sexuality'. The terms sex education and sexuality education are used interchangeably throughout this research, sometimes with similar and other times with different meaning attached which I endeavour to make explicit where relevant or necessary.

This research focuses on sex education targeted at young people. The interview responses cover a large age range, with data related to good and inclusive practice in sex education for young people of pre-school age through to early young adulthood. It is recognised that all elements of sexual health education intersect with privileges and corresponding oppressions, including but not limited to those existing within paradigms of gender identity, sexual orientation, class, caste, religion, socioeconomic status, family situation, ethnicity, skin colour, immigrant status, dis/ability status. This project's queer and feminist methodological and analytical base focuses on this intersectionality to the fullest extent practicable throughout the entire research (Collins, 1997).

3.1.5 Assumptions

This research posits that unique insights into 'good' and inclusive practice in sex education can be gained by listening to those who have dedicated significant portions of their career to these efforts and situating their narratives in comparison with those from another

context. A comparison of narratives from professionals can give useful insights into national policy contexts, cultural discourses, societal and interpersonal power relations and conceptualisations of identities and the body. While the project examines stories of good and inclusive practice, it does not purport to proclaim or discover a universalising collection of good and inclusive methods or approaches. Rather, it is interested in unpacking how and why discourses of good and inclusive sex education develop differently in two distinct and different European contexts. When analysed through feminist and queer lenses, these stories provide an illustration of what good and inclusive practice is, why this is the case, and how this analysis might inspire new vantage points for examining this field.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Feminist and Queer Approach to Research

Feminist research intends to change the world, rather than simply study it (Stanley and Wise; 1983). According to Byrne and Lentin, feminist methodologies must take gender as a basic theoretical concept, and work to deconstruct the power relationship between researcher and those who are researched (2000). While it can be argued that research itself is politically engaged, feminist research is explicitly so (Lynch, 2000). Feminism, as a methodology, is not unified, however. There are as many approaches to feminism as there are feminists (hooks, 2000). This research strives for a feminist research approach which is simultaneously postmodern, poststructuralist, intersectional and queer.

The queer and feminist underpinnings of this project acknowledge that there is never simply one best or even good way of doing anything (Sullivan, 2003; Browne and Nash, 2010; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Using poststructuralist feminist epistemologies, this thesis rejects the notion of meta-narratives or any idea that a single, overarching truth about any social phenomena exists to be discovered through research (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Like many queer researchers, I see these aims of objectivity and truth-discovery as reflecting a detached, hierarchal way of seeing the world (Bornstein, 1994; Browne and Nash, 2010). I see objectivity as impossible, since we are all embodied, situated human subjects whose personal and political realities cannot be separated from the research we conduct (Hartsock, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Collins, 1997). As a queer and feminist researcher, I see that social worlds have inevitably and inescapably been (re)produced by

and through hetero-patriarchal systems (Butler, 2006). Feminist and queer research offers an alternative which challenges these dominant epistemologies of modernity so often reiterated in research, including rationality, objectivity and neutrality (Code, 1987; Haraway, 1988). Feminist researchers have long posited that the purpose of research is not only to collect scientifically-based knowledge for its own sake, but to glean narratives of subjective experiences as a means of consciousness-raising and contributing towards political and social change (Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983).

Feminist methodologies are not comprised of one proscriptive set of instructions, but rather represent an approach to research which reconceptualises traditional methods and develops new techniques (Stanley and Wise, 1990). Feminism sees the institutions which create, frame, enforce and perpetuate oppressive situations as structural and systematic. Feminist research has the potential to identify the mechanisms of oppression and to value experiential knowledge and ways of listening to and hearing female experiences (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992). It looks at policy related to emancipation, social justice, knowledge, oppression, access, privilege and domination within the context of what is known as the patriarchy; the deep-rooted and institutionalised domination by men and male structures (Stanley and Wise, 1983). Furthermore feminism seeks to examine mainstream research topics in new and innovative ways (Fonow and Cook, 1986). One of the ways feminism has lent itself to theoretical innovation has been for its contribution to the development of queer theory as a research methodology (Browne and Nash, 2010).

Adherence to a queer method and methodology can, in many ways, also be seen as allegiance to a queer ethics – the need to constantly strive to see outside of that which is constructed as 'normal' (Warner, 2000). Queer theory has been critiqued for purporting to be über-inclusive; however, intersectionality of identity outside of the lens of sexual orientation has been ignored by many queer theorists (Sullivan, 2003). Berlant and Warner argued that it was 'not useful to consider queer theory a thing, at least not one dignified by capital letters'. Instead, they offer, the term 'queer commentary' which may also be seen as queer analysis (1995: 343). Valocchi gauges the progress of the use of queer theory in social science research, calling for a 'queerer' use of the concepts underpinning the theoretical standpoint, and to take more seriously non-normative alignments that understand the complex intersections of identities (2005: 750). Sullivan traces how queer activist movements have been critiqued for their Whiteness, and how the term queer evokes a particular conceptualisation of queer identity which is partially constructed by a

presumption of race and ethnic privileges (2003). Barnard (2004), on the other hand, argues that a queer perspective has helped to highlight the ways in which gender and sexuality are fluid, and that queer's challenge to the idea of identity fixivity can be extended to give more nuanced understandings of other identity concepts such as race and ethnicity, which have traditionally been seen as more static. To me, queer is a set of principles used within research for the purpose of gleaning an analysis which remains continuously aware of power and privilege. It is method and methodology which is ever-seeking of experiences and perspectives situated outside of an ever-expanding set of taken-for-granted norms (Warner, 2000; Browne and Nash, 2010).

3.2.2 A Postmodern Approach

Postmodern critical theories see social contexts as political scenarios (Fook, 2002). These approaches situate data as well as the researcher within specific historical and cultural contexts in an attempt to reveal the situatedness and relatability of their position and analysis (Lindolf and Taylor, 2002; Jarvis and Robinson, 1997). Postmodern researchers have historically struggled with what Denzin and Lincoln (2000) call a 'crisis of representation', in that postmodern theoretical perspectives threw out any notions of objectivity on the part of researchers and unveiled the ways in which those who are researched can be 'Othered' through the research process. This crisis encapsulates the dilemmas involved in dealing with broken down traditional notions of truth, reality and knowledge when the ways in which they are constructed within existing power hierarchies and privilege paradigms are revealed. For postmodern feminist researchers, the answer to this dilemma is ongoing reflexivity on the part of the researcher, making visible the researcher's power and positionality in a way which recognises objectivity as an impossibility (Stanley and Wise, 1983). Etherington (2004) encourages reflexive researchers to explore how their personal histories led to an interest in the topic, what presuppositions about knowledge in this field they hold, how the researcher is positioned in relation to this knowledge and how their gender, social class, ethnicity and culture influence on their positioning in relation to the topic and to the research participants.

3.2.3 Feminist Reflexivity

As situated individuals, we come to research with assumptions, positionalities and perspectives which influence the entire process (Rose, 1997). Our own experiences impact

the research project from development the of research questions to participant selection, methods, theoretical and ethical frameworks and outcomes (Tisdall et al., 2008). Academic research has traditionally been seen as an impersonal activity, expected to be approached from a position of unbiased objectivity, demanding a purportedly 'rigorous' distance and 'non-involvement' in the subject in an effort to avoid contaminating the data (Smith D. E., 1987; Reinharz and Davidman, 1992). Feminist researchers, however, recognise deliberate reflexivity on the part of the researcher to be an essential component of rigorous qualitative research (Fonow and Cook, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1983).

Feminist research loses the 'security of the anonymous third person', encouraging and embracing usage of the first person 'I' and acknowledging a closeness of the researcher to the topic of research and, quite possibly, the subject of inquiry (Etherington, 2004: 27). Some, such as Lynch (2000), argue against the term reflexivity on the basis that it is used in varied and sometimes confusing ways, an argument which gives way to the introduction of the perhaps more relevant multiple concept 'reflexivities'; there are as many ways to be reflexive as there are reflexive researchers. For others, reflexivity is little more than the awareness and acknowledgement of subjective bias (Evans and Azzopardi, 2007). For auto-ethnographers, reflexivity becomes the primary empirical data or methodological basis for enquiry (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Others still use reflexivity to bridge a gap between research and practice (Darlington and Scott, 2003).

I have been influenced by Etherington's definition of researcher reflexivity as 'the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry' (2004: 31-32). Areas for reflexive contemplation include social relations and relationships within the research process, the research setting, participants and recruitment channels, the researchers' internal process and reactions to the research, collaboration and community ties, aims and dilemmas of consciousness raising for the researcher and those being researched, alliances, funding processes, reactions of recipients of research information, cultural, political, societal and educational contexts to name a few. This research aims to consider as many of these aspects as possible and to incorporate them throughout this thesis, but to do so without allowing for reflexivity to overtake the primary data of participant narratives. I strive for a balance between being reflexive while simultaneously preventing the research from becoming about me, as such (D'Cruz et al., 2007).

3.2.4 My Reflexive Positioning

A PhD is a lengthy project, so selection of a topic which can sustain interest and energy over a prolonged period is paramount, and selection of a topic which has personal interest and relevance to the researcher often best fits with this need (Etherington, 2004). The feminist mantra, 'the personal is political' readily describes feminist reflexive research (Hanisch, 1970: 1). I engage with international dialogues from what Anzaldúa describes as a cultural 'insider/outsider' perspective (1987). In using Anzaldúa's term, I mean that my positionality is complicated and unique, both in Ireland and in Sweden, as well as amongst sex education professionals. Originally from the United States, I have researched queer and feminist theories in relation to sex education since 2005 in Ireland. In my undergraduate studies I trained in business and accountancy; I worked as an accountant, grant writer and budget analyst in the US from 1998 to 2005, all the while focusing such efforts within NGOs benefiting women and children. Meanwhile, I volunteered evenings and weekends for a rape crisis centre, providing hotline and in-person advocacy and support. Throughout my career, my priority has been one of social service, and there came a point where my paid work in accountancy felt unsatisfying in its distance from direct engagement with issues for social change. Rape crisis work experiences left me desiring exploration of social phenomena affecting the marginalisation of women and children, and led me to explore gender and sexuality norms as well as power structures and shame from a feminist perspective. I was most affected by hotline calls from adolescent girls feeling low self-esteem, lack of support, and lack of education around sexuality as well as sexual violence. This realisation inspired me to pursue an MA degree in Women's Studies from University College Dublin, focusing my thesis on a review of the Irish Relationships and Sexuality Education Junior Cycle (age 12-15) curriculum. While studying, I worked in shelters for homeless women and active IV drug users and, afterwards, I collaborated on a number of research projects on topics of gender, sexual health and sex education. My desire for knowledge continued, and I applied for and received funding for my current PhD project through the (former) Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS), which is now the Irish Research Council (IRC).

During my time in Ireland I have gained some degree of 'insider' status in that I have navigated the political systems and social customs, and I often 'pass' for Irish in that I 'look Irish' and have what can be seen as an Irish surname. Yet, of course, I will always be an 'outsider' in terms of cultural background, shared history and, most noticeably, accent.

Sweden is the other national site of this study. I first visited Sweden in 2009 and, as I do not speak Swedish, I am very visibly an 'outsider'. Interestingly, however, in Sweden I became quickly linked in to a community of sex education professionals, much more readily and extensively than I had in Ireland. I believe this reflects something about a Swedish structure for community and professionalism granted to sex education in Sweden, more so than speaking to my 'insider/outsider' status. Participants in Sweden were notably faster to respond to my requests for interviews than were participants in Ireland. They were generally more accommodating in arranging interviews and also seemed to me to be more excited and keen to contribute. Within the dialogues and debates I found myself in during the time I spent in Sweden over the course of this project, however, it felt as if I was provided at least some degree, of 'insider' information and perspective – most likely due to a more closely shared theoretical perspective on sexuality with participants in Sweden when compared with those in Ireland. Feminist and queer pedagogies are at a more advanced stage in Sweden than most of the world, which is something I will discuss at length within the findings chapters.

I identify as a White, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, cisgender, agnostic, American, feminine, bisexual/queer woman. From a feminist perspective, these things matter (Butler, 1993). I engage in this research in particular ways that have been informed by my own history and perspectives. My situatedness, particularly as a queer woman, positions me both personally and politically within this queer-feminist research project. As a woman, I have an intimate and ongoing familiarity with the forces of the patriarchy. As a bisexual/queer person, I experience daily what it feels like to have my sexual orientation questioned, discredited and invisibilised. I am also incredibly privileged, and my queer and feminist approach requires that I constantly seek to 'check' my privilege, to explore my own compliance within oppressive societal structures and norms and seek to understand the impact of these norms for individuals in less-privileged positions (see also McIntosh, 1998). Each of these aspects of my identitiy and experience interact uniquely with the data resulting from this project.

My own sex education experiences, like many people's, were limited and tinged with shame, fear and anxiety on the part of my teachers and parents. I have come to learn that I received a more comprehensive sex education than many still do today, particularly in Ireland and the United States, but also, in some cases, in Sweden. I identify as a feminist for political purposes, and I have engaged in grassroots and more structured forms of

activism through volunteer work for transgender rights and sexual health and reproductive rights in Ireland and within Europe. I have engaged, since 2006, in a casual capacity volunteering and doing paid work in delivering trans* awareness, sexual health and sexual empowerment trainings within college, university, community, business and activist settings – often with the purpose of being deliberately LGBT inclusive and sex positive. I served on the Board of Directors of Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) between 2008 – 2010, and I currently assist the Irish Trans* Students' Alliance (ITSA) with their work in colleges and Universities.

My activist work has increased during the course of this research project, and these experiences undoubtedly connect with this research in complex ways which cannot always readily be separated out or articulated. Also, during the course of this PhD project, in 2009, I joined the Board of Directors of the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA), Ireland's Member Association to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, European Region. I served as Chairperson for the IFPA during 2014. It is worthwhile to clarify that my affiliations have largely been in a voluntary capacity and have increased during the course of the PhD project. Most of this project's interviews took place at an early stage in my voluntary engagement with sexualty and sexual health NGOs in Ireland, and as such I did not personally know the majority of participants in either Sweden or Ireland before commencing the research.

None of these aspects of my affiliations or identities mean that I have figured out definitively what 'good' and inclusive practice means; indeed it was my own journey within these realms that led me to ask the research question and identify professionals who could share their knowledge for this project. I approach this research with a clear aim to learn more and, despite having an invested positionality – as feminist methodologies would assert we all have, I am committed to reflecting on my positioning throughout the research process, to acknowledging where my own experiences might have an influence, and to approaching the research without any preconceived notions about how this research project's findings or conclusions might develop and what new insights might unfold.

3.3 The Research Process

3.3.1 Qualitative Research

This research uses feminist qualitative methods of inquiry to focus on valuing and honouring people's narratives, stories and experiences (Stanley and Wise, 1983). A qualitative research project contains many components and can take many shapes (Maxwell, 2012). At its core, qualitative research preferences stories and their meanings (Polkinghorne, 1995). Qualitative research is open to the possibilities of ever-changing worldviews, as opposed to seeing knowledge as formulaic or static (Patton, 2005). It focuses on interpretations and the transformative potential of meaning making through research (Creswell, 2013). Lines of research inquiry come to light in varied and emergent ways and research takes place with sensitivity to participants as people and also to places, environments and wider contexts (England, 1994).

Research topics are often emotion laden and close to peoples' lives (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is often situated within a specific theoretical lens or worldview and searches for a social meaning ascribed to the research question or problem (Polkinghorne, 1995). Research questions interact in dialogue with the research process and often evolve throughout the project (Patton, 2005). Research design emerges from the research process, rather than being set and prescribed from the beginning (Creswell, 2013). Feminist research methodologies strive to be consistent with feminist values, often preferring qualitative insights over quantitative measures (Stanley and Wise, 1990). Qualitative methods allow for a less mechanical relationship between the researcher and participant, thus allowing responses to emerge from a place of empathy, safety and freedom (Cook and Fonow, 1986). Feminist research reflects on the impact of the research, on participants' welfare as well as on the ways in which the process may undermine immediate coping strategies without immediately influencing long-term structural change (Smith, 1987).

3.3.2 Procedures

A list of semi-structured interview questions, along with consent forms and project information sheets, were distributed to participants in advance in order to facilitate ease in interviewing and so that participants were not surprised. These documents included detail on the research project a signed commitment letter articulating my standards for research

and commitments to their integrity as participants as well as assurances that their confidentiality, rights and respect would be upheld (see Appendices, Figure 3: Participant Information Sheet). Information was clear, simple and accessible. I provided participants with opportunities to contact me after the interview, and enabled ongoing feedback and input if desired. In one case, this function resulted in a second interview taking place. None of the research was observational and all of the primary empirical data stemmed directly from transcripts of the recorded interviews.

3.3.3 Ethics

All research must have the care and well-being of research participants at its core (Seidman, 2012). Social science research inevitably raises ethical and procedural dilemmas. This is particularly the case with feminist research as it has an overt political aim and positions feminist solidarity and a critical look at power and difference at the centre of the research (Allen and Baber, 1992). Prior to travelling to Sweden to conduct my fieldwork and attend a fellowship at Sweden's Centre for Gender Excellence (GEXcel), I received ethical clearance from the School of Social Work and Social Policy Research Ethics Committee (REC) which I applied to in May 2009 for my field research with adult professionals working in sex education in Ireland and Sweden.

Mishna (2004) cites three main principles of ethics for researchers as (1) obtain informed consent; (2) minimise harm and discomfort and ensure the research brings about good; (3) ensure fair participant selection as well as fair distribution of burden and benefit of research. Etherington (2004) lists six ethical principles related to informed consent which include the trustworthiness of the researcher, respect for participant's autonomy, a commitment to beneficence, commitment to non-malfeasance, justice in the research process and a researcher's self-respect. One feminist ethical endeavour is to remain aware of, and consciously strive for, an ongoing balancing act between attempts to be received genuinely and openly by participants and colleagues in the field caring for the participants (their time openness and the preciousness of their contributions) and, at the same time, caring for the self in the research process (Etherington, 2004). I attempted to achieve this through reflexivity, transparent communication with participants, open and empathic interview dialogues, regularly checking to ensure participants' comfort, and by scheduling interviews in a way which ensured I, as researcher, was looked after, rested and present for each of the interview sessions.

3.3.4 Progression of the Project

Feminists such as Oakley (1981) have advocated research for and by women, not simply about women. Similarly, other researchers have asserted that research on topics which affect young people should avoid the paradox of 'missing youth' (Darbyshire et al., 2005; Anderson, 2001). A second phase of data collection with young people in a focus group setting was planned from the beginning of this project (see Appendices, Figure 2: Project Background Sheet). From late 2009 through early 2010, in preparation for this phase of the research, I attended the Research with Children and Young People certificate course through the University of Edinburgh between late 2009 and early 2010. This course helped me create a plan for data collection with young people which subsequently received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee (REC). However, it became apparent that irreconcilable power dynamics would emerge if I were to position data from young people alongside the narratives of good and inclusive practice from adult professionals as they emerged in this particular project. Focus groups with young people did not take place. The compromise to the integrity of contributions from both cohorts would be too significant, and I chose, instead, to delve deeper into the rich narratives I had already gleaned from adult participants. I now aim to develop a creative research project with young people on these topics as a post-doctoral endeavour.

This study initially sought to examine good practice in sex education for a specific cohort; adolescent girls aged 12-15 (see Appendices, Figure 2: Project Background Sheet). However, the participants to this research consistently spoke to a broad range of age and gender, including narratives of good and inclusive practice for boys, mixed gender groups and young people both older than 15 and younger than 12. The resulting data set served to broaden this project's research focus in terms of gender and age range, though at times the narratives endeavoured to focus on adolescent girls. None of the participants to this study worked exclusively with adolescent girls and the narratives reflect their more broad-based experiences. It would have limited and created an injustice to the data set to have not expanded the age range and gender focus as a result of participant narratives.

3.4 Data Collection

In 2009, I travelled twice[140] on a research fellowship to Linköping University, Sweden. The fellowship, entitled 'GEXcel Themes 4 & 5: Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment: Bridging Epistemological Gaps' took place in their Centre for Gender Excellence, part of Tema Genus (Gender Studies). This experience fed directly into my PhD at an early phase. The opportunity afforded access to professionals in the field of sex education. Participating in an international network of sex education researchers, policy makers and practitioners, I had opportunities to meet with these professionals in a series of seminars and conferences directly relevant to this research.

3.4.1 The Data Collection Story

Data collection began in Sweden during the Summer of 2009, and continued in both countries until November 2011 (see Appendices, Figure 1: Participant Interviews Table). It was during Phase 1 of the Swedish interviews that the unique juxtaposition between sex education in Sweden and Ireland began to emerge. At that early stage it became clear that this project would be best suited as a direct two-country dialogue, rather than one which compared Ireland with discourses internationally, as was initially envisaged. Using snowball sampling methods, many of the participants interviewed in the first phases of data collection in Sweden and Ireland referred me to others working in the field who they perceived would be beneficial for me to interview. Snowball sampling allows the researcher to permeate networks with credibility through use of named contacts (Streeton et al., 2004). Referrals were made for people who had specific experience with aspects of my research aims, people who had particularly influential roles in sex education in either country, and for those who could contribute unique perspectives and opinions. This created a purposeful yet diverse participant base. I interviewed 34 participants in total, during two phases in each country. One person in Ireland was interviewed twice[141], as they felt they had relevant information for me 6 months after their first interview. Additionally, two people in Sweden[142] felt most comfortable being interviewed jointly within the space of

[140] Once in the Summer and once in the Winter, spending a total of 6 weeks in 2009. The relationship that this fellowship facilitated with Linköping University led me to return twice more as a 'visiting researcher' during the course of my PhD studies.
[141] This participant is listed as P33, with their second interview listed as P33-2.
[142] These participants are numbered P27/1 and P27/2.

one interview. Thus, I interviewed 18 people in Sweden over the course of 17 interviews; and I interviewed 17 people in Ireland over the course of 18 interviews.

3.4.2 Research Participants

Researchers, practitioners, managers and programme workers from government departments, NGOs, universities, youth websites and LGBT programmes participated. The participant base mapped a cross section of representation from these fields in both countries. My intention was to facilitate dialogues that reached 'beyond the official line' (Duke, 2002: 39). These efforts were achieved through assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. However, I recognise that the fact that many interviews took place in the workplace and during working hours may have had an impact on the extent to which non-official or personal narratives emerged (Elwood and Martin, 2000). It is noteworthy that many participants in Sweden stated that they would be content to be personally identified in my research. These same participants made it explicit when their personal viewpoints differed from those of their employer. Conversely, several participants in Ireland went to lengths to assure that their contributions would be anonymised and confidential, in some cases asking me to exclude portions of their narratives or to email them any quotations I would be using for their approval. Some participants in Ireland expressed genuine fears in relation to their narratives being identified. I believe the differences in sentiments expressed by participants constitue a reflection of larger issues at play for sex education in both countries, and I explore these differences in my findings chapters.

3.4.3 Selection and Recruitment

Sex, sexuality and sexual orientation are inherently linked and, after deeper analysis, often indistinguishable (Diamond, 2003). Using this rationale, I interviewed people working with LGBT youth around sexuality-related issues in both countries (using a broad definition of sexuality education) in addition to those working in sexual health agencies (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010). In each country, this terminology and the curricular remit of the concepts of sex and sexuality differed. In Ireland, sexual orientation is discussed primarily within the wider SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) curricula, while sex and sexuality fits within the remit of RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) which is part of SPHE. In Sweden, sexual orientation is included both as part of sex education curricula and as part of a wider curriculum on civic

education. This research does not focus on the curricula as such, but rather on participant narratives which include curricular insights when relevant to their own narratives.

Participant referrals reached saturation point when the same individuals were repeatedly referred (Streeton et al., 2004). Comparable counterparts in both countries were identified as the recruitment process unfolded. Sexuality education researchers, practitioners and civil servants were chosen as those who are driving and shaping the discursive fields of sex education in both countries.

This research deliberately selected professionals, who could be seen as elites, as research informants. The meaning of the term 'elite' within a reflexive and feminist research project must be contextualised and interrogated. Within the research process, professionals emerged as a group of informants who were accessible and particularly valuable for their awareness of the policy and political contexts of sex education as well as their own practices, struggles and learning experiences with pedagogy. It is for these reasons that their narratives uniquely lent themselves to a queer and feminist project. Many of the informants were aware of different pedagogical and theoretical approaches to sex education, and had, themselves, made informed decisions about the use of different pedagogies. As a group of informants who have focused their careers on sex education, unique insights emerged about political, societal and theoretical influences. Teachers and young people, for example, would have offered drastically different perspectives on the topic. Young people would be able to speak as recipients of sex education, and teachers would offer insights as professionals for whom sex education is a smaller part of a larger remit. The narratives from sex education professionals were distinct as they emerged from those who are driving the discursive field of sex education in their context (Irvine, 2004).

Sex education professionals provide a unique and relevant perspective to the research on sex education theory and practice, and their experiences are under-represented in the research literature both in Sweden and Ireland. In some instances, participants speak from their experience working as outside facilitators or rseachers in the school classroom alongside teachers. In other instances, they contribute to the research data by discussing experiences of providing sex education interventions in NGO or community settings, or in a school context where the teacher is not present in the classroom. For some participants, their experience of teacher provision of sex education is limited to second-hand information, though all participants did have some experience either researching or

providing sex education in a classroom setting, or influencing the classroom experience at policy level.

3.4.4 'Elite' Informants

There has been much deliberation within the research literature about what it means to conduct a study with 'elite' informants (see also Stephens, 2007; Dexter, 2006; Harvey, 2011). Some, like Stephens, categorise informants within a paradox of power relations which sees informants as 'elite', 'ultra-elite' and situated in contrast to a novice researcher (2007). Others, such as Harvey (2011), delineate elites as senior managers, CEOs and company presidents, specifically and strategise on how the researcher must gain trust and present oneself in relation to these informants. Feminist reflexive research argues that the researcher should present herself honestly and reflexively and sees power relations as constructed and more nuanced than meets the eye (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Fonow and Cook, 2005). Using this line of analysis, Smith (2006) argues for a poststructuralist viewpoint on power, when assessing whether or not a cohort of research participants shall be referred to as 'elite' or as having power (in contrast to 'non-elite' or not possessing power). I am inspired by Smith's (2006) work which acknowledges that power is one of the most complex and variously defined concepts within social sciences, and that it is not easy or simple to assess the power exerted by the research participant, whether it is in relation to the topic or to the researcher. Smith argues that power can be possessed but not exercised, that it can be fluid and can depend on myriad contextual specificities. In this way, the idea that 'elites' can be readily identified or seen as consistently powerful relies on an over-simplified notion of power (Smith, 2006: 645). As a researcher, I can never be certain of all of the power dynamics at play in each interview. I am only ever aware of that which is made visible to me, either when it is pointed out to me by someone else or through my own observation. I intentionally did not gather identity-based demographic data on the study participants. The interviews conducted in Ireland revealed that the sex education profession is not an incredibly privileged career choice in that county. Many spoke of job instability, funding cuts and challenges in justifying their work. In both countries, it can be argued that those participants who are civil servants or researchers may hold a certain level of power socially. Similarly, those who work to educate young people arguably hold some power over youth from an educational perspective.

This study strives to remain critically aware of and engaged with the theoretical, societal and political positioning not only of the researcher, but also of the research participants. All of the participants in this project either worked directly with young people in school sex education settings or worked directly with policy and/or curriculum, influencing the delivery of sex education to young people in school or community settings.

Neither country is presented or researched as a best practice model, but rather they are examined alongside each other to reveal nuances, similarities, and differences. Both Ireland and Sweden are small countries where the larger cities are not large by global standards. It was, therefore, important to avoid a disproportionate capital-city focus, although this challenge was linked to structures already in place that had an influence on the distribution of sex education professionals in both countries. In particular in Sweden, most sex education projects had a 'National' focus, but the employees were based in an office in Stockholm. This limitation was furthered by my snowball sampling method, which began in both countries through contacts located in urban areas. Nonetheless, I was able to achieve a balance of participants with 'national' as well as 'local' remits, and a combination of those based in capital cities as well as non-capital and more rural areas (see Appendices, Figure 1: Participant Interviews Table).

3.4.5 Language

The comparative nature of this project inherently involved speaking with a number of people for whom English is not their first language. I ensured I was able to speak with participants who have a sufficient level of English, enabling effective communication around the topics covered by this project. Ireland is a diverse country, and not all participants in Ireland could be guaranteed to have English as their first language. Indeed there were participants in Sweden for whom English was their first language. In one case, a participant in Sweden expressed feeling self-conscious about their level of English language and initially asked that I not record the interview. I agreed to this, and we proceeded to begin the interview on that basis. However, early on in our dialogue the participant felt enough at ease to encourage me to turn the recording device on. In some other cases, participants in Sweden would pause to find the perfect English word to express what they were trying to say and, in some instances they engaged me to help them find the words. This scenario occurs just as easily between people who have the same native tongue, particularly given that we were discussing, in some cases, complex theoretical

positioning or profession-specific references. In all cases I took every effort to ensure and clarify regularly that I was understood by participants and that I comprehended the meaning behind what they said. All participants were incredibly proficient in English, and the dialogues in both countries produced rich narratives that readily situate in dialogue with one another. I maintained good faith with participants by attempting to demonstrate that I could be trusted and by checking in on an ongoing basis for potential misunderstandings. I ensured that all participants had my contact details, should they need to contact me for any reason during the process, and some of them did this. I reflect further on the use of language within the findings chapters.

3.5 The Interview Process

Interview lines of questioning were semi-structured and based on the list sent in advance to participants (see Appendices, Figure 2: Project Background Sheet for Interview Participants). I engaged the participants in a dialogue, rather than sticking rigidly to the questions, endevouring to cover the same topics with each interview. Questions included:

- What is your role in sex education in your country?
- What do you consider good practice to look like?
- What, do you believe, are the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in sex education?
- What are your thoughts on the formal curriculum for sex education, including evaluations of implementation and how teachers are trained?
- Who teaches sex education and how do they teach it?
- What are the aims and messages conveyed in the programmes? How is it taught?
- Discuss the legal situation for sex education, including your views on the law, such as consent laws and access to medical services for young people.
- Describe your knowledge of non-school sexual health services and sex education.
- Tell me about any particularly effective creative and/or innovative sex education methods that you use or are aware of.
- How is sex education made to be inclusive of all experiences? Specifically think about inclusion of 'difference' in gender, race, class, religion, dis/ability and sexual orientation, among others.
- What effective sex education collaborative efforts have taken place?
- What is your dream for the future of sex education in your country?

Interview questions were formulated to concentrate on examples of good and inclusive practice, as well as to provide a framework for comparing Sweden and Ireland alongside one another (see Appendices, Figure 2: Project Background Sheet for Interview Participants). The data collection for this research project was structured into two phases, each phase consisting of a set of interviews in both countries. The selection of participants for Phase 2 was informed by Phase 1 in that many phase 2 participants were referred by phase 1informants. In another sense, however, Phase 2 can be seen as an extension of Phase 1 in that the interview questions, aims and objectives remained the same throughout.

3.5.1 Phase 1 Sweden

I arrived in Sweden one week before my fellowship officially began in June 2009. Prior to my arrival, I had corresponded with researchers at Linköpings University to obtain contacts for researchers in the field of sex education. I had also met some researchers at the Gender and Education Conference in London in April, 2009 who assisted in providing me with contacts. From these contacts, I obtained the names of individuals whose work focused on sex education within NGOs (including sexual health and LGBT organisations), freelance sex educators and civil servants focusing on sex education and inclusion policy. I organised Phase 1 of the Swedish interviews for this project with ten individuals. Of the ten individuals interviewed at this stage, all were based in Stockholm; six had National remits and four were working locally in the capital city. Three were working in sex education NGO settings, four were working in LGBT NGO settings, one was an independent sex educator and two were sex education researchers. All had focused on sex education, whether in the context of one or more specific projects or for the duration of their career. The shortest interview was 28 minutes and the longest was 1 hour 48 minutes. Eight of the interviews took place in the office space of the participant, one occurred in a coffee shop, and one took place in the participant's home.

3.5.2 Phase 1 Ireland

The first phase of data collection quickly revealed significant differences culturally, societally, theoretically and discursively than those I was aware of in Ireland through my MA research. Most notably, I could see how both queer theory and feminism had played instrumental and overt roles in shaping current Swedish discourses in sex education. I

completed Phase 1 of the Swedish interviews during the Summer 2009 phase of the GEXcel fellowship, and returned to Ireland. That Autumn, I identified and interviewed 12 sex education professionals in Ireland including civil servants, researchers, independent sex educators and NGO employees working with a particular focus in the field of sex education. Some of these individuals were identified through referrals from my supervisor, Paula Mayock, who served as the lead researcher in the most recent assessment of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme to have been conducted in Ireland (Mayock et al., 2007). Other participants were identified through my own prior knowledge of sex education professionals in Ireland. During this phase of the study, I interviewed two individuals in Galway, one based in Donegal, three in Cork, and six in Dublin. Five of these participants worked for sex education NGOs, two were civil servants with sex education remits, four were sex education researchers and one was an LGBT organisation employee. Six of these individuals had National remits, one had a rural remit and five had an urban remit in either Cork or Dubln. All but one of the interviews took place in the participant's offices, with the exception being one phone interview (via Skype). The shortest interview in this phase was 48 minutes and the longest was 1 hour 27 minutes.

3.5.3 Phase 2 Sweden

In late 2009, I returned to Sweden for the second part of the GEXcel fellowship, and also conducted phase 2 of Swedish data collection. This cohort of participants had been exclusively identified through referrals made to me during Phase 1 in Sweden. Referrals had been made not only by project participants, but also by individuals I met during the seminars and conferences which had taken place in the context of the fellowship. I interviewed seven more participants, six based in Stockholm and one based in Lund. This cohort included two civil servants with sex education remits, one independent sex educator, two sex education researchers, one sex education NGO employee and one LGBT NGO employee. One final interview was conducted in Sweden on a return trip for a conference in late 2010, and this took place in Malmö with an independent sex educator. Three of these individuals had National remits, three had urban/capital remits in Stockholm, and two had rural remits. Of these eight Phase 2 Sweden interviews, five took place in the participant's offices, two took place in coffee shops or cafés, and one occurred in the participant's home. In this cohort, the shortest interview was 32 minutes and the longest was 2 hours 56 minutes. The length of this longest interview was an outlier and

took place with a participant who had a lot to say and who was happy to speak to that extent. I checked in with this participant numerous times during the interview to make sure they were comfortable with the length. This was also an interview that took place in a coffee shop, which may have contributed to the comfort of the environment in the interview lasting so long. One of these interviews took place with two individuals simultaneously, both civil servants. These participants specifically requested that the interview be conducted jointly.

3.5.4 Phase 2 Ireland

Upon my return to Ireland after Phase 2 of interviews and my fellowship in Sweden, I met difficulty in receiving responses to my requests for interviews for a second cohort of participants in Ireland. Several of the participants in Ireland whom I invited for interview did not respond to my requests or were not able find time in their schedules, leading me to further my search for participants. These individuals had been identified in some cases through referrals from Phase 1 participants and, in other cases, through referrals at academic conferences I attended and through my own knowledge of sex education in Ireland. The delay may have been related to my having contacted individuals at the beginning of the year, which could be a particularly busy time. It may also have had something to do with the fact that several of these interviews took place with individuals working in rural locations and, therefore, required some further planning in terms of my travel or arranging times when they were in Dublin. These factors combined to cause Phase 2 Ireland to occur much later in the project; four more participants were interviewed in the Summer of 2011 and the final two interviews in Ireland took place in November 2011. I interviewed one individual in Dundalk, one in Wexford, two based in Limerick and one based in Dublin. The Dublin-based individual was interviewed twice during this time frame. This was at their specific request in that they felt their work had progressed quickly in a short space of time and they wanted to feed that in to my project comprehensively. In this last phase of data collection, I interviewed two individuals working in LGBT NGOs, two working in sex education NGOs, and one civil servant. Two of the interview sessions took place in the participant's offices, one took place in a coffee shop, one occurred over the phone (via Skype) and two took place in the meeting room at my office in the Children's Research Centre. The shortest interview in this phase was 42 minutes and the longest was 2 hours 12 minutes. Please see Figure 1 in this chapter for a further breakdown of participants.

3.5.5 Reciprocity and Research Settings

One dimension of consent is appreciation of the voluntary nature of the participation, when participants are uncompenstated (Mishna et al., 2004). The adult interviews I conducted were unpaid. Most participants spoke to me during their paid work time, although with some it was probable that the interview took place during their time off from work. In one instance, the research participant insisted on buying me a coffee, and in some other scenarios I purchased a coffee for the participant.

3.6 Data Processing

Throughout the analytic process, it is the researcher who drives the participative data collection and analysis and, within feminist reflexivity, this proximity must be reflected upon (Mouthner and Doucett, 2003). A co-interpretation of data can be aided by engagement with participants during the interview processes and through ongoing feedback where relevant (Clark, 2004; Cree et al., 2002; Punch, 2002). Insights and meaning from participant narratives will be viewed in the context of certain norms and socially constructed discourses (Krauss, 2005). Poststructuralist and queer research, however, regards a multi-method element of data analysis as a necessity for adherence to these research methodologies (Dahl, 2010) as it enhances reliability (Halberstam, 2005). Feminist approaches would add that reflexivity has the most critical role to play in rigour and accuracy (Fonow and Cook, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Gill, 1991). Ongoing critique of participants' positionings also helps to address any dilemmas concerning rigour and aids in balancing biases in the research (Thomas et al., 2000; Clark, 2004). Conclusions result from holistic integration of data and aim to open up and expand upon existing knowledge.

3.6.1 Data Recording

All interviews, transcribing, coding and analysis was conducted myself, as the researcher. All interviews were recorded using a digital device, with the permission of research participants. Participants were invited to ask any questions prior to, as well as during, the interview process and in some cases a longer discussion about the use of interview data took place. The digital recordings were listened to several times throughout the analysis and findings write-up processes in order to ensure an ongoing engagement with source data

as well as to maintain a close proximity to the tone, content and meaning of the interviews themselves.

3.6.2 Data Management and Anonymity

Hard copy data files were stored in a locked cabinet in my office at Trinity's Children's Research Centre, to which I alone held the key. A similar arrangement was provided for me during my times in Sweden, and utilised to store all data collected. Computer files are stored securely on my personal laptop or on my computer in the Children's Research Centre, both of which required passwords to access. All personal data acquired on participants via email or by other means were anonomised promptly and stored. Participants have been anonymised for the purposes of this research in order to ensure they are able to speak freely about the topics raised without implications. Anonymity has also been used to ensure that all participants are represented on equal footing in my written findings. All resulting documents and publications from the research, including my own notes will contain only anonymised data.

3.6.3 Ethics of Transcribing

As anyone who has painstakingly spent hours, days and weeks transcribing interviews knows, the act of transcribing plays – or has the potential to play – a critical role in the analysis of any research project. Etherington argues that if we are explicit about our transcribing methods and experiences, we are less likely to misrepresent our data (2004). As we listen and transcribe, we re-remember the interview scenarios, re-interpret the data, glean new insights, and to reflect upon and ultimately improve our interview techniques (Poland, 1995). If ever there were a time to reflect on the embodied experience of research it is during the transcribing. My back ached, my ears rung, I became touchy and irritated. All the same, I was excitedly re-immersed in the interview experiences, analysing – in some way – as I went.

As a feminist researcher, I wanted to make the nuances of the narratives transparent. Decisions are made in each moment during the transcription process about how to reflect different types of pauses, inflections, nuances, punctuation and grammar. I decided to not go over recordings more than three times; as one attempts to capture every single minutiae, to exhaustively reflect in the transcription every single pause, inflection, emphasis, each

partial word uttered, a researcher must cut her losses. I acknowledge that some details were probably inevitably left out, though researchers seldom reflect on this possibility (Etherington, 2004). I made reflexive notes to support analysis both after the interviews and while transcribing. I endeavored to ensure that the analysis of my research data through transcripts was not left with what Kvale (1996: 167) calls 'an impoverished basis for interpretation', meanwhile ensuring my body and mental state were also not left too 'impoverished'[143].

3.6.4 Participant Representation

Demographic data were not collected on participants in this study and concepts such as gender and pronoun[144] preference remain neutral in my presentation of findings. When a pronoun was necessary in presentation of participant narratives, I chose the gender neutral 'they', despite its linguistic awkwardness. Pronouns are often assumed within social science research, rather than asked about explicitly. My work in transgender activism informs my own perception of the taken-for-grantedness of pronoun usage. My own positioning as someone who often passes as both Irish and heterosexual, but identifies as neither, informs my awareness that there are aspects of identity which we can never assume and which data collection, however in-depth, may never make visible.

The queer dilemma of the risk of mis-gendering and mis-pronouning juxtaposes interestingly with the feminist tradition of the use of pseudonyms for anonymity of participant contributions that communicate humanity and personify the participant contributions (Pfitzmann and Kohntopp, 2001). In many cases, feminists have navigated this method by facilitating participants to choose their own pseudonyms (Quinn and Radtke, 2006). Guenther (2009) suggests that our choices regarding naming and representation of both individuals and organisations should be deliberate, well thought-out and made visible. I did not feel that the use of pseudonyms for organisational affiliations or for participants themselves would prove beneficial. While my aim was to personify

[143] Perhaps this is a useful place to acknowledge that, at one point within this project, my mind and body did indeed take a toll, necessitating (at the advice of several health practitioners) that I go 'off' of the PhD register. Between the project's October 2008 start and the October 2014 end, I was 'off-books' for four semesters.

[144] Pronoun preference refers to, for example, 'she', 'he' or the gender neutral 'they'. In Swedish, 'hon', 'han' or the increasingly used 'hen' (Milles, 2011). Within research writing, assumptions are often made about the pronoun preference when referencing the words of participants or, indeed, of other researchers. My research recognises that pronoun preference is personal and, in some cases, fluid, and refuses to pin down participants under linguistic or other societal markers of gender.

contributions, indeed they were personal, I had to reconcile this feminist ideal with the queer reality that gender does matter (Butler, 1993). I realised that most names contain meaning, be they gendered, cultural or otherwise and that the use of pseudonyms would undoubtedly attach a specific situatedness to participant narratives which may or may not be relevant or meaningful to the data. In the small countries of Ireland and Sweden, it was likely that pseudonyms for organisational affiliations would not accomplish the anonymising effect that would be intended.

I chose to avoid this spiral of potential challenges and to acknowledge that our identities are fluid and ever-changing. Participants may, for example, have used one pronoun and/or gendered name at our interview but desired to change it the very next day or five years after publication of this project's findings. The, admittedly imperfect, solution was to give participants a number and a broad category of affiliation for their professional work (see Appendices, Figure 1: Participant Interviews Table). In this way, anonymity is protected to the greatest extent possible, a more comparable basis for the discourses between countries is provided and, most importantly, any potential misrepresentation based on misgendering is minimised in line with a queer perspective to the research. Where a participant narrative emphasised a certain word or phrase, I use *italics* to reflect this. Within participant quotes, any use of emphasis is a reflection of emphasis by the participant during original interview.

3.6.5 Agendas in Research

Complete transparency in qualitative research is, in reality, not possible. This is partially due to the voluminous transcripts and the reality that participants will often use the research scenario in unanticipated ways (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). In both Sweden and Ireland, many participants expressed aspirations for my research which could be read as expressions of their own agendas. Many of the participants from both countries expressed hopes that my research could change situations for them professionally, either by highlighting their good work, by calling for increased funding, or by naming the political scenarios which inhibit their work. Part of the dilemma of social scientific research which aims for social change is the realisation that, in many senses, we are incredibly limited in this regard as researchers (Shipman, 1988). Participants' expressions of aims gave way to explanations from me which clarified the context of the research project, my aims for publication and social change situated with the need to synthesise all of the data as one

large set, rather than concentrating on outlying contributions, and the reality that the immediate drive for this research is to fill the requirement of PhD thesis.

3.6.6 Relationships with Participants

Reflexive and empathic interviews with participants who tell passionate stories of investment, struggle and pride in their work can build a level of intimacy with the researcher (Busier et al., 1997). Feminist storytelling and listening practices can give way to revelations that 'parallel the therapeutic encounter' and, sometimes unexpectedly, lead to valuable understandings and insights about the participants and the topics of their stories (Etherington, 2004: 227).

The topics of the research interviews centred on the professional aims, achievements and perspectives of participants which exist simultaneously as my own set of professional interests. My interviews with professionals, therefore, readily lent themselves to the development of collegial relationships following the interviews. During my visits to Sweden, I have attended numerous conferences and seminars on topics related to my thesis, and I have inevitably encountered this study's research participants at these events. It was accepted that we would speak further within this setting, and establish collegial relationships. In many cases, initially because I was seeking more research participants, I stayed in touch with participants. In a couple of cases, I have developed close friendships with, in particular, some of the participants in Sweden. In Ireland, I had already known some of the research participants from my years volunteering and researching in the field, so a few of these collegial relationships had already been established but have also continued. In other cases, some participants have not stayed in touch much at all. Following each interview, I sent a thank-you email and followed up on anything we had agreed upon (for example, in the events where a participant requested a copy of their interview transcript), and in some cases I have met participants casually for coffee during my visits to Sweden.

Each relationship has been unique and they have all been diverse. Krieger argues that 'the self is not something that can be disengaged from knowledge or the research process. Rather, we need to understand our participation in what we know' (1991: 30). It is for this reason, that I reflexively expose these relationships and dynamics. Although social scientists have been, according to Goode, 'remarkably coy about what they do on the job'

(2010: 302), I am not alone in having formed friendship and collegial relationships with my informants. In his 2010 article, Goode contemplates the rarity for researchers to expose their emotionally and physically intimate relationships with research participants, and in doing so deliberates on his own experiences, noting that most of the time these types of relationships do not impact the findings or conclusions of the research, but that at times they do. The fact that the participants in this research project are engaged in a related field meant that when we were in contact with each other conversations concerning my research often arose outside of the interview context. The information from these conversations did not change the basis of my empirical data, but they did provide further tools for analysis and helped assuage any language barrier. For example, participants have given me policy documents and curricular material well after the interviews were finished. However, these types of materials were also given to me in the context of many of the interviews.

In the spirit of feminist research, I remained constantly aware of and reflexive of any power dynamics that may have been at play between myself and this study's research participants (Allen and Baber, 1992; Kvale, 2006). Some participants noted in more recent conversations, that their thinking has progressed on certain topics since the interviews took place. My conversations with interview participants, as well as other colleagues and professionals in this field have continued to shape my thinking and analysis on these topics. Through my use of reflexivity I choose to make that visible within my written research.

3.6.7 Dilemmas and Limitations

One of the quandaries of feminist and queer research is the perpetual grappling with being seen as rigorous and legitimate, while simultaneously seeking to question and deconstruct the notions comprising that which has come to be known as research. St Pierre (2002) suggests that efforts deemed to be classified as scientific research are increasingly positivist and quantitative and advises educational researchers who use feminist, queer, postmodern and poststructuralist methodologies to guard against such critiques which do not acknowledge their own totalitising and normalising discourses. Aguinaldo (2004) asserts that the notion of validity must be deconstructed in order to achieve its discursive function in social scientific realms and urges postmodernists and queer theorists to unpack the grand narratives which underpin concepts such as validity and rigour. Aguinaldo offers social constructivism as a tool with which to do so, arguing that 'research findings are

always already partial and situated' (2004: 128). According to this position, the difference is that much research work does not acknowledge these biases and positioning, taking for granted normative assumptions under the guise of impartiality and objectivity. As Dahl argues, 'methodological frameworks of collaboration and co-production of ideas can queer[145] research conventions and contribute to a reconsideration of what counts as theoretical work' (2010: 145).

As the researcher, my own language limitations have an impact on this study, in that I do not read or speak the Swedish language. My language limitations were made clear and all participants consented to be interviewed in English. I have also made this language limitation clear in all of my written work. As this research project focuses primarily on narrative discourses and the ways they interact in dialogue with one another, any limitation related to my access to Swedish language research literature is minimal, especially since many Swedish governmental and NGO websites have English-language information.

One additional limitation of this research is that the participant base is limited to adult professionals working outside of school contexts, while the research question concerns sex education for young people and primarily discusses those modalities which take place in school settings. A project with wider scope might render more comprehensive conclusions if it were to include young people, teachers and classroom observation. The strength of focusing the participant base on sex education professionals, however, is for the specific influence they have in driving sex education discourses through research, NGO activities, outside facilitation and roles at government level. Teachers of sex education rely on resources provided to them by these sex education professionals, through the official curriculum, NGO supplementary resources, and through the cultural discourses produced by those who are steering the sex education field. Teachers are limited in their practice to the discourses made available to them (Phelan and McLaughlin, 1995), and in sex education these discourses are driven by sex education professionals.

While this research endeavoured to interview a cross-section of relevant sex education professionals in each country, there were undoubtedly key individuals in both countries who were missed. One possible effect of this limitation is that the narratives from those participants that were included in the study could be seen to generalise the situation for

[145] Queer can be used as a verb, in addition to an adjective and noun, and queer as a doing (Sullivan, 2003) is particularly useful within conceptualisations of queer methodologies.

their entire country. In Ireland, several emails were sent requesting interviews, but remained unanswered. Additionally in a few cases in Ireland, individuals from key organisations did not feel that the research was relevant to their work. In Sweden, referrals were limited to those made to me by my own contacts, which perhaps served to limit the participant base.

3.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is varied, interactive and ongoing (Grbich, 2012). It establishes themes and patterns through listening to the recorded interviews, writing and re-reading the transcripts and coding thematically multiple times (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2008). I aimed to write up my findings reflexively and in a way which includes participant voices, emphasises the process, contributes to the literature in the respective field and calls for action in its recommendations or conclusions (Creswell, 2007). Etherington considers the dilemmas of creating a postmodern text, comparing the structuring of her own project on reflexive research to 'trying to dress an over-active baby... no sooner had I pushed one leg in, than the other came out; as soon as I tucked that leg back in, an arm was free and so on' (2004: 23). She argues that postmodern pieces of writing are notoriously messy, particularly when viewed in the context (or through the privileging of) order and clarity. For her, one of the most basic tenets of postmodern research is that, 'there is no one 'right way' – an exciting and (perhaps) troubling idea!' (Etherington, 2004: 71). Postmodern times and ways of thinking have opened up freedom within methodologies. Postmodern interviews are necessarily creative, adaptable to unique interview scenarios and, as Fontana argues, as there is no set of rules, one must forget the notion of rules completely (2002).

3.7.1 Thematic Coding

Digital records were transcribed and then coded thematically using Nvivo 9 software to organise the manually coded data. I believe that each participant has significant and unique contributions, and I aim to represent the range of responses while accounting for individual and environmental dynamics in analysing data (Darbyshire et al., 2005). One of the reasons for manual coding, rather than using the aid of word-finders in software, is those very differences in linguistics that discourse analysis aims to examine. Participants used vastly different terminology to discuss similar concepts and manual coding facilitated full exploration of these nuances. Some of the linguistic differences were cultural, some

personal, some pedagogical, and others political. For example, one participant in Ireland refused to use the language of 'sexuality education', preferring the term 'relationships education' to deliver the same school-based Irish Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum. In another example, many participants had strong views on the types of language that must be used to communicate information about genitals within sex education, with some insisting that 'proper' or 'biological' terminology be used, and others feeling strongly about using 'sexy' terminology which others might refer to as 'slang'. These nuances will, of course, be unpacked comprehensively in the analysis chapters. My analysis recognises that there are many people, many voices, and many ways of having a voice, including silences, affect, artistic expression and resistance as well as spoken words.

3.7.2 Critical Queer and Feminist Analysis

This research takes a poststructuralist, postmodern stance on feminist and queer theories to analyse discourses within data, data collection and analysis (Allen and Baber, 1992; Charmaz, 2011; Lather and Lather, 1991; Kong et al., 2002, Popoviciu et al., 2006). As such, analysis is mindful of, and works critically and intersectionally with, multi–faceted notions of identity and diversity (Collins, 1997). Not all interview participants in this research use a queer and/or feminist lens, but rather this is my theoretical approach which was made clear to participants.

Smith (1987) cautions that we must remember woman is not a homogenous category, and that class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability all constitute intersections with gender. The work of trans*-inclusive feminists, such as Serano (2007), reminds us that the category woman is perhaps more nuanced than some may realise and includes the experiences of trans* and gender variant women as well as the more privileged positioning of cisgender women. Butler (1990) argues that gender is a societal norm which interacts in tandem with other norms and functions to afford privileged positioning to one experience and oppress those situated outside of the norm. In considering all of these, the use of queer and feminist analysis seeks to critically interrogate and reveal gendered and sexual experiences which sit outside of the norm, while intersectionally examines systems of privilege and oppression (Collins, 1997). Specific aspects of adolescent embodiment and development as well as gendered and sexualised notions of femininity and masculinity are particularly relevant for feminist theories (Frost, 2001). These seek to expose the multiplicity of ways

in which cultural norms are created and constructed rather than natural and essential (Haraway, 1988).

Postmodern feminists are skeptical that one universal truth exists (Allen and Baber, 1992), and prefer to work at deconstructing, dismantling and exposing rhetoric traditionally taken for granted as truth rather than purporting to proclaim truth themselves. A postmodern research process acknowledges that, although it aims to dismantle and deconstruct such concepts, it is not exempt from the privilege, power, biased histories and creation of knowledge which influences all types of research. Despite this, it endeavours to acknowledge, explore and make visible these intricacies which shape how information is gathered, interpreted and presented (Flax, 1987; Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1988). Stanley and Wise (1990) caution that reflexive and feminist research practices should never be interpreted to be free of bias or power dynamics, but rather reflexive about those dynamic. Meanwhile, queer theory and postmodernism would argue the inevitable failure in achieving the goal of being always-reflexive, ever aware, and constantly dismantling of privilege and power within research (Browne and Nash, 2010). Feminism, as a theoretical and methodological basis for research, centres around and problematises the experiences of those situated outside of privileged gender positioning. This includes women, girls and transgender people, of course. It is also an approach which recognises intersectionality of identity in terms of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, dis/ability to name a few. A critical use of these theories and methodologies produces a specific critical approach to sex education pedagogies, one which sees gender and sexuality norms, systems of privilege and oppression, and discourses.

3.7.3 Analytical Process and Presentation of Findings

The analytical process for this thesis was completed in six stages. First, each participant was interviewed, one individual was interviewed twice. Both during and immediately after each interview, I took notes reflecting on themes emerging and reflections based on the interview. These notes included both reflections on context, expressions and affective elements of the interview (those aspects which would not be captured by the digital recorder). I also took note of initial impressions and interesting themes as well as reflections which may have been articulated by the participant either before or after the digital device was in use.

Next, each interview was transcribed and I completed all of the transcription myself, chronologically in the order the interviews took place. This process provided a valuable opportunity to conduct an initial analysis of key themes emerging in the narratives. While transcribing, I maintained a list of themes, both minute and broad, that emerged and jotted down reflections related to these themes.

Third, upon completing the transcription process for all interviews, I printed out and read each transcription in detail. This method of analysis was particularly useful in that it allowed for reflection on the written word and a visual perspective on the data. I highlighted emergent themes using colour coding and wrote analytical reflections in the margins, beginning to link the narratives to larger reflections on the meaning contained within this particular set of stories. The colour-coded print outs were cut up and spread out all over my living room floor, allowing for a visual look at what was emerging thematically and analytically. This stage of analysis rendered a list of themes and sub-themes (see Appendices, Figure 4: Outline of Codes).

Fourth, when this phase of highlighting and paper transcript analysis had been completed, I uploaded the transcript documents into Nvivo 9 software and created nodes and sub-nodes which corresponded to the themes and sub-themes created in the previous phase. In using Nvivo, I took the opportunity to read and code the written transcripts another time. I referenced the paper transcripts, but gave this analysis a second reflection. Nvivo afforded me the opportunity to view the thematic contents of the narratives alongside one another so that themes could be looked at as a whole.

For phase five, I reviewed the thematic and sub-thematic documents from Nvivo and made reflective notes of further analysis, this time more overtly linking analytical reflections from the research and theoretical literature which I made efforts to read and keep up with throughout the duration of the PhD project. An outline of the findings chapters began to emerge. As is often the case with a research project of this size, every analytical reflection will not make it into the final thesis. I endevoured to focus on the collection of narratives as a whole and the ways that they linked together, but also to acknowledge significant outliers of content. Writing up the findings chapters involved several formats and multiple revisions.

Many of my findings chapters began their lives as shorter versions through conference papers. I took regular opportunities to write up findings from my data in this way and these conferences provided prospects for engaging with the analysis and for bringing in theoretical perspectives in supportive environments. This gave me an opportunity to present the work to audiences in Ireland and Sweden, which brought in reflections from other researchers, and in some cases activists and professionals, working in areas such as sociology, social policy, research on the body, gender studies, feminist research, queer theory and sex education. Conferences and frequent visits back to Sweden afforded chances to network and dialogue with colleagues about my data, to obtain references to relevant research and to strengthen my analysis. I continued to read as much relevant research material and theoretical writing as possible throughout the analysis and write-up processes, always taking notes on the ways in which new information might link to or reflect upon my project's data. It was through these initial drafts of chapters and reflection processes that the core meaning making of this project's data was crafted and refined most clearly.

In establishing findings chapters, I mapped the thematic codes which had emerged back to the initial research questions. These themes and research questions, listed at the beginning of this chapter, became organised as the findings chapters of this thesis. Data are presented from both countries alongside each other, categorised by themes and presented as a dialogue on each topic.

As a sixth phase of analysis, while writing up the thesis chapters I listened once again to the set of interviews on the digital device. This provided an opportunity to revisit the source data at a point in the thesis where the contents of the analysis chapters had already been quite refined. I felt that this stage of revisiting the data was a unique and useful step which ensured that the integrity of the initial meaning from the interviews was upheld and secured within the final version of the written thesis findings. As the findings chapters were drafted and re-drafted, the Nvivo nodes and the initial interview transcriptions were also revisited regularly to ensure that findings had captured the stories of the participants and the meaning of the set of interview data as a whole.

3.8 Discussion

This PhD project uses queer and feminist methods and methodologies to examine narratives of good and inclusive practice in sex education from professionals in Ireland and Sweden. It proposes that unique insights can emerge from examining these two very different European contexts alongside one another in a two-country comparison. It takes a poststructuralist perspective to this piece of social research and engages self-reflexively throughout. Data were collected through four phases of semi-structured qualitative interviews, two phases each in Sweden and in Ireland. Interview data was analysed in six phases, using thematic coding, multiple revisits to the data, and Nvivo qualitative coding software. Analysis of findings engaged with the research literature, theoretical perspectives, the project's initial research questions and with other individuals through dialogues and presentations at conferences.

Chapter 4

Political and Legislative Influences: *Hope and Hopelessness*

A comparison of the disparate trajectories of sex education in Ireland and Sweden is no simple task. Participants in both countries were very aware of the important role that public policy and the law play in either facilitating or preventing 'good practice' in sex education. Narratives from both countries also demonstrated good intentions on the part of the participants and those working in the field for providing 'good' sex education. From a social policy perspective, it is critical to examine the political and legislative influences which directly impact upon 'good practice' in sex education. Of course, the role that legislation plays is nuanced and ever-changing.

As established in Chapter 1, sexuality education dilemmas faced in Sweden and Ireland may on the surface seem to differ only by their historical positioning in time[146]. The interviews conducted with professionals working in the field of sex education elucidated the ways these differing contexts have developed into the ways in which sex education exists today. Their narratives on political and legislative influences help to situate classroom pedagogies into a wider context.

Sexuality education is perhaps one of the most politicised topics within school-based education (Walker and Barton, 2013; Ringrose, 2013; Allen et al., 2012). From an overarching perspective, roughly similar sets of laws exist in both countries but their impacts differ vastly. Ireland and Sweden are perfect examples for the ways in which European attempts at standardisation of certain rights and protections can vary greatly between States in practice. These differences appear to reflect national political priorities as well as both individual and national cultural and historical sexual discourses.

Through participant narratives, this chapter examines the political and legislative influences on sex education in Sweden and Ireland as they link to narratives of 'good' and 'inclusive' practice. I situate these politics within participant discourses of hope and hopelessness through a queer and feminist lens.

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[146] Sweden's 1955 introduction of a compulsory curriculum[146] in schools preceded Ireland's 1994 introduction by 40 years.

4.1 Hopefulness and Hopelessness in Queer Theory

Queer theorists have long considered and analysed concepts of hope and hopelessness as they engage with politics through a queer paradigm (see also: Berland and Warner, 1995; Edelman, 2004; Duggan and Muñoz, 2009; Ahmed, 2010; O'Rourke, 2011). Berlant and Warner see a queer approach to politics as radically hopeful, holding on to a never-ending aspiration towards a promise of political utopia (1995). For O'Rourke, much of the allure of queer thinking is its promising nature. He asserts that 'Part of, perhaps all of, the attraction of queer theory is its very undefinability, its provisionality, its openness, and its not-yet-here-ness' (2011: 103). With this rationale, hope itself might be seen as inherently queer in some contexts. However, for Edelman, author of *NO Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, queer theory is inevitably hopeless and must necessarily reject the future (2004). Edelman recommends embracing queer's hopelessness, thereby rejecting society's hopefulness towards normative social order (2004). O'Rourke (2011) argues that as queer theorists have become increasingly interested in social politics, proclamations of queer theory's death have increased. Yet somehow queer analysis remains alive and well, thriving even, as evidenced by its continued and increased proliferation within analytical and theoretical milieus since its explosive arrival in the 1990s (O'Rourke, 2011; see also Sullivan, 2003). Both Ireland and Sweden have benefited from strong and thriving, albeit small, communities of queer theorists and queer activists and in both contexts sex education has been an ongoing topic of queer discussion (see also Bromseth, 2009; Giffney, 2006).

4.2 Critical Hopefulness

It must be stated from the onset that the discourses contained within narratives from Sweden were overwhelmingly critical – of governments, policies, teachers and those with perceived positions of power when it comes to sex education. Participants in Sweden were decidedly more critical than those in Ireland, which was in many ways surprising given Sweden's reputation as a global 'sex education leader'. Throughout the course of this study, I came to see criticism as perhaps a Swedish cultural trait, a notion which I will explore in more depth in the next chapter. These critiques were not solely negative and were not articulated in isolation. Rather, they were situated within a distinct and striking hopefulness that participants in Sweden afforded to legislative updates and the impacts of certain political trends.

Svensson and Gunnarsson (2012) point out how Sweden is most famous for its gender equality policies, but that these policies are closely intertwined with Swedish welfare state ideology. They trace how Swedish anti-discrimination legislation has acted to both guarantee non-discrimination and to introduce active initiatives for equality, in order to uphold Sweden's self-image as an 'equality' State. Many participants in this study in Sweden discussed equality legislation, at some points querying and critiquing its implementation or the motivations behind recent additions to the laws. Simultaneously, however, most participants who spoke of Sweden's anti-discrimination policies widely hailed them as facilitating an intersectional approach to equality with extensive protections for young people in an education context. In contrast, equality legislation in Ireland was more sparsely referenced and, when it was discussed, it was denigrated for the restrictions it imposes.

4.2.1 Equality Law: Queer in Sweden, Not Accessible in Ireland

In many EU countries, equality legislation names specific anti–discrimination grounds of protection. Sweden's recently expanded seven equality grounds include sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age[147]. Sweden's equality body works to ensure that employers, Universities and schools implement measures to prevent discrimination and is charged with promoting equal rights. Participants frequently credited equality policy with facilitating 'good' and 'inclusive' sexuality education:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ... so in the event that, you know, parents come in and say, 'I don't want you teaching my child about homosexuality' – well, you know, I'm sorry, the law says I need to do it. Among other things.

In Ireland, equality legislation protection is afforded on the basis of gender, marital status, family status[148], sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community (Irish nomadic people). Ireland's nine grounds have been hailed for outnumbering those of many other countries but only cover issues concerning access to

[147] In 2009, the four previous anti–discrimination ombudsmen merged to become the Swedish Equality Ombudsman, responsible for all seven grounds. This move has been seen as progressive by some and as a neo–liberal attempt to reduce equality services by others, sparking heated debate.
[148] The family status ground protects parents, pregnant mothers and caregivers.

education and do not impact the educational curriculum. These laws are also not accessible to people under age 18 (The Equality Authority, 2005) [149]. A religious 'ethos' exemption[150], applicable in most Irish schools, allows for employment discrimination, resulting in few 'out' LGBT teachers as role models for young people. Religious 'ethos' implications in Irish schools extend beyond employment measures and preside over all operations of the schools, including the curriculum (Neary, 2014). Several participants in Ireland spoke to the impact of religious ethos. One researcher asserted that the 'ethos' constitute a co-mingling of Church and State, while another considered it 'an opt out':

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... it's still, you know, the State and the Church and the State's attitude is informed I still think by the Church... I still think that's the ethos.

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] Em, this veil of cultural Catholicism is being used as a smoke screen. The ethos thing. It's giving people an opt out.

In practice, all functions of the school must be in line with its religious ethos, but this is interpreted in a variety of ways depending upon the religious affiliation and the traditions of the particular school (Devine, 2005). One civil servant described how some schools interpret school 'ethos' as an imperative to take out certain topics – such as contraception – from sex education lessons but asserted that this is not what is expected of schools:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] Some people still think if it's a Catholic school you can't teach about contraception, but every school in the country should be teaching about contraception... the ethos of a school doesn't mean there's certain topics you take out. You know. Everything has to be addressed, but it can be addressed in a way that's consistent with the ethos of the school.

According to the other participant narratives, this civil servant's assertion is not understood or addressed in all schools. Participant narratives elucidated that religious 'ethos' is enforced and interpreted in different ways among schools throughout Ireland.

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[149] In order to make a complaint under the Equal Status Act, an individual must be over the age of 18. A parent or guardian can make a complaint on behalf of a young person (Equality Authority, 2005).

[150] Section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act exempts institutions with a religious 'ethos' (including schools and health services) from equal treatment obligations. In February 2012, Fianna Fáil Senator Averil Power proposed a bill to amend this and disallow discrimination based on sexual orientation and civil status grounds only. On 11 April 2014 The Equality Authority published recommendations for amendments to Section 37.1, based on submissions sought from civil society individuals and groups. Amendments have not yet been enacted.

4.2.2 Optimism: Recent Changes in Law

Many participants in Sweden hailed the equality laws as providing a mandate for inclusive sex education in schools. In particular, many heralded the 2006 addition of school remits to anti-discrimination laws as 'good practice'[151], but expressed concerns about ensuring implementation of this law:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ... when this legislation came... it came very quickly. And suddenly people, the schools and preschools, they had to do something. But they really didn't understand what this was about *at all*...

Several participants in Sweden applauded the anti-discrimination law's expanding mandate, but simultaneously expressed a fear of failure at perfect implementation. As Gunnarsson and Svensson articulate 'The prohibition of discrimination and the implementation of active measures to achieve gender equality do not always sit comfortably with each other' (2012: 9). Active measures refer to the ways in which law might be implemented in practice. As one participant detailed:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] They [schools] are still struggling with the law that came for schools in 2006, it is now incorporated in the discrimination law... They're still like, 'How are we going to work with equality?'... Schools are so slow... it's really, really hard to change.

One participant suggested that the downside of such an all-encompassing legislative remit was that it could result in inaction on the part of teachers and school staff:

> [P26, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] They [teachers] know there is a new law, but they have no clue... what I've seen is that teachers very much think in their own, 'How do I react? How do I do it? What do I have to do? I'm scared. Maybe I'll do all of those mistakes. I'm scared so I'd better not do anything so I don't make mistakes.'

[151] The Prohibiting Discrimination and Other Harassing Treatment of Children and Pupils Act was enacted 1 April 2006. Bromseth discusses how this legislation obliges schools actively to prevent discrimination on the seven equality grounds (2009). If a pupil takes legal action, the burden of proof lies with the school to demonstrate how they have worked to prevent the discrimination to which the young person was exposed.

In narratives like the one above, the participants ride a fine line between coming across as sympathetic to the plight of the teachers and seeming to blame teachers for inaction within their obligations regarding the law[152].

In 2009, the four previous anti–discrimination Ombudsmen merged to become the Swedish Equality Ombudsman, responsible for all seven grounds. This move was described as progressive by some participants, while others saw it as a neo–liberal attempt to reduce equality services. Several participants in Sweden were optimistic about the reconfiguration[153]. For one civil servant it presented an opportunity to look at all of the grounds more comprehensively and holistically:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden]... the work for gender equality needed some, sort of, vitamin injection because it was sort of old-fashion and heteronormative so I think this merging of the Ombudsman will also be to, in the long run, a more up-to-date work for gender equality... I think we could sort of incorporate [gender equality work] into the heteronorm [perspective] again, but it needed to be broke loose, first.

The above narrative attempts to articulate, as Svensson and Gunnarsson (2012) have argued, that while gender equality has been a long-standing cornerstone of Swedish legislative achievements, in practice the country's equality legislation has perhaps been less inclusive than it would purport to be. The rights of certain minority groups such as single mothers and immigrant women, for example, are not fought for or guaranteed with the same ambition as other equality scenarios (Svensson and Gunnarsson, 2012).

During the course of this study, Sweden's anti-discrimination legislation became unique within Europe for its addition of 'transgender identity and/or expression' to its list of protected grounds. Many participants welcomed this addition to the legislation, but expressed concern about how this new law might integrate with the long-standing gender protections and queried why 'transgender' needed to be separate[154]:

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[152] Many participants empathetically describe the ways in which laws are implemented without proper follow-through, leaving teachers under-prepared. However, these narratives often became critical of teachers while also critiquing broader structural issues.

[153] Participants described the reasons for the merger of the equality bodies as two-fold. Firstly, it was seen a cost saving measure. However, this measure had been justified and explained as necessary due to increasing (awareness of) diversity in Sweden. The second reason included the need to examine grounds such as ethnicity and religion more closely and the need to include a ground which recognised transgender identity and expression.

[154] Many transgender activists and campaigners would argue that 'transgender' fits within the broader remit of gender, rather than constituting its own (separate, 'Other') category.

> [P26, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] ... to have a law says that transgender identity – it should be gender identity - but at least, for trans* people or people seen as trans*, that is fantastic... people that have the power actually knows [about trans* people] now. And I think that is fantastic.

While the transgender and gender grounds are still listed separately, for many participants the rationale behind the formation of the new equality body was to place an equal focus on all aspects of equality law. Some would argue that the law is written in a way which necessitates an intersectional critique of norms, rather than a focus on aspects of difference, when attempting to enforce and ensure equality. Borchorst et al. assert that addressing multiple inequalities simultaneously through anti-discrimination law has become a new policy trend across Europe, starting with the Nordic countries (2012). A central debate in relation to this new framework is whether or not a 'multiple' approach might serve to downgrade certain aspects of equality while placing disproportionate emphasis on others (Borchorst et al., 2012). Participants in this study in Sweden shared these concerns.

4.2.3 Queering Legislation

Whether or not a queer approach which examines power and privilege can ever truly function as perfectly intersectional is an age-old queer dilemma (Sullivan, 2003). It is perhaps this very predicament that characterised what I will call *critical hopefulness* on the part of participants in Sweden. While many spoke of a queer potential in the law, or celebrated a queer perspective on equality having been legislated for, these optimistic narratives were frequently critical that the law, or implementation of the law, was not going far enough. This nuanced version of hope could be seen to reference what Berlant calls a 'dubious optimism' offered by adopting a queer perspective (Berlant and Greenwald, 2012).

Sentiments in Sweden were decidedly hopeful and optimistic, motivated to improve conditions and always looking forward towards a better future. Simultaneously, however, they were steadfast in their critique both of those in power and power structures themselves. For some, the list of protected grounds in Sweden was seen as limiting:

> [P8, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ... I think we limit ourselves to the discrimination legislation in Sweden. Because gender identity or expression... sexuality, race, religion, disability... because it's much easier to work if you can like [say], 'Yeah, the legislation says you have to work with this' or 'this policy says you have to work with this'. But that's why we limit ourselves... it's much more easier to get people to listen and to actually do work with those issues. I mean we can work with body size or with different stuff as well but it wouldn't have so much influence, I think.

This participant simultaneously credited equality legislation for facilitating and legislating for inclusive sex education work while critiquing it for being too limiting. This type of narrative was common in Sweden. A number of participants expressed excitement at the 'normcritical[155] potential' within several aspects of recent legislative changes:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...I was very excited when we got the legislation because I saw the normcritical potential... we used the legislation as a framework and then we saw the normcritical potential, so that was a way of, em, eh, to say [justifying], 'Yes, here, you see we need to work normcritically'...

The 'normcritical potential' seen by this participant describes a recognition that with all of the equality grounds examined simultaneously under one Ombudsman, the new structures open up the possibility for a focus on norms as opposed to 'the Other'. According to one civil servant, it was not the intention of the legislative changes to bring in a queer or normcritical perspective, but rather the upsurge in normcritical advocacy was well-timed for interpreting the legislative changes in this way:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] ... I think the government has some sort of notion about what that is, but I think when it comes to promoting equal rights and opportunities I don't think they see that the structures sort of meet or are co-dependent of each other and reproduce each other... they didn't foresee that we would work with this promoting equal rights and opportunities in a normcritical way, I guess... normcriticism is really something that has come from below, from the grassroots... it is sort of the popular version of queer theory.

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[155] Normcritical approaches to pedagogies and the law are an emergent trend in Sweden (Bromseth et al., 2009). Rooted in queer theory, these approaches seek to challenge identity norms as a tactic for inclusion. Normcritical approaches focus on norms such as heterosexuality, cisgenderism, able-bodiness and Whiteness, rather than 'adding on' diverse experiences. They exposes oppressions by displaying how societal norms work and why they are unstable, engaging critical thinking and consideration of one's own oppressive actions. Normcritical approaches were overwhelmingly cited as good and inclusive practice for sex education by participants in Sweden, and these narratives will be addressed comprehensively throughout this thesis.

This participant was not alone in overtly crediting the trend of applying a normcritical perspective to the law to the work of grassroots efforts. It was striking the extent to which non-governmental employees, activists and NGOs in Sweden seemed empowered to conduct their own critical analysis of government decisions, and to even go so far as attempting to educate government departments about what their dictates imply in practice. One participant working in an NGO in Sweden described how they have increasingly utilised a normcritical perspective to challenge the notion of 'risk' categories within their funded remit by another government department:

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] And from the National Board of Social Welfare I know that they think that our queer perspective, a normcritcal perspective is troublesome because they want to define people in 'risk' categories... it has really, the last two years, you've gotten more and more acceptance from when I'm fighting for this normcritical perspective.

Research and funding priorities which focus on 'risk' are common within the sexual health and sex education field. References to these types of productive dialogues between NGOs, activists and government departments were not found in the narratives from Ireland[156]. The success of grassroots normcritical efforts having reached government and policy level, even to a small extent, must undoubtedly have an influence on the sense of hopefulness that ran through the narratives in Sweden. This sense of hope pervaded most narratives, even critiques of the government in power in Sweden were qualified with a sense that the situation was 'not a disaster':

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] But I guess we do have the wrong government now, so speaking from a personal perspective, not as a State employee, but I think it can't really get any worse so – and it's still pretty good. The discrimination act isn't a disaster, I think there are some things that could be improved, but I think, yeah. This is sort of the low water mark and it can only go upwards from here... I think the challenge is to make it even more easily accessible for people who don't work with the questions professionally to at least make them understand why it's important.

Duggan and the late Muñoz, in 2009, published their queer theoretical conversation 'Hope and hopelessness: A dialogue' as an article in *Women and Performance.* Interestingly, they

[156] In fact, there were reports of governments actively blocking and diminishing the work of NGOs and individuals working to improve good practice in sex education, which I explore later in this chapter.

immediately associate hope and optimism with race and class privilege, operating as the reward for conformity to social norms, an endorsement of domination under the guise of freedom (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009). As noted in Chapter 3, the participants in this study were, on a whole, undoubtedly privileged[157]. By incorporating Duggan and Muñoz's analysis, we can see that hopefulness may be partially linked to *who* is being interviewed, in addition to *which* National context we are examining.

It would seem that these musings on hope and optimism can also readily be mapped onto the dilemmas faced by sex education professionals attempting to work within the neoliberal and neoconservative political frameworks that so many participants sought to critique. In a seemingly unfair twist of logic, the actions of those who seek to escape the shackles of these political situations by using techniques such as hope and optimism, the discourses of betterment or other methods available to us in the social and political landscapes in which we reside could be interpreted as unconscious complicity with the very power structures they seek to escape. In this sense, we can see the scenario as one which Berlant (2011) would consider a 'cruel optimism'. Duggan qualifies her theorisation of this hope-desperation loop by asserting that not all hope fits within this vicious circle. She posits that while a non-critical hopefulness may never be the right 'queer' thing to do, an 'educated hope' might be the *only* way forward (2009: 278, *my emphasis*). Duggan concludes by asserting that the opposite of hope is actually complacency, not hopelessness, as hopelessness contains an affective energy and drive (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009).

4.3 Hopelessness

Hopelessness and despondency characterised many of the narratives in Ireland. In many cases, this hopelessness was tethered with what could be read as a small hope for what 'good practice' might transpire if new or different interpretations of policy were to become reality. This thread of aspiration within desperation could be interpreted as Duggan's affective drive or energy behind hopelessness (2009). In some cases, legislation and political situations were interpreted with fear and apprehension in Ireland, whereas in other more rare instances liberties were taken to ensure 'good practice' first and foremost, above a rigid interpretation of law. It is important to explore the differing discourses of who the

[157] Their positions as professionals in the field of sex education affords them a certain power and status, which intertwine with the race and class privilege that I would guess most of the participants in Sweden would acknowledge if they were to have been asked demographic information.

law is seen to protect when examining Ireland's and Sweden's legislative realities alongside one another.

4.3.1 Cautious of Governmental Motives

Several participants in Ireland discussed the Crisis Pregnancy Programme of the Health Service Executive[158]. Within these narratives a sense of caution, uncertainty, mistrust and hopelessness in relation to government initiatives is palpable:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] We reduce teenage pregnancies through the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, therefore, great. I mean the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, the name of it alone... crisis pregnancy is only one experience of many influencing sex education - gender, sex, etcetera.

Participants in Ireland were critical, but there was a strong sense that what was being expressed was more muted than a healthy and engaged critical optimism. There was a clear sense of desperation, but the hopelessness expressed by many contained a certain *helplessness* when it came to discussing governmental reliance for policy or funding purposes. Even when commending some governmental efforts, any accolades are situated in a wider context of hopelessness:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... CPA[159] have had funding and they have been able to kick start projects where they've been able to kind of do research... there's a catalyst for change... that research has added to at least the shift that has happened to kind of some extent. And I think that even though I'm not that hopeful or not that pleased with where we are today... I think we could be considerably, kind of, you know, worse off...

It is striking that this participant seems to begrudgingly feel obliged to express gratitude that the situation is not 'worse off', perhaps an indication of having battled throughout their career and feeling a genuine and informed appreciation that governmental support for

[158] The Crisis Pregnancy Programme in Ireland is, since 2010, operating under the Health Service Executive (HSE) and tasked with formulating and implementing a national strategy to prevent crisis pregnancy. Prior to that, these functions came under a semi-independent body, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPP). It is important to note that many of this project's interviews took place prior to this changeover.

[159] Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPA) was the former name of the Health Service Executive's Crisis Pregnancy Programme (HSE's CPP)

sex education could be more restrictive. This narrative was characteristic of responses in Ireland when I asked participants to cite good practice examples.

4.3.2 Despondent Wishes

Policy discussions by study participants in Ireland focused less on equality legislation issues than in Sweden, but offered a strong critique of the restrictions imposed by Age of Consent laws and limitations concerning the absence of a national sexual health strategy:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] The things nationally that would make a difference, across the board, is the existence of a sexual health strategy... When you've got a strategy, it gives permission for work to happen, and even if that work doesn't happen overnight... I think all countries, all developed countries, have a strategy... So the things that for me would make the difference would be, number one having a strategy. One, the legal clarification on the Age of Consent.

> [P18, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... in Ireland we don't have a sexual health strategy and it can work in two ways. There's no sexual health strategy and there's no funding from up there [the government], but at the same time we still have people at grassroots level that are pushing for that sexual health education for young people...

The above narrative articulates well the conflicting scenario in Ireland whereby sex education professionals are working to advocate for legislative assistance, while simultaneously getting on with their work anyway and seeing it through regardless of what political supports are or are not in place:

> [P34, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] (laughs) Ok, [my dream] would be, well it would be, em, a national sexual health strategy, it would be a properly *funded* national sexual health strategy, em, and sexual health agencies all over the country. (laughs)

The tone in the articulation of this participant's 'dream' was sarcasm, and this type of sentiment was not uncommon in Ireland when participants discussed policy and governmental level support. Suggestions from participants that Ireland is out of line with the developed world for its absence of a national sexual health strategy highlight the

simplicity of what participants believed could impact their work at a policy level[160]. Narratives of lack of support for sex education initiatives from a governmental perspective were striking for their sense of hopelessness, and for the fears of repercussion in the event that their work might contravene existing laws.

4.4 Interpretations of Policy

Despite having similar sets of laws, albeit with differing details, the discrepancies between the ways that public policy was seen and interpreted in Ireland and in Sweden were remarkable. In Ireland, participants articulated what can only be described as a genuine fear of the law on the part of many of those working in sex education. In Sweden, on the other hand, the law was interpreted under a cultural paradigm which prioritises sexual freedom and exploration, as well as empowering young people to take responsibility for their sexual health needs. In Ireland, of course, there is also a cultural paradigm operating, but one which is more linked to sexual repression than freedom, a concept that I will explore in the next chapter. Additionally, the vast differences in abortion legacies of the two countries can be seen as setting the foundation for the ways in which sex education policy and implementation has transpired in both countries, but in Ireland the abortion discussion was most notable for its overwhelming absence from participant narratives.

4.4.1 Fear of the Law

The Age of Sexual Consent is 17 in Ireland, and previous research has found that, in practice, this is in some cases enforced by General Practitioners (GPs) acting as gatekeepers to contraception for young people (Sherlock 2008; IFPA 2011). Discussions of Ireland's Age of Consent laws were frequent in interviews, and often expressed with strong opinions, as was the case with this participant:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... that lack of clarity around the Age of Consent is an excuse for services not to be there.

[160] During the course of this study, the Royal College of Physicians began focusing on campaigning for a National Sexual Health Strategy, and in May 2012 the Health Service Executive commenced development of such a strategy, which has not yet been enacted. Regional health boards previously had their own strategies in place.

As outlined in Chapter 1, contraception and condoms were banned in 1935 and remained illegal until a Supreme Court ruling in 1978[161]. This spirit of gate-keeping with regards to contraception has continued today, with a practice of 'consultation' in advance of obtaining emergency contraception, a custom which is not mandated by any policy and has, in many cases, been found to moralise over or chastise the sexual experiences of those who seek to access it[162]. Considering the collateral effect of these multiple factors, contraception can be practically inaccessible for young people[163] (Sherlock 2008; IFPA 2011), particularly those under the Age of Sexual Consent, and a number of participants confirmed encountering this in their work:

> [P34, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... we've had young women in here who have been, em, refused treatment even for morning after pill or more general contraception, from GPs. They would come in here and say, 'Where can I go?' You know, 'Because I've been to the family planning clinic and they just turned me away.'

The Irish Sexual Health and Relationships Study, published in 2006 found that 21% of men and 12% of women first experienced heterosexual vaginal intercourse before they were 17, with some initiating sexual activity at age 12 or 13 (Layte et al.). These figures indicate that the current Age of Consent legislation is out of touch with the lived realities of young people's sexual experiences in Ireland. The hopelessness around the prospect of bringing the legislation in line with reality was disheartening, but not surprising considering the lack of significant political will for this issue[164]:

> [P18, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... I personally think that the Age of Consent of 17 is very unrealistic... [young people] are having sex at a very young age and research suggests that that age is getting lower and lower as time moves on. So we really have to

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[161] Despite feminist activist efforts, condoms were not made available without a prescription until 1985, and for a time after that many GPs still only prescribed hormonal methods to married women.

[162] See: http://realproductivehealth.com/real-productive-health-guidelines-for-psi/

[163] It is important to note that, in February 2011, the Irish Medicines Board granted over-the-counter status to emergency contraceptive pill Norlevo, meaning that at the time of this study, the pill may now be purchased by individuals over age 16 in pharmacies without a prescription. This change occurred after most of the interviews for this project had taken place. Accessibility barriers remain for young people obtaining oral contraceptives, but condoms are now widely available in Ireland.

[164] A 2006 report of the Joint Oireachtas (Parliament) Committee on Child Protection recommended changing Age of Consent to 16, and 18 with a person in authority. Former Minister for Justice Alan Shatter introduced memos and spok on the issue several times since 2006, putting forward arguments both for change and for keeping the legislation as it stands, avoiding taking a stand. Former minister of state for children Barry Andrews introduced similar proposals in the final weeks of the Fianna Fáil-Green Party coalition, but they were never implemented. Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny spoke out against lowering the Age of Consent. In 2013, Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RNCI) took a stand against proposals to lower Age of Consent, citing Child Protection issues.

> buck up and get real... we have to be able to look at strategies around this and the first thing maybe would be to look at lowering the Age of Consent... I don't think we can do much about the Age of Consent but what we can do is to make sure that we still provide some level of sexual health knowledge and try and get past that loophole...

Again, here we see a strong desire for change and hearty critique of the lack of effective legislation, but this is quickly qualified by 'I don't think we can do much about the Age of Consent', a sentiment which sits in stark contrast to the optimism found in narratives from Sweden. Rather than having optimism for change in legislation and policy, participants in Ireland were more sanguine about their personal spheres of influence and ability to affect change in the context of what was essentially portrayed as a desperate sexual health landscape.

Age of Consent laws indicate competency in the eyes of the law for engaging in sexual behaviour, and their intention is to protect young people from sexually predatory encounters (Bullough, 2005). While the laws purport to protect young people from exploitation, there was a strong indication in Ireland that participants felt pressure to enforce these laws in a way which would serve to inhibit young people from sexual exploration, rather than shelter them from abuse as a fundamental priority. Those educating in schools ensured they communicated clearly about Age of Consent, and some elaborated on the responsibility teachers have to disclose unlawful conduct:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... most young people don't know that the Age of Consent is 17. So we have to make sure that people know the Age of Consent... if somebody is under 16, in particular, they [teachers] might feel that they have to tell people's parents... It's a more literal interpretation of the guidelines.

There is a particular concern with these laws when they translate to a scenario whereby young people cannot approach a trusted adult in order to access confidential help with a situation such as pregnancy or sexual health needs:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] Yeah, well if a teacher knows a child is sexually active under the age of 17, it's very important that teachers alert students to the fact that they do have responsibilities... if they're having sex underage, you know, all those things are issues which, if they make a teacher aware of, you know. It's not mandatory, but teachers are

> advised to contact the parents... that's both bad and good. You know, it's bad in the sense that the child might not confide in a teacher...

This could be interpreted as a clear indication that protection of the young person is not the central concern of Age of Consent legislation in Ireland. With the added difficulty of lack of safe and legal access to abortion services in Ireland, this narratives speaks volumes about the inaccessibility of sexual health assistance for young people in Ireland.

It would seem, according to participant narratives, that Age of Consent laws in Ireland are implemented from a place of fear, both when it comes to the distribution of contraception and sexual discourse in the classroom:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland]... no young people under 17 are meant to be sexually active... some agencies and organisations would have concerns that if they do work around sexual health that they may be perceived as being promoting it. Promoting sexual activity, which is specifically against the law... people are afraid to do the education bit in case they might be perceived as promoting sexual activity which is illegal. Now sometimes that's used as a smokescreen.

This narrative from a civil servant in Ireland is concerning for the undertones it contains which infer that sex education for young people under age 17 could be seen to be promoting sexual activity. When the above participant speaks of a 'smokescreen', they refer to the use of the law not to protect young people from harm, but to moralise over their behaviour. The notion that providing sex education and sexual health services will function to encourage increased sexual behaviour in young people has been refuted (Irvine, 2004; Shtarkshall, 2007; Boonstra, 2009). Despite this, the fear factor clearly has real implications for educators and young people alike:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...I mean I would feel scared as a teacher talking about the Age of Consent with students, because I wouldn't be sure, you know... teachers feel they're overwhelming so they'll just avoid it. Don't ask don't tell again, like... staff come in and do things on STIs or whatever and kids are terrified and they're left with loads of issues... I think it's a huge ethical issue.

For this participant, in contrast with the civil servant in the previous narrative, the 'ethical issue' lies in the avoidance of the topics, rather than an ethics of rigidly interpreting the

law. Most participants in Ireland spoke of a restrictive interpretation of Age of Consent laws and some expressed an overly-cautious approach to the law to be unrealistic:

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... Child Protection is such a really big thing for us, for all youth services, and there's a certain hysteria around it as well... I think there is a difference between two young people having a relationship and one happens to be 16 and one happens to be 17, you know what I mean, and sexual abuse of a minor. You know, I think there needs to be some kind of perspective with that.

This participant's assertion that 'there needs to be some kind of perspective' reiterates the narratives which indicate that, in many instances, this is not the case. Other participants did not let the law stop them from supporting young people, though it must be noted that it was only NGO employees doing work outside of a school context (ie. Youth groups and support centres) who expressed freedom to do so:

> [P34, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Yep, I mean there is, well there's no legal age for distribution of condoms... the Age of Consent is 17 for both sexes, em, and again we have to take, em, I suppose a reasonable view, I mean if you've got a 15 year old having sex with a 17 year old, then effectively the 17 year old is breaking the law. But at the same time, we need to find out if that's consensual and if it is then, in general, we don't do anything. If we suspect it's not consensual then obviously it's a Child Protection issue.

It is important to remember that most schools in Ireland operate under a set of religious ethos, in addition to Age of Consent laws and other legislation. Many of the participants' narratives from Ireland describe laws being used as excuse or rationale for exerting religious ideology regarding sexual morality.

4.4.2 What and Who is Protected?

The Age of Sexual Consent in Sweden is 15, but participants widely reported it is not enforced to inhibit or cause difficulty for young people:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... the Age of Consent in Sweden has been 15 years for a long time and there has been no problem and it doesn't mean that you can't have sex... It's not supposed to hinder young people to explore sexuality...

For the participants in Sweden, the Age of Consent law was not interpreted in a restrictive way, though some acknowledged that perhaps not everyone interprets it this way:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] But now there are some voices coming up and questioning. 'Ok, you should not prescribe the pills to girls under 15'... that kind of voices, you, and opinions, you didn't hear that before in Sweden[165]...

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] And today, there is a big discussions about this in Sweden because, em, we got a new criminal law a few years ago, eh about *rape.* And, in this law it states very, very clearly that it's forbidden to have, I mean if you had sex with a person who is under the age of 15. It's rape. Eh, but... (usually there's an) exception if, for example, it's eh eh let's say one is 14 and one is 16. And if they are in love with each other... the people who were behind this law, they now say that their intension was never to – so to say – forbid young people to have sex! But of course, for some people, it's interpreted in that way.

Despite an apparent openness in interpreting the law, and a perceived flexibility within legislation by participants in Sweden, a strong discourse of encouraging parental or adult support for young people engaged in sexual activity pervaded:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]... our approach in Sweden has been, for a long time, that well, of course, you always ask 'does your parents know?' eh, 'do you want them to know' or 'maybe they could give you support.' But not that they inform the parents without the consent of, of the young girl – in this case.

In the above narrative, we see that an ethic of care is very present in Sweden, but crucially we see that Age of Consent laws do not prevent access to services or intend to catch young people out from engaging in sexual exploration. The two year difference in Age of Consent between Ireland and Sweden is significant, but what is much more striking is the culture surrounding interpretation of the laws.

[165] While this participant did not explain what they meant by 'you didn't hear that before in Sweden', it is likely that they refer here to a more recent influx of immigration, a topic which I explore in-depth through participant narratives in Chapter 7.

4.4.3 The Elephant in the Room

Sweden's early and progressive abortion legislation was widely credited by participants for opening up an array of services, including their Youth Sexual Health Clinics[166]. These clinics, called *ungdomsmottagning* in Swedish, were frequently referred to as aiding good practice in sexual health services and sex education in Sweden:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] ... In 1974 abortions became legal in Sweden and at the same time it opened up a whole lot of youth (sexual health clinics)... several hundreds of them... Youth health clinics are accessible, hours are convenient, culturally encouraged by parents. They have this [confidentiality] – they have to be quiet they can't tell parents... many young people also feel quite secure to go there because they know that if something is wrong that they can't talk to their parent's about then they can go there.

Clinics ensure confidentiality to the patients, and this confidentiality extends to abortion procedures:

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... as a young girl, for example, you have the right to have an abortion – even if you're a minor. And, *without telling your parents!* ... there are also maybe situations when it would be very, very maybe dangerous as well for the young girl if her parents knew and things like that... If the girl really really, eh, doesn't want the parents to know, then she could for example have an abortion even if she is 14 years old or something like that, yes.

Those delivering sex education curriculum in schools ensure that abortion is covered:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I'd say most teenagers in Sweden know a lot about abortion so what we do is we check that they know what the law says.

In Ireland, abortion was illegal at the time of independence from Britain, and effectively remains so[167], persisting as a divisive cultural issue. One client described how common

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[166] Youth Sexual Health Clinics were cited by participants as sites of sex education intervention and as accessible and confidential ways for young people aged 12 to 25 to take responsibility for their own sexual health needs. Sweden has a network of these clinics, based in every municipality throughout the country, and open during hours which are accessible to youth. Ireland has one youth sexual health clinic, based in St James' Hospital in Dublin, open 10am – 1pm on Thursdays only.

[167] In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights ruled Ireland's failure to implement the right to a lawful abortion when a woman's life is at risk violates Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. On

practice would not permit those under the Age of Consent to be given information on abortion without a parent present[168]:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... we also have some under 17 going for crisis pregnancy counselling as well... we wouldn't give them information about abortion unless they came with a parent...

Overall, discussion of abortion by participants in Ireland was notable perhaps more for its scarcity than for a particular discourse. Abortion could be seen as the proverbial 'elephant in the room'. One participant's narrative discusses the silences on abortion in the sex education classroom:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... silences still permeate the whole delivery of the, em, curriculum. And I don't think that's, you know, there's no mention of abortion, for example, either... I think even there are probably *more* silences than even the silences in the curriculum, in terms of delivery of it.

According to hooks, a fundamental feminist prerequisite to gender equality and 'free love' is access to 'safe, effective contraceptives and abortions' (2000: 25). By this rationale, closing the gaps in the area of abortion legislation and services will be vital for advancing sexuality education efforts in Ireland.

4.5 Blame, Responsibility and a Qualified Satisfaction

While some narratives were qualified with acknowledgement of the intricate webs of responsibility required for sex education 'good practice', it is striking that, among sex education professions in both countries, blame characterises the narratives much more strongly than does responsibility. The discourses of blame may, in part, reflect upon the

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1 January 2014 The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Bill 2013 came into effect, following the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012 from septicaemia. The 2013 Act purports to legislate for abortion where pregnancy endangers the woman's life, including cases of suicide. On 6 August 2014, a migrant woman, 'Ms Y', underwent a forced caesarean section after having expressed suicidal ideation as a result of her pregnancy, and requested an abortion, four months prior. This woman was unable to avail of the right to travel for abortion services. The Ms Y case raises questions about the right to abortion under the 2013 Act in practice.

[168] The Regulation of Information (Services outside the State for the Termination of Pregnancies) Act 1995 allowed doctors, agencies and counsellors to give information on abortion services abroad, should they request it, but requires information on parenting and adoption to also be given in the context of counselling. The 1995 Act prohibits service providers from making an appointment for a termination on behalf of their client.

particular professional position of the participant. Many working in NGO contexts, for example, alluded to their desire to work themselves out of a job, and their feelings that it is ultimately the responsibility of teachers, schools and/or the government to ensure 'good practice'.

Also striking, in both countries, were the discourses on the official sex education curriculum. In both contexts, participants described what might be coined a *qualified satisfaction* with the curriculum. Most stated that, in principle, the contents of the curriculum were sufficient and adequate to meet the needs of students if and when it is implemented comprehensively and properly. However, in both Sweden and Ireland, there were complex reasons expressed as to why full and adequate implementation of the curriculum was a rare occurrence.

4.5.1 Departments of Education

Participants in both countries went to lengths to unpack the role that Departments of Education play in either facilitating or, more often, preventing 'good practice' from occurring. In both countries, these departments were seen by many of the participants in this study to have significant power. In both cases informants expressed, by and large, that this power was not being dealt with as responsibly and thoroughly as would be necessary for 'good practice' to take place.

4.5.1.1 -Broader education system structural concerns

Many participants in Ireland expressed criticism of the Department of Education for the way it functions, for having bias and for not following through on obligations. Some critiqued Ireland's education system itself, linking the Department of Education's inability to follow through on implementing inclusive sex education to wider structural issues. Some participants mentioned finding ways to work around these structural and governmental limitations, which, as already highlighted, was a general theme in the narratives from Ireland:

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... it's just the way the Irish education system works. It isn't as centralised as other education systems, so the Department of Education isn't going to go in and say, 'You all have to teach sexual orientation in schools'. And they actually aren't in

> a position to... It's not necessarily homophobic, it's structural as well. So you have to put a lot more energy into doing it in many different ways, you know.

Here, the reference to teachings on sexual orientation emerges in response to questions about inclusive practice[169]. When this participant notes that 'it's not necessarily homophobic', they are to some extent qualifying a tendency in Ireland to assert religious 'ethos' as a reason for lack of teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity. Discussions of structural conditions placed these critiques in a wider context:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] And I think, you know, in terms of my dream, I think changing the education system here would be really high up on my agenda. It's just too rushed, there's too much... it's too driven by academic results...

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] The Department of Education has to kind of step up to the mark. I don't think this is going to happen, by the way...

While changes to the system and Department of Education were frequent 'dreams' in Ireland, there was a distinct lack of faith that these changes can occur. In Ireland, a lack of adequate teacher training was frequently highlighted, and some again linked this back to systemic governmental issues, indicating a disconnect between funding priorities and sex education practice whereby the curriculum is developed but teachers and schools are not supported to achieve full implementation:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] So what's happening is that we are very good at developing really sophisticated... fancy curriculum documents that are lovely, but the Department... it's the Department and the government's fault that they do *not fund teacher development* to a real and meaningful extent in *any* subject. It's not just sexuality, this is an issue with our education system, they do not back it up. They don't walk the walk, they talk the talk until the cows come home. We have some of the most sophisticated language in the world, in every curricular area. So this is a wider issue than, do you know what I mean?

[169] It is important to note that in 2013, the Department of Education in Ireland published Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, which contained language about homophobic bullying. This policy, as well as supplementary videos as additions to the RSE/SPHE curricular modules were implemented after this projects' interviews took place. It is important to note that anti-homophobic bullying policies and supplementary sexual orientation resources do not constitute a directive to teach about sexual orientation in Irish schools per se.

Lack of faith in the government, and a discourse blaming the Department of Education, in particular, was a strong theme emergent from the narratives in Ireland. Bias in research, and especially in evaluations, was another concern. In both countries there is a governmental priority to rely on 'evidence-based' methods. Participants in Ireland and Sweden highlighted the potential for bias as well as limitations in the use of specific pieces of research to back up governmental policy on curriculum:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... the research[170] was paid for by the Department of Education. Right? And if someone is paying the bills for the piece of research that you do... it came down softly enough on what was happening and not happening.

Another participant discusses their perspective as a researcher exploring sex education within a government funded project:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... we were silenced in lots of ways. We had to exclude certain comments that were less, that were more controversial... I think we were censored, definitely, in that research process and with the research advisory group, we were constantly frustrated.

Ireland was not alone in citing frustrations with perceived research bias; participants in Sweden expressed similar concerns in this regard:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] And he [a well known Norwegian professor whose work is used in Sweden] he's evaluating his method himself. But that is the only evidence-based method today. So that's what – because the government, they want to investigate evidence-based method that they can recommend, the schools know what is evidence-based and that is so scary because it is one of the most awful approaches, it's so, it's not ethical at all, it's awful!... that is also so much connected to neo-liberal/neo-conservative educational context... the municipalities, they feel this pressure to use evidence-based methods.

These narratives indicate, explicitly and implicitly, that sex education professionals in both countries perceive bias on the part of the government, government-funded evaluations of a programme or governmental promotion of an evidence-based sex education method. These

[170] Here, this partipant refers to the Mayock et al. (2007) study Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the Context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): An Assessment of the Challenges to Full Implementation of the Programme in Post–primary Schools.

narratives also reveal a strong underlying mistrust in government agendas and discourses on sex education. Furthermore, all research exists within a specific discursive framework, and this often goes unacknowledged when governments prioritise simply 'evidence based' models.

In addition to criticisms of the education systems and Department of Education functions, some NGO and outside facilitator organisations in Ireland articulated nuanced and, at times, fraught relationships with the Department. Although a mandatory curriculum for schools is in place, outside facilitators are not regulated or mandated to implement the official curriculum as such, despite the fact that many schools bring in outside facilitators with an aim to fulfil RSE obligations (see also de Vries et al., 2009). Not surprisingly, most participants in both Sweden and Ireland working as 'outside facilitators' or within organisations that provide such services considered their own curriculum to be superior to governmental mandates.

4.5.1.2 -Relationships between advocacy and government discourse

One participant in Ireland discussed at length the dilemmas their organisation faced in trying to work alongside the Department of Education, perceiving that the resistance to liaising or collaboration might be rooted in the Department feeling threatened by NGO work:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] It's been very, em (hesitates) – [one civil servant] is an extremely difficult person to work with. Like really super controlling, and yeah, if I say more, like it's just really difficult to work with... It's all this, this organisational, em, jealousy I think... you know, turf. And it's really big... it's big between statutory bodies and NGOs... I think maybe statutory bodies get threatened by the work of NGOs, because NGOs move much faster and do, are doing new things all of the time, so that effects things too. So that's part of the complexity... it's not, 'Congratulations, oh my God, you've produced all those (resources) and you helped us produce this other one for us and you're doing another one as well, wow that's so great!' It's not like that. It's like, anger.

This same participant elaborated further on the structural, financial and societal relationships between governmental bodies and NGOs, asserting that disproportionate

control lies in the hands of the State, but that responsibility for following through on their remit is not upheld:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... it's unbelievably hierarchical, and insulting to us... that an NGO should provide money to do something that the State is supposed to do, that is outrageous. Or else provide the human resources to make up for it... the power relationship between NGOs and statutory sector is really, really tough... they have control in an extraordinary way.

In contrast, it was striking in Sweden to learn that NGO and grassroots efforts have been embraced to some extent at governmental level, even to the point where some civil servants and government departments have adopted the language of activists, with activist discourses becoming – at least in small part – integrated and accepted as necessary steps forward:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] But then for the schools and preschools, they also had, in addition to these grounds of discrimination, they also had *other degrading treatment*.... then the National Agency for Education, they came with this very important, it's sort of a book, a report... there they really point out that norms, em, that *harassment has its ground in problematic norms*. Also, they point out that there are other problematic norms, like class, and body things and things like that... their report *was not possible* without our work. I mean all in the network and things. Because they really refer to our work, to *our* books and things.

This narrative illustrates how, in Sweden, a governmental report on good practice for inclusive education was published with express references to the discourses introduced by a 'network' of activists, educators and researchers working on topics of queer pedagogies. One participant in Ireland offered a perspective on why the scenarios might be different to Sweden, linking government's lack of reception to NGO advocacy efforts to an absence of teacher participation in advocacy for change:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] Teachers aren't activists in this country... We also have unions who silence issues as well... they do a lot of professional development for teachers, but it's very conservative. So it's controlled! It's not just the teachers it's the unions themselves are stumbling on this... the micropolitics issue is huge.

The mention of teachers' unions and 'micropolitics' by this participant indicates that it is not only governmental-level resistance to activist and NGO discourses, but that more insidious influences might be exerted on teachers generally in Ireland, preventing them from participating in advocacy on issues related to their work. While the normcritical movement must not be misconstrued as having permeated all or even most sexuality education efforts and classroom experiences in Sweden, it is significant that some governmental departments and many NGOs have actively taken on queer concepts with grassroots origins in working with sexuality and young people. Lack of teacher activism in Ireland also links to wider structural issues, including the religious 'ethos' of most schools, which I will expand upon in the next chapter.

4.5.2 A Qualified Satisfaction

The narratives and discussions on the role of the Departments of Education often included a deconstruction of the formal curriculum and its strengths and weaknesses. In both countries it was widely reported that the curriculum itself is sufficient, though perhaps not perfect, and that if barriers such as timetabling constraints, teacher training, a 'whole-school approach' and parental support were to be adequately addressed that the curriculum itself is quite satisfactory.

In both countries, an official curriculum exists as part of the mandate for the implementation of a sex education programme in schools. While participants, on a whole, felt that both sets of curricula have merits, participants in each country critiqued the curriculum content for lack of inclusion. Most notable, however, were the critiques around curriculum implementation:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... at least there is a curriculum... while it's good that it's there, I think the problem that there is in terms of how that operates is that there's insufficient monitoring from the Department of Education of how that's delivered... There are superb resources that have been developed... how it operates, right, is another thing. So it's good that that's kind of there, ok?

Again, it must be noted that these narratives are in the context of interview questions which sought examples of good practice. The above participant was careful to limit their accolades on the curriculum to only applaud the fact that it exists. The existence of a

sufficient curriculum was argued as something 'good' in both countries; it was the discussion about implementation that sparked critiques:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... the curriculum is the same as it always was... nobody really was criticising the curriculum, it was the extent to which it was being implemented... teachers weren't dealing with STIs, they weren't really dealing with sexual health elements so much. And some were getting in outside speakers, some weren't... that's where the gap is for the students.

In Ireland, the inconsistencies in implementation and lack of sexual health content were common themes. In Sweden, also, participants were generally satisfied with the curriculum, qualifying this with an assertion that full implementation was the main challenge:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] One small dream is, and it's still a dream, is that people in schools at least do what they are told to do... At least please read the curriculum and do your best, and please read the law about discrimination, non-discrimination laws, and do your best... that teachers and principals at least *try* to fulfil what's in the curriculum or what's in the law.... *read* the curriculum and say 'Oh my God!' and read the law about discrimination and say 'Oh my God, I don't know how to do this, I don't have the knowledge, I need some trainings, I need time to reflect, I need to get more knowledge please' – and that they would start to demand it much more than they do today...

In both countries there was a sense that 'if people in schools at least do what they are told to do', in the words of the participant above, that implementation would improve significantly. What is interesting in this narrative is the onus the participant places on schools to 'demand' training and knowledge on these issues rather than on the government to provide these supports. For participants in Ireland, poor implementation was most often attributed to the Department of Education, for not providing sufficient training or monitoring and evaluation. In Sweden, poor implementation was most often linked to inadequate follow through on equality measures and the fulfilment of obligations in relation to equality legislation. Participants in both countries reported that, if the curriculum and related legislation were to be implemented adequately and consistently in practice, both by government departments and on the ground in schools, the existing sex education curriculum would fundamentally be sufficient. Beyond that, of course, were

critiques around lack of inclusion within curricular materials, which I will address in later chapters.

4.6 Discussion

Narratives on political and legislative influences on sex education from participants to this project detailed what can be characterised as a *critical hopefulness* in Sweden and a *despondent hopelessness* in Ireland. While policy has facilitated, or at least has not obstructed, the work of participants in Sweden, in Ireland lack of legislation and policy and the ways in which legislation has prevented the provision of information or services to young people were seen as major obstacles. Despite Ireland having far fewer legislative supports for sex education than Sweden, participants in Sweden were more actively critical of the role of government as a barrier to sex education implementation. In Sweden legislation was, in some instances, used as a lever with which to push discourses forward towards inclusion and comprehensive practice[171], but sometimes this progress comes with compromises from the perspective of professionals working in sex education[172].

While the two year difference in Age of Sexual Consent between Ireland (age 17) and Sweden (age 15) is significant, what is much more striking is the culture surrounding interpretation of the laws. In Ireland, participants expressed a genuine fear of the law within their work in sex education. Age of Consent laws purport to protect young people, but participants in Ireland offered narratives which described enforcement of these laws in a way which would serve to inhibit young people. Participant's narratives indicate that protection of the young person is not the central concern of legislation in Ireland. Lack of government-level support for sex education efforts was a characteristic from the narratives from Ireland. It was surprising to see narratives from civil servants with sex education remits in Ireland which placed responsibility on to the school, rather than taking responsibility for the government's role in ensuring good curriculum implementation. Several in Ireland pointed to the lack of a national sexual heath strategy. While abortion is practically inaccessible in Ireland, participant narratives on abortion were striking for their absence, in contrast to those from Sweden who referenced Youth Sexual Health Clinics as

[171] Participants in Sweden repeatedly cited the success of normcritical activist efforts as beginning to have an impact on government level discourses.

[172] Both countries have equality legislation, but in Ireland these do not impact on the educational curriculum whereas in Sweden the law contains specific equal treatment directives for schools. While the laws in Sweden purport to have a more direct impact on education than in Ireland, many participants emphasised a lack of thorough implementation of legal directives, often through a discourse that was critical of schools

a widespread and accessible means for young people to access confidential abortion services.

In both contexts, participants expressed what I call a *qualified satisfaction* with the curriculum in that the content was widely seen as sufficient, but implementation and enforcement of the sex education mandate were seen as inadequate in both contexts. Participants in both Sweden and Ireland expressed that if the curriculum and related legislation were to be adequately implemented, both within schools and wider political structures, then the existing sex education curriculum is satisfactory. Lack of faith in the government and a discourse of blame regarding the Department of Education, in particular, was a strong theme in Ireland. Some participants linked this back to systemic governmental issues, indicating a disconnect between funding priorities and sex education practice whereby the curriculum is developed but teachers and schools are not supported to achieve full implementation. In Sweden, participants expressed similar sentiments, but were more focused on the need for principals to take the lead with good implementation. Participants in Sweden were broadly more critical of their political and legislative milieus than were participants in Ireland. Despite having more rigorous criticisms and critiques of policy, participants in Sweden were also notably optimistic about the possibilities that some of the newer legislation holds, with some going so far as to name legislation as having 'queer' potential. In Ireland, legislation was primarily seen as inadequate and a barrier to sex education provision. Participant discourses in Ireland were characterised by a simultaneous belief that situations would improve with better legislation, while despairing that such legislation would ever come to pass.

Muñoz (2009) posits that the negative sentiments associated with despondency actually signal the capacity to transcend hopelessness, containing potentiality for new modes of collectivity and dissent from problematic power structures. He explains how cynicism and opportunities are two examples of the emotional drive behind hopelessness leading to creative re-imagining in seemingly desperate situations and asserts that hope must exist somewhere in order to avoid a situation where hopelessness becomes an immobilising force. Muñoz argues the need to acknowledge negativity in the dialectical relationship between hope and hopelessness, because we live in a disappointing world and risky projects – such as queer revolutions – will maintain value even when they experience failure (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009). A Muñozian reading of participant narratives would see the discourses in both countries as necessary and appropriate for their time and place.

Perhaps Sweden's critical hopefulness is a sign of the times, and Ireland's despondent hopelessness contains within it the very drive that is necessary to transcend the current reality. Situating narratives of policy influences in the two countries side by side affords remarkable insights related to how notions such as blame, responsibility, optimism and desperation are perhaps more national or cultural traits than policy directives.

Chapter 5

The Role of Power: *Cultural Discourses in Society and in the Classroom*

An analysis of power, at both micro and macro levels, and the role it plays in sex education, is essential to a feminist and queer analysis (Connell, 1978; Grosz, 1985). Power is exerted not only in the political sphere, through governments, hierarchies and policies, but also in the cultural sphere through norms and messaging (Guzzini, 1993). This cultural sphere contains power operations on macro and micro levels and, as such, it extends to interactions between individuals, including in the classroom (Cook-Sather, 2006).

Culturally, Sweden's social democratic welfare state, reputation of gender equality and sexual liberation, and strong human rights discourse contrasts sharply with the Republic of Ireland's postcolonial nationalism, historically linked to the Catholic Church which exerts a doctrine of shame and guilt in relation to sexuality. To leave the comparison at that, however, would be to oversimplify the cultural backdrops of the two nations. Sweden's history in the eugenics movement, its historical treatment of people living with HIV, and its own colonising status within Scandinavia contrast with the ongoing challenges Ireland has faced in shaking off postcolonial remnants, which are particularly embedded within the spheres of health and education. In both of these countries, these legacies and cultural specificities interact interestingly with increased sexualisation of Western culture, and with interpretations of what it might mean to promote sexual health today from a governmental or societal perspective.

In spite of the prevailing ideologies, reputations and norms at State level in both Ireland and Sweden, national ideals and myths were quickly unpacked and challenged by this study's participants. This chapter examines, through participant narratives, the concepts of power and culture and the ways in which these play out according to professionals working in the area of sex education.

5.1 Debated or Demanded?: *Introduction of Sex Education Curriculum in Schools*

5.1.1 Ireland

Catholic based doctrine on sexuality had established a solid societal discourse in Ireland decades prior to the Ireland's 1994 formal curriculum introduction, and any movements away from those teachings historically encountered significant socio-political barriers (Inglis 1998; Kiely 2004; Ferriter 2009). A series of incidents of infanticide provided impetus for school-based Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in 1994 (Inglis, 1998). One participant explained:

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...when RSE came in at the end of the '80s and early '90s it wasn't boom time, but there was, you know, that was the whole reaction to cases of infanticide[173]. So therefore, you know, it was typical Ireland. It wasn't that it was planned and systematic, it was a crisis response to a crisis situation.

This participant situates Irish political movements economically within a legacy of poverty and culturally, within a context where the impetus for social change was typically a 'crisis response' rather than an indication or effect of economic success. The narrative illustrates what Bacik depicts as an Ireland dragged 'kicking and screaming' towards the 21st century principles on sexuality which she argues were characteristic much earlier throughout the rest of Europe (2004: 1). Bacik sees this resistance as a postcolonial hesitancy, which I will explore later in this chapter (2013).

Some participants attempted to trace back sex education history in Ireland prior to the RSE programme's introduction, linking it – as many researchers have – to two previous programmes (see also Inglis, 1998; Kiely, 2004; Mayock et al., 2007). One was a more general 'Life Skills' programme and the other, an abuse prevention 'Stay Safe' programme:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] So some schools adopted these programmes, they weren't completely formalised... they came from the American context, you know, general

[173] A series of tragic events through the late 1980s and early 90s, including the death of a fifteen year old girl and her newborn baby, lifted the lid on a decades–long Irish tradition of sexual secrecy (Mayock and Byrne, 2004). The events provided impetus for school–based Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in 1994 (Inglis, 1998).

> life skills training. And a lot of the thinking, at that time, was that, you know, young people will grow up to be unemployed and they'll have all this time on their hands and they'll need the life skills to cope with unemployment and all the other problems... these programmes were kind of, em, adopted in some schools and not others. [There was a] kind of fury that [the introduction of these programmes] generated in the media as well. Because there was a reactionary, em, group I suppose, who came out very much speaking against the instruction of Life Skills, feeling that it was, em, getting away from Catholic teaching in this area... And then there was the Stay Safe programme, that was a child abuse prevention programme introduced in schools, and again, you know, there was big controversy generated around that and big difficulty getting Stay Safe actually implemented in all schools.

This narrative again brought in views on an Irish poverty (pre-Celtic Tiger economic boom) that this participant perceived to have influenced thinking behind the introduction of Ireland's early forms of sexuality education. One participant felt that the Stay Safe programme was challenged and resisted because it acknowledged a power perspective, the idea that adults could negatively exert power over young people:

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...the start of it was the Stay Safe programme... again the opposition to that was enormous because it said it was bringing to mind something that was not into mind with children. In other words that they could be abused by adults.

A number of participants noted how these early programmes, and especially the later introduction of RSE, generated much criticism and controversy in the media. Some participants hesitated to directly link the controversies to a solely-Catholic resistance, and felt they also reflected societal fears about the loss of innocence of children:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] It was very, very interesting because it was so controversial... this idea of sort of breaking the innocence of young children, that it wasn't appropriate to give them terminology for the private parts of their body at a young age, you know. There was a lot of fears around the language actually, particularly. There was a very strong feeling that it was the parents' responsibility, but it wasn't the responsibility of the schools. There were protests and people with placards and, you know, it was very tough... There was a lot of resistance, an awful lot of resistance from conservative groups, sometimes religious-based, sometimes not... the idea of integrating this into the school curriculum and it being taught by the teacher was the problem... the amount of publicity it got, I think it did impede the initial introduction of the programme.

This participant elucidates one of the primary aspects of apparent contradiction between Catholic doctrine and a State-supported health promotion discourse; this contradiction lies in the question of who should have to take responsibility for sex education: parents or schools[174]. Other participants to this study felt the hesitancy from schools was less about direct religious doctrine and more about something cultural. Perhaps, due to the entanglements between culture and Catholicism in Ireland, there may not be a way to distinguish or homogenise the roots of resistance. The context of controversy surrounding the introduction of Ireland's school-based sex education curriculum enables a clearer understanding of the constraints these programmes continue to face (see also Kiely, 2004; Mayock et al., 2007). It is important to note that the initial 1994 RSE curriculum, guidelines and policy have not been comprehensively updated, though updated resource materials are being developed and have recently begun to be released. In addition to relying upon a two-decade-old curriculum, many participants felt that other sexuality efforts in Ireland more generally have also not progressed to any great extent:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] So, [I was working in sexual health back in] 1979, and so if I were to look back over that sweep of years, I think that probably one of the things I'd say is I don't think that we've made significant progress.

A sentiment of slow progress was common among participants in Ireland, with some expressing frustration at attempts to bring widespread practices more up-to-date. One participant felt that cultural opposition to sex education was a thing of the past, and that societal discourse has shifted now to one of demand for improved programmes:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] I see it that there is a lot of public acceptance for sex education. I think there is actually public, kind of, almost demand for it. You know, the articles in the paper now tend to be about why isn't it happening rather than why is it being introduced.

Despite the perceived challenges to implementation, participants in Ireland were also keen to point out pockets of good practice, individual teachers or groups across the island. This finding is in line with the results of Mayock et al.'s (2007) evaluation which found higher implementation schools to rely upon a combination of factors such as a 'champion' within

[174] Catholic teachings dictate that sex education is the responsibility of parents (Inglis, 1998).

the school, parental involvement, teacher training and comfort, high status and clarity for the sex education curriculum and whole-school support.

5.1.2 Sweden

While feminist notions of sex positivity and gender equality may seem synonymous with Swedishness, some participants emphasised that this reputation was not easily achieved and is, perhaps, not even deserved. A number of participants attempted to trace the development of Sweden's sexuality education history. One participant traced the origins of Sweden's early sexuality education back to the late 1800s, arguing that those efforts set the scene for a cultural 'acceptance' and a corresponding absence of resistance when the programme eventually became compulsory:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think a lot of what is going on today has historical roots and can be understood by historical knowledge... you can say, it is started with a lot of diseases, there were a lot of problems with that in Sweden... in the late 1800s, late 19th century or even further back, but that is when they started to teach about it... it was also recommended from the 1940s. But it wasn't compulsory until 1955... And when it became compulsory it became so without nearly any discussions, debates or anything. Of course it was sort of accepted already.

This same participant continued to trace the more recent decades of Sweden's sex education movement in some detail, describing it as having evolved through an ongoing process, which has swung backwards and forwards like a 'pendulum':

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think that if you look at it historically, one such [historical] moment was in the 1960s, and that was when Swedish sexual education was thought too problem oriented... then the sexual education was to recommend people not to have sex... young girls to keep away from young boys and so on. So it was criticised... And that resulted in a new, em, a new guidance for teachers, and that was the one that was, em, in a way into the 1990s... it said that it should be neutral. No values, nothing like that in it. You should be neutral to everything. And that you should also accept different kinds of sexualities and in a way that is very much looking like the more modern, in a way, perspective... I think that you could not have forced that kind of change into the society if the society hadn't been ready for it... It was people that had been working politically with sexual questions for many years... they [sex education activists] have said it was such hard

> work and they took it so serious and they were working and arguing and fighting for years and years and years but they didn't' give it up, they were keeping fighting [sic]... you look at it and it seems so clear but I think it was hard work to get there... some people look at the history of, em, sexuality in Sweden as a pendulum.

According to this narrative, Sweden has not always taken such a 'value-free' stance on sex education and, in fact, prior to the 1960s, the curriculum was seemingly more analogous to the abstinence-based approaches prevalent in the United States and elsewhere today (Irvine, 2004). Others echoed this narrative, cautioning that early curricular efforts did not embrace the sex positive and feminist efforts that are visible in Sweden today:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... a warning perspective I would say, and I mean [the curriculum instructed pupils to] abstain, like in the 50s.

This notion of discourses having gone back and forth, not always adhering to feminist and sex positive ideals, was a strong theme in the narratives, as participants reflected on Sweden's reputation as a sex education leader. Furthermore, there was a strong sentiment that sex education was not always as 'good' as it is today, and that any achievements had been hard won. Despite this, many participants acknowledged that the existence of sex education in the first instance had never been disputed. Rather, it is the content of these programmes which has fluctuated over the decades:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...there's no debate in Sweden. For and against sexuality education... you didn't have a discussion like you would have in other European countries like 'for and against' and this would *ruin the youth* and it will make them be more *sexual* and it's *immoral* - we didn't have that kind of discussion! The discussion was *how shall we implement it*. How should it be better!

Other participants doubted that Sweden's sex liberal reputation was warranted and posited that Sweden 'relies on their reputation too much', but does not always have the practices to back up its 'fame' of 'sexual freedom'. This participant asserts that the idea of 'progressive Sweden' is a 'myth', not necessarily grounded in practice, positing that perhaps the reputation has become a self-fulfilling prophecy:

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... I think that Sweden has a reputation of being very progressive, and eh, I'm not sure *at all* that this is the case... today I'm not sure that

> Sweden is unique anymore... we still rely on our reputation, too much...Sweden was very much - from other countries - also *looked upon* as this 'progressive Sweden' and, and Sweden was a country *famous* for kind of sexual freedom for the young and a very progressive sex education in school and things like that. I think that, and also equality between men and women and things like that, I think this is, em, also a *problem* maybe because it makes a lot of parts of Swedish society a bit lazy. (laughs) They think that everything is good: 'we know how to do it', 'we always did it', 'we know this best'... a Swedish kind of national myth about itself! ... Sweden got a reputation. In a way, which some parts it was maybe based on something that was, you know, correct, it was there. And some parts was very much myths. But that was a long time ago and it gets kind of, true, even if it isn't true! (laughs)

Participants in Sweden were freuqently critical of what they depicted as a national 'progressive Sweden' narrative, often identifying gaps and citing examples of where reality does not live up to the rhetoric. Despite this, many were also conscious of the comparative nature of this project, and perhaps projected their own notions or stereotypes of Ireland. My own positionality and participants' preconceived ideas about my values, as well as those existing in the other country, certainly played a role in narrative discourses. The result was that narratives in Sweden acknowledged Sweden's progress (in the context of a comparison with Ireland) while simultaneously expressing their dissatisfaction[175].

5.2 Health Management and Precarious Bodies

5.2.1 Sweden

In tracing the historical 'pendulum' of Sweden's sex education discourses, Sejersted (2011) asserts that the shift that occurred in the 1960s was due in part to the 'salvation' promised by human rights and public health generally coming to outweigh any religious moral influences which may have existed prior to that time. Foucault traces back European societal movements even further, explaining the precursor to the health promotion discursive trajectory by describing how in the 18th century, 'governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a 'people,' but with a 'population'' (1978: 25). Foucault explains this phenomenon as 'biopower', the notion of

[175] In Chapter 4, I explored the reliance upon policy and the high expectations participants in Sweden had for the government in enacting legislative and political measures. Many credited Sweden's early compulsory programme to Swedish cultural ideals, and the integral role that the government plays in upholding these tenants of Swedish nationhood.

public health and risk regulation systems as regulatory regimes which have less to do with health in the literal sense, and more to do with power and control of human populations (1978: 140).

Following Foucault's theory of 'biopower', many researchers have argued that a health promotion agenda is fundamental to capitalist and neo-liberal/conservative governmental regulatory power (McGregor, 2001; Richardson, 2005; Macdonald, 2011). Participants in Sweden frequently credited sexuality education successes and cultural prioritisation of (youth-friendly and accessible) sexual health services to the social democratic state[176]:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] Some people think it is the welfare state, that the welfare state had this effort to make a healthy, em, population. And since the medical exploration of sexuality made sexuality be part of people's health... there was also this belief in science and knowledge, that knowledge could actually change people into something better.

One participant attempted to unpack the power dynamics and rationale underpinning Sweden's early curriculum:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] ... in those days they had high thoughts about it and thought this is a task not for ordinary people. 'It's too complicated, it's too difficult'... you know when this was discussed politically in the 1930s and 1940s that is how it was discussed and that is why it was decided that it would be compulsory [in schools]. They thought that ordinary people can't inform their children.

Here we see a discourse on the embededness of power dynamics within what has now come to be seen as 'value-free' sex education in Sweden. While the curriculum may now claim to be free from values, its existence in the first place lies within a governmental power perspective which historically assigned values in relation to who is qualified to educate children about sex. The 'value-free' curriculum furthermore emerged from a political agenda focused on managing a certain type of healthy population. This contrasts with more recent (and ongoing) discourses in Ireland debating the roles of parents and

[176] Characteristics of social democracy emerged after the 16th century Protestant Reformation converted previously-Catholic Scandinavia into world leaders of Lutheranism, and Sweden's Social Democratic Party was formed in 1889, generally credited with forming the welfare state as it is known today (Mead and Hall, 1972; Sejersted, 2011). An active, early and politically-engaged feminist movement played a global role in gender politics. The welfare state continues, though many argue that it is in crisis following neo-liberal political and governmental turns (Sejersted, 2011).

schools in sex education. It is noteworthy that early Swedish efforts became standardised under this knowledge promotion and health regulatory agenda:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] The first sex education was very heavy, knowledge heavy perhaps you could say. Because of the thought that knowledge could change, could make change.

Though maintaining a strong health promotion agenda, school curricula was officially revised in 1977, moving from a 'knowledge' base to a pedagogy which acknowledged differing sexual 'values' and the reality that young people were (at least hetero-) sexually active (Nilsson and Sandström, 2001). One participant critiqued that the 1977 'value-free' discourse fell short of addressing or reflecting upon its promotion of the 'value' of heternormativity. This participant reflected on the challenges experienced through more recent attempts for queer-inclusion in sex education, tracing this legacy back to earlier efforts and narrating the ways in which the 1977 curriculum was not exactly 'value-free':

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I mean you need to know the, the background, the history... I mean, just to address homosexuality, during the 60s or the beginning in the 70s in sex education was very hard. I mean then of course it's *better* that, I mean, it's *something* [rather] than nothing... what has been a problem, then, is that, well it has also been an excuse that 'well, ok, we have these people coming from (sexuality organisation), from the gay organisation, gay and lesbian organisation, and so then we don't have to bring it up in the rest of the sex education'

Despite what may appear to be early feminist and queer accomplishments in Sweden's sexuality education, a number of participants were quick to critique the weight of the country's sexual reputation:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] Um, maybe it's, actually Sweden – you know Sweden has been a free country of sex! (laughs sarcastically) And actually it has been a good thing because you talk a lot about sex here. There's a lot of talk even in the papers and all of this. We talk about sex, we are writing about sex, sex is always there – but still, now I get to the other side, again! It's a lot of talk about sex and everybody's getting sex education, but still we're not talking about women's sexuality... I mean, even biologically most people don't know how the clitoris has legs going back, and they don't know how it looks. It's a trend in Sweden that women are doing plastic surgery on their inner labia

> because they think they're hanging out. So you have a lot of sex talk, but still there's a lot of things we don't talk about. So a lot of talk that 'sex is ok' and you can talk about sex toys and free sexuality and all of that, but still.

For this participant, despite the 'proliferation' of sexual discourses in Sweden, to borrow Foucault's (1978) term, there is still a fundamental piece missing in terms of a biological perspective on pleasure, particularly for women. LGBT inclusion, sexualisation of culture and biological discourses in sex education will be explored more extensively in Chapters 6 and 8.

5.2.2 Ireland

Ireland has been in an economic recession for the entire duration of this PhD project (Begg, 2014). In an austerity Ireland, we have seen a steady decrease in funding for social issues in a context where NGOs have long performed services that the State would provide in other countries (Bacik, 2013). It would seem that in these examples we see an expanded sense of ominous biopower in the context of austerity and government-level 'rights' processes, which interplays interestingly with the enduring effects of the Catholic Church in this milieu.

As austerity continues with no end in sight (Begg, 2014), we enter into what Hage has called a state of 'permanent crisis' – 'a kind of permanent state of exception' (2009: 97) which, I argue, serves to extend a Irish postcolonial mindset into a new frame. Cultural narratives and nostalgia around the Republic of Ireland's foundation as a state are markedly characterised by poverty as well as Catholicism, dating back to the missionaries of the 5th century (Dillon, 2002). The Irish free-State political system adapted a capitalist democratic structure similar to Britain, though Education and Health sectors were taken on by the Church, and have largely remained this way (Kennedy, 1996). Many participants cited the remnants of the Catholic Church as standing in the way of their idea of health promotion:

> [P34, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]…there are still [Catholic] schools who say, 'You could come in and talk to us if you like, but you won't be able to talk about condoms.' You know? You do have schools that say that. And so we say, 'Well, no, because we can't do our jobs without talking about condoms.'

The conflict between this participant's need to 'do their (health promotion) job' and their experience of the enforcement of a Catholic 'ethos' which, in this case, disallows information provision on condoms, sums up wider national tensions between public health and religion. Several participants situated these concepts as oppositional:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] The schools don't want to do sex education, and there's a variety of reasons why they don't want to do it. Parents don't do great sex education with their kids, and feel uncomfortable and vulnerable about it, and the services that are out there, the public health kind of messages there aren't supported with funding and nearly like being afraid of the residue of, kind of, the Catholic Church. And that kind of power around morality. Which hasn't gone away... it's nearly like a shadow of the morality or sexuality and the Catholic Church and that whole kind of agenda is, and we never got our head around being able to say, 'State is one thing, religion is something else, people's values and morals are another story, but as a State we're in the business of promoting good health. Including good sexual health.'

This participant asserts the Foucauldian regulatory 'power' (1978) over Irish sexuality as having a (Catholic) religious, rather than health promotion, foundation, yet desires 'promotion of good sexual health' to be the 'State's business'. Biopower wears a different face, contains a unique agenda and has a distinct origin in Ireland when compared to Sweden. For Foucault (1978), these function as regulatory regimes, exerting power over sexuality. Many participants asserted that the seemingly contradictory ideals of health promotion and religious 'ethos' are complicated by the historical, political and practical ways in which health services and Catholicism are bound in this postcolonial context. One participant cautioned that this effect must not only be framed specifically in a modern-day austerity context, referring back to the Celtic Tiger economic boom as a time when Ireland was 'on a pigs back' yet sex education was still under-supported:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... when we were all still on a pigs back, nothing happened with the RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) even in good times. Zero.

When responsibility for education and health sectors of the government was given to the Catholic Church at independence, one effect was the important role assumed by the community and voluntary sector in delivering social services which are State-provided in other European contexts (Bacik, 2013). Catholic organisations continue to play a

disproportionate role in this sector, as well as civil society more generally, with funding for non-Catholic based efforts (such as sexual health and LGBT services) often relying upon international philanthropic funding with governmental input as minimal or supplemental[177] (Bacik, 2013). Today, over ninety-percent of the nation's schools have Catholic patronage, though the current government has expressed a commitment to redressing this imbalance[178] (Bacik, 2013). Many Ireland participants cited Catholic school 'ethos' as responsible for the exclusion of topics like contraception and homosexuality from lessons. For example, this participant whose organisation provides sex education outside facilitation identifies Catholic 'ethos' as a barrier to their work, while acknowledging that the extent to which this operates varies between schools:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ...One of [the barriers] is the Catholic ethos in all schools. It's interpreted differently, wherever they are, and they've got a lot of leeway in the way they interpret it and some of them impose that on us more than others.

Catholic 'ethos' not only have an impact in schools, but in health services in Ireland more broadly[179]. Although the religious 'ethos' can be clearly found in policies and, to some extent, in narratives of practice, many participants in Ireland were keen to articulate ways in which discourses, whether from individuals, schools or organisations, have shifted away from a Catholic 'ethos' or doctrine:

> [P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...I think we've gotten away in holy Catholic Ireland, thank God – or whoever's out there – from the notion that people shouldn't be having sex because sex is morally wrong and God will judge us and we'll all go to Hell. We've moved away from that to, a sort of a protective discourse, I think... you know, that maybe it's just that we've made such a big deal about it that people have been socialised to feel that this is a big deal... I don't know, I haven't got all the answers.

For this participant, it may not make a difference whether sexuality in Ireland has become a 'big deal' due to Catholic morality or due to health promotion goals of protection.

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[177] A few select LGBT and sexual health services in Ireland do receive a larger proportion of their funding from governmental sources.

[178] In 2008, following reports of institutional sex abuse scandals, Catholic Bishops acknowledged the current level of Catholic schools as no longer necessary. In 2011, then-Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn formally recognised and began awarding increasing patronage to Educate Together (a multi–denominational school patron).

[179] Ethics committees operate in many Irish hospitals, and most of these are grounded in an underlying Catholic doctrine, exerting overt religious influence on the structure and service delivery of the Irish health system (Bacik, 2013).

Indeed, the content of programmes and the concept of biopower more broadly are relevant with either discursive epistemology. This participant and some others were quick to critique the health promotion move that they saw as underway in Irish sex education, but did not necessarily have a ready alternative to offer.

5.2.3 Careers in Sex Education

In terms of sexual health promotion work, there was a stark contrast between the narratives in Sweden and Ireland not only in relation to funding for organisations, but also for the work of individuals. It was striking to learn that RFSU, Sweden's national sex education and sexual health organisation, has branches in localities throughout the country, with each employing teams of part-time workers to provide education sessions in schools and to deliver safer sex information and supplies throughout the local area, for example in pubs and at festivals[180]. Many of the participants I spoke to in Sweden explained that their careers had begun with part-time employment in the sex education field while studying at University:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] Em, and I heard a friend of a friend's girlfriend who told me she was giving out condoms during the summer during condom week – these kind of summer campaigns that (sexuality education organisation) were organising. And she said, 'I get paid to give out condoms, you know at beaches, parks and so on – you could try it' and I was like 'Is it true? Could you really, you know, get paid for that? It sounds excellent'. I wasn't interested in these issues in any way, I just thought it was, em, a good job, you know, you've got tanned at the same time as you earned money!

As we can see in this narrative, even for individuals who were not necessarily interested in sexual health as a career, it is a financially viable vocational option which is to some extent prevalent in Swedish society. In contrast, Ireland's counterpart organisation to RFSU, the IFPA – an organisation where I served as Chairperson of the Board during 2014 – has experienced ongoing cutbacks from funding sources and does not have the financial means to operate most of its campaigns nationally; it therefore frequently relies on the work of volunteers and often provides education in schools and community settings without

[180] Condoms are also distributed at some festivals and on college campuses in Ireland, through NGOs and the Union of Students Ireland (with funding from the HSE and Durex). These activities do not constitute significant sources of employment within the sexual health sector in Ireland. While it is important to remember that Ireland is half the population of Sweden, the scale of condom distribution efforts are miniscule in comparison.

receiving any funding for doing so. Several participants in this study spoke of delivering education and doing health promotion work in an unpaid capacity in Ireland:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] And so there are people on a shoestring, with very, very poor resources who are interested in a public health agenda, who are interested in STIs... I think it's pretty sad that probably the majority of people that could be named, who are interested in sexual health, I could probably name 70% of them. And the fact that there aren't hundreds.

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Em, and I would like to have, I hate the idea of saying more staff, because that sounds like you're almost kind of empire building, but more staff somewhere. That there were actually more people working on sexual health issues.

Based on participant narratives, the number of paid positions in sexual health in Ireland equates to a insignificant fraction of those in Sweden. Several participants in Ireland felt fortunate that they had a paid position in this field, where there are so few sex education jobs. Furthermore, some stated that if they did not have their current position, they would leave the country in order to be able to do the work they are passionate about. One participant passionately argued that, in Ireland, 'there's no career' in sexual health, and positioned sexual health as the least 'promising' area to pursue if one is interested in working within the fields of youth and health:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] Yeah, well there's no career. If you came through the door to me and you said, 'I'm interested in working with young people in a health area, what do you think is the most promising area for me to involve myself, to make a career for myself?' I'd say anything but sexual health.

When compared to the narratives from Sweden demonstrating widespread casual and professional work, from distributing condoms to running local area campaigns to delivering outside facilitation in schools, the above narrative from Ireland sits in striking contrast. The absence of career possibilities and NGO funding for sexual health priorities in Ireland contributes strongly to a culture which does not demonstrate that sex education is a priority. Despite the stark contrast in the professionalisation of sex education between the two countries, several participants in Sweden expressed aspirations that sexual health

work would become 'more professional' or might one day be given higher clout than it has currently:

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] So I think the [need] may be, to make sex education kind of – make it more *professional.* I would say.

It seems that the dilemma of under-professionalisation of sex education work is universal between Sweden and Ireland, as well as perhaps across Europe and further afield, but to vastly differing degrees.

5.3 Catholic Guilt, Shame and Fear: *'it's a very complex area, you know'*

When examining Ireland's 1994 introduction of a State-mandated model of sex education curriculum in schools, it is important to recognise that implementation of this mandate was hard won, and rigidly opposed by Catholic lobby groups. Any Catholic influence we see today must be put in that context:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] The people who fought for it, basically said, 'We need this programme to stop teenage pregnancy and to control STDs', but they're coming from a particular perspective. Then you have the people who are fighting against it saying, you know, from a Catholic, very much a Catholic perspective, saying that, 'This is not the way we want our Catholic children to be educated on sexual matters.' Which is fine. But there was no other discourse.

This participant asserts that the debate over sex education in Ireland has been more about its existence within a health promotion frame, rather than an in-depth debate about content which might introduce other discourses, such as the feminist discourses seen in Sweden. The debate over sex education in Ireland, however, did not disappear 20 years ago when the RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) Curriculum was introduced. During the course of this research project, the media has reported the prevalence of Catholic based groups such as Pure In Heart[181] performing what could be seen as 'sex negative' or

[181] Pure in Heart is an association of the Iona Institute, a Catholic based 'think tank' which emerged on foot of the sex abuse scandal discourses in 2005. Iona Institute has become the public face of the Catholic Church in Irish news media, whereas previously Bishops and Clergy would have participated in societal discussions around issues of relevance to Catholic teachings (Inglis, 2008). Pure in Heart promote sexuality only within heterosexual marriage, and became known for using a pedagogy whereby students stick themselves together with sellotape to make an analogy of the 'uselessness' of the tape (and one's sexuality) after being stuck to multiple partners (see http://www.thejournal.ie/sex-education-sellotape-1310906-Feb2014/).

'shaming' pedagogies of 'outside facilitation' of sex education in schools. In this sense, when the media positions groups such as Pure in Heart opposite groups such as the Irish Family Planning Association, Irish society can be seen to remain in 'debate' about the implementation of a comprehensive sex education programme, despite the existence of a mandatory curriculum. While the debate may no longer be about whether or not topics of sexuality are included in the curriculum at all in schools, the Catholic teachings pervade in schools through a discourse of guilt and shame:

> [P12, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... Guilt is a really big issue here. And I don't, I think part of that probably comes from the formal education setting, but I think it's just very a cultured thing here to see sex and the body and everything as this thing to feel guilty and bad about and as a result of that I think that the way people seek information and the way they even discuss the issues tends to be, it's almost in a confessional kind of manner... looked at as a bad thing or something to control, definitely has a negative side to it...

In Ireland, this has manifested in tandem with the establishment of a postcolonial identity. During the drafting the 1937 Irish Constitution, there was the infamous influence of Catholic Archbishop McQuaid, and Catholic doctrine was particularly prominent in the wording of the fundamental rights Articles (Bacik, 2013). In recent decades, Western societies can be seen as part of a global system which has developed and distinguished itself through power systems of patriarchy and colonialism (Moane, 1999; Enloe, 1989). The exclusion of women from power – political, economical and societal – was documented in a variety of policies which emerged at independence for the postcolonial state of Ireland (Moane, 1999). Married women were barred from public service occupations, contraception and abortion services and information were banned, divorce was illegal and married women were dependent on their husbands for access to welfare and financial services (Moane, 1999). Moane asserts that these operations of power, and specifically the restrictions placed on women and women's sexual health and reproductive rights, are common to many postcolonial countries, resulting in profound political exclusion (1999). For several participants, the influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland can no longer be attributed to the 'Church', per se, in the sense of it representing a religious population who upholds Catholic doctrine, but more so to an Irish culture which has evolved through religion, including Protestant religious influences, and the role that those religions have played historically:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] Well certainly the Church [influences sexuality education]. And excuse me, when I say the Church, obviously I mean the Catholic Church, but I don't *just* mean the Catholic Church because obviously the Church of Ireland, again, you know would be similarly conservative just not a majority. Em, even though the influence of the Church is waning, the cultural impact, you know, will take a long time to diminish. And more and more people not going to church will say, but actually the attitudes and whatever around, em, sexuality, you know, it was a long time the dominant attitude for it to be secretive and dirty and not spoken of, and it'll take a long time for that to change, even though the actual power of the church has diminished quite a lot. Because, you know, that culture is held within people and within families and generations, so you know, it takes time... You can't expect cultural change to be fast... and it's not just the Church, it's people's fear of media and adverse media... I think this kind of conservatism exists, and I think it's a legacy from our past and I'm not sure that it's 'The Church' [gestures inverted commas] actively doing anything these days... but I think it'll take a long time for people to, yeah, to kind of find their own sense of what's acceptable and appropriate.

Shildrick acknowledges religious influences across the island of Ireland and reminds us that, 'although the relationship between the state and the Church works within different parameters, the dominant religion of the North is no less conservative and pervasive than it has been in the republic' (2013: 4)[182]. Since independence, the Catholic Church has endured a particularly powerful influence in Ireland, one which has not disappeared (Bacik, 2013).

Over 90% of Irish National Schools[183] have Catholic patronage and, in such institutions, sexuality education must be taught within the religious 'ethos' of the school (Bacik, 2013). These 'ethos' guidelines are interpreted in various ways between schools (Mayock et al., 2007). One way a school might feel certain about their compliance with Catholic 'ethos' would be in bringing in Catholic-based 'outside facilitators'. Participants in my study largely equated Catholic 'ethos' with a mandate to avoid in-depth discussions on contraception options and LGBT experiences within sex education, and this included discourses from participants who were Catholic sex educators themselves. Stories of 'good practice' in expanding sex education beyond these discourses were few, despite clear

[182] The dominant religion in the North of Ireland is Protest. Protestant and Catholic religious affilations within the island of Ireland are closely linked to political stances and National identities.
[183] National Schools are primary level schools. Fewer secondary schools are of Catholic patronage.

evidence of curricular exclusions[184] as well as the curriculum's patchy implementation (Norman, 2004; Mayock et al., 2007; Kiely, 2004; Roe, 2010). A narrative of fear in relation to the ways Catholic 'ethos' influence sex education permeated narratives in Ireland. Participants spoke of their perceptions of teachers' fears of crossing the boundaries of what constitutes Catholic ethos, as well as the reality that many sex educators today never received a similar education when they went through puberty and adolescence:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland]... I think it is, to some extent, a cultural thing. You know, a lot of teachers are people my age, they have very repressive experiences of sex and sex education and not discussing it, so my – probably my most common quote [from teachers] is, you know, it's very difficult to come from a culture like ours and suddenly become, like, a culture like Sweden overnight...

The fear-based interpretation of religious 'ethos' combines with a culturally catholic societal and political context to create a scenario whereby sex education contains remnants of shame:

> [P11, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Yea, well the main thing I think, like, I think we have huge societal issues around sex. Enormous. Ireland, Catholicism, whatever – I don't know why, it's a very complex area, you know. But, I think we have such a long way to go. And when I kind of start really thinking about it I get quite scared, you know, but I think our society in general, I think it's absolutely dreadful in how we look at sex and how we talk about sex and how we, you know, it's just, yeah.

The narratives allude to fear and shame discourses, and their complexities in Ireland. Bacik (2013) asserts that policy makers have failed over many decades to confront the Catholic Church's doctrine on sexuality and the stronghold it maintains in Irish society.

5.4 We Swedish/They Irish

Seemingly generalising concepts of Irishness and Swedishness were no doubt particularly strong due to the two-country nature of this research and my own positionality as, in many ways, cultural 'outsider' to both contexts (Anzaldúa, 1987). As was outlined earlier in this

[184] Including but not limited to information on contraception, abortion, discourses on pleasure and LGBT experiences.

chapter, many participants in Sweden were quick to attempt to unpack the Swedish national narrative as sex liberal or sex education leaders:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ... In Sweden it's very much, 'Oh, we're already equal. I know about this, *I* think about this every day, that's something we've always had in our mind' ... That is really the biggest obstacle in our work in Sweden. The picture, the National picture of Swedes as equal, and the most gender equal country in the world and all of that.

This participant had an interesting perspective on the national 'coding' of a discourse, and reflected the need for this perspective to be deconstructed further:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] ... the specific way of regarding sexuality has become something National. Coded in a national way. That the 'normal, good' way to view sexuality... it hasn't really been explored in Sweden. Sexuality hasn't really been explored in National or ethnic perspective yet... if you want to keep the sexual education in the way that you are having it now and to develop it in a certain direction you have to take in these kind of matters, you can't just avoid them.

This participant posits that the discourse prevailing in Sweden's sex education might reflect more nationalist values, and could serve as a mirror to reflect back a taken-for-granted set of State ideals. Røthing and Svendsen's work explores how, in Norway, nationalist values have played out in the sex education curriculum through discourses of, what they call, 'homotolerance' combined with a privileging of heterosexuality (2010: 147). This analysis of a Scandinavian neighbouring nation might also have relevance in Sweden. Reimers (2007) asserts that, in Sweden, LGBT experiences are presumed to exist outside of the classroom in question and argues that 'homotolerance' underpins the Swedish national identity.

In Ireland, a national sexual discourse was less directly linked by participants to nationhood. The postcolonial contextualisation of these narratives is entirely my own analysis. As has already been demonstrated throughout this thesis, most participants in Ireland directly related the challenges faced in sex education to the continued societal role of the Catholic Church:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] They don't have the experience. And culturally speaking, Irish people, as an ethnic group, em, White Irish people just don't have the experience to talk about their personal sexuality. Particularly in a school context. No way in a school context!... People in Ireland, to a large degree, and teachers in Ireland are not practicing Catholics as such, but they're *culturally* Catholic. In that they mightn't go to mass but there's still that kind of silence around that sexuality can exist. So, I'm generalising, but that's pretty common.

Interestingly, most participants in Ireland endeavoured to *separate* themselves personally from a cultural 'they' who upholds Catholic sexuality influences. No participant mentioned feeling complicit in the continued power of a dominant 'cultural Catholicism' and, despite recent increases in sexuality activism and organising, participant narratives establish a sense that despondency is interwoven into the fabric of the nation. While discussing issues such as discomfort around sexuality as a culture, participants did not position themselves as uncomfortable generally, and spoke more of 'they', as in Irish 'culture':

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] So, as with all these issues, I think, what I suppose I would see about sex education is to some extent it parallels our own, kind of, psychological development ourselves as a nation around sexuality. You know, you can't suddenly impose total comfortableness with sex on a culture that came from a very negative place around sexuality. So I think you just have to support teachers, be patient to some extent while, at the same time, trying to push out this boundary, to some extent.

While some participants expressed the need for patience with where Irish culture is at presently, others wished that societal discourses could be broadened more quickly, and hesitatingly considered how this might be achieved:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... I suppose if the discourse in civil society could be broadened in some way as well, I think that would be very useful, but I don't know to what extent or how that can happen to a large extent. I think there's so many organisations that have just been careful about how they present what they do and don't want to, you know, so I don't know exactly how that can happen as well.

These narratives are reminiscent of the despondency theme in Ireland discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast to the societal lamentations of participants in Ireland, most

Sweden participants positioned themselves as *part of*, and possibly even proudly responsible for, a cultural 'we' who have 'acceptance' of youth sexuality.

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Yeah, overall I mean first what I think is, is that we have an actual acceptance, eh, of young people's sexuality. We, that's, we just assume that they think about this, they might act out some – not necessarily in sexual intercourse – but in relationships, they fall in love, they you know, they're flirting, petting, whatever – kissing. Eh, and I think that actually is, is something in a way unique.

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] The strength, I think, is the big acceptance – when it comes to young people, and also children you can say in sexuality. That they are sexual creatures, in a way... even children are, even very small children are taught on sexual matters... It is compulsory on all levels in Swedish schools.

Despite the reality that many participants in Sweden critiqued its 'sex liberal' reputation, some seemed simultaneously prideful about the Swedish acceptance of youth sexuality; some perhaps could even be seen to acknowledge their own personal contributions to Sweden's reputation and successes. It is necessary to reiterate here that my theoretical affiliations were made explicit during the recruitment process and that many participants were identified through my personal and academic networks, possibly resulting in generally more 'progressive' data than a 'representative' study would render. This, along with the study's two-country nature, might partially account for the 'Irish they' and 'Swedish we' that emerged in relation to 'progressive' discourses. It is important that these complex reflections are not misconstrued as a binary. Participants in 'culturally Catholic' Ireland were keenly aware they would be situated alongside 'sexually liberated' Sweden, and vice versa, which sometimes resulted in participants asserting their own comparisons. Several participants in Ireland cautioned that Sweden's reputation might not be as good or as 'liberal' as it appears, and some based this on first-hand experience of having made professional visits to Sweden in the context of their sex education work:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] That's very interesting, because I think we all have this idea that Sweden's very liberal, but people have told me there are very conservative Christian communities in Sweden.

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Yeah, but then there's always something to push, because when I was in Sweden, like one of the things I noticed was that, like, even though

> they have all those rights and stuff in place, they still don't have the right to change their name without permission[185]. You know? So I was thinking, 'Ok, actually as a queer activist, queer activism can happen in any country, because there's always something to do.' You know, in Ireland.

One participant in Ireland advanced a particularly pointed critique of Sweden's role and reputation internationally, and brought up important elements for consideration within this analysis:

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] I think there are really big issues there around diversity, actually, in Sweden. And actually in terms of the lack of diversity in Sweden I think is a really big thing... I mean initially around the treatment of people with HIV was really problematic as well. And also, I think there is an issue for me, well I felt, and the other staff felt as well that there's – yeah Sweden has a slightly colonial attitude, you know. And I think (Swedish sexuality organisation) has a slightly colonial attitude as well, which I think is kind of really unhelpful... I don't think it's just their organisation, I think it's a cultural thing. I think people would experience elsewhere in Europe about Sweden generally, you know. I mean Sweden essentially is the Britain of Northern Europe. So, I don't think they understand the subtleties of that, either... from their own position as colonial, as an ex-colonial power, essentially, you know what I mean. That is something to look at there as well.

This participant introduces colonialism, but from a less recognised perspective, in revealing Sweden as a colonial power within Scandinavia. Specifically, Sweden's colonial history with Finland could perhaps be seen as in some ways analogous to the unique postcolonial relationship that the United Kingdom has with the Republic of Ireland. Both situations are often not included within global dialogues on colonialism and postcolonialism due to their geographic location within Europe and predominantly White European populations (Keskinen et al., 2012). In both Ireland and Finland, however, postcolonial remnants such as language and aspects of privilege may be identified. As is often the case with privilege and oppression, the oppressed communities are aware of their stance as well as the position of the oppressor, while the oppressor is unable to see the remnants of its historical actions (Macintosh, 1988). This participant also introduces the historical treatment in Sweden of people living with HIV, and refers to the shaming

[185] This participant refers to name change laws as they relate to trans* experiences.

treatment of the first cases of HIV in Sweden as well as Sweden's Communicable Diseases and Prevention Act[186].

Lastly, this participant introduces an interpretation that, perhaps, Sweden's sex education reputation, discourse and work is being used in a colonising way. Sexuality organisations in Sweden, as well as many other NGOs, have an international aid element to their work, which could be seen as Sweden 'colonising' or bringing their methods and approaches to other cultural and national contexts (see also Hagy, 2013). All of these points are important to consider while framing Sweden's sex education discourses and reputations, particularly when they are examined alongside Ireland's.

The Swedish 'we' was not always a pride-filled one, however. Many participants in Sweden acknowledged that Sweden's international image be distorted for international guests:

> [P6, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] It's hard to say because the picture from outside, what we get, with lots of international guests and everything is that it's *so impressive* all the things that we've achieved and all the things that we do here in Sweden – and now I'm saying *we* as in *Sweden* as a whole country.

A number also acknowledged that, in many ways, the situation in Sweden can be seen as good when compared with Ireland, but this assertion was almost always made as a prelude to a critique of Swedish discourses:

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] I find it interesting to look at different cultural contexts from different perspectives. Depending on which perspective you have it can seem to be really good or really – or not very good at all. I understand that the Swedish situation is much better than in Ireland.

> [P6, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] But it's still, I guess in Ireland the climate is slightly worse but still here there are tendencies in society, I mean, conservative and it's – the act of sex is not openly discussed so much...

[186] First introduced in 1988, it includes a contentious clause that obliges HIV-positive individuals to inform sexual partners of their status (Merson et al., 2008). The law continues to cause shame and challenges for those living with HIV in Sweden (Martin, 2006).

Shildrick calls the international idea of Irish 'backwardness' a 'myth' and a 'lazy explanatory model', meanwhile acknowledging that the endurance of a religious stronghold on the island has served to prevent progress of social and equality movements (2013: 1). The situation is complex and nuanced, much more than seeing one country as 'good' or 'bad'. It was clear that participants in both countries had preconceived ideas about the other country, based either on first hand experiences or on reputations.

5.5 Problematic or Pedagogical Potential?: *Sexualisation of Western Culture*

In addition to historical, cultural, and political perspectives, the impact of sexualisation of culture more broadly, in the media and internationally, must be considered. Inglis (2008) traces the emergence of global influences in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger economic boom, and theorises their impact in the context of a Catholic Ireland, concluding that they are simply another form of repression. One participant to this study attempted to brainstorm the current influences on Irish sexuality:

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... what I don't know is, em what is the language in which they talk about sexuality? In other words, ok, it used to be within a religious discourse. Or it was not talked about at all, but if it was talked about it was through a religious discourse and then through a medical discourse according to Foucault. Now the question is, em, is it an entertainment or media discourse?

Previous research has found a pleasure discourse to be missing from the Irish RSE programme (Kiely, 2005; Mayock et al., 2007). This could be seen as an obvious way in which sex education curriculum sits in contrast with media discourses. For Walter (2011) recent years have seen an emergence of a 'new sexism' in mainstream media and culture which has arrived in a clever guise of what might seem on some level to be a celebration of female sexuality turns out to be a form of sexism in disguise (2011)[187]. Walter (2011), Levy (2006) and many others critique the sexualisation of young women, in particular, which has been achieved in large part through the media at an increasing rate over the past decade (see also McNair, 2002; Renold and Ringrose, 2011). Gill (2012) urges us to see

[187] Walter asserts, 'although the word empowerment is so often attached to this culture, it is a strange distortion of what the term once meant to feminists. When we talked about empowerment in the past, it was not a young woman in a thong gyrating around a pole that would spring to mind, but the attempts by women to gain real political and economic equality' (2011; 7).

these debates as intrinsically linked to discourses of heterosexism, racism, classism and ablism as well as sexism.

According to participants, sexual shame discourse remains strong in Ireland. Some alluded to cultural references regarding sexuality for young people in Ireland, including specific norms and colloquial practices, and conveyed these narratives with a sense of concern and protection:

> [P11, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... there's a lot of kind of things around different colour bands you wear or, if you wear something it means if you're out at a disco it means you're not wearing any knickers and it means your available and, you know. I think there's a huge amount of pressure on young people to have sex these days, phenomenal...

Another account spoke to the paradox of a sexualised culture that exists simultaneously with a sexually repressed discourse:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] So, anyway, when you talk about sex and sexuality and sexual education and how far we've come and where we have to go, to me it is still, it is, there's a considerable kind of leap... you know MTV, the music stations, whatever, and I would be chatting to kids, and kids laugh at me because I say, 'When I look at that I see soft porn.' Turn down the sound and I see soft porn. And they don't see what I see, so ok, there's an age and maybe a kind of cultural thing. But at the same time, if you take magazines, you take TV, you take all of that, we have sexualised kids at a very, very young age.... there's a mismatch between parents not giving sex education, sex education not happening in schools, and sex being all around us.

Although participants in Ireland acknowledged that sexual discourses were becoming more prevalent in the media and society generally, several expressed concern at how this was playing out for young people, in particular:

> [P11, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... you know, these dialogues are becoming more explicit and young people are becoming more open so, 'Ok, let's embrace that' and 'Let's all chat about it' kind of a thing... But I'm really, really concerned about the numbers of young people having their first sexual experience, as I said, with alcohol. I think it's phenomenal and I think it's a much bigger issue than what we, you know, we're talking about as a society...

This type of 'concern' discourse, or even in-depth discussion of sexualisation of culture, was not present in the narratives from Sweden. A number of participants in Ireland acknowledged the duality of the sexualisation of culture within an historically sexually repressed society, and expressed that therein lies the challenge for parents and educators:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] Yeah, I think what's happened, this is just my personal view now, is that it's almost like the culture has flipped so suddenly that teachers and parents are trying to catch up with it. And I do think that they don't know what messages to give young people.

Some participants in Ireland felt that the local Irish media might hold the key to bringing the Catholic elements of culture up to date. Historically, in Ireland, since the age of the television, sexuality discourses and movements can be traced through notable media moments (Inglis, 1994). This phenomenon is not unique to Ireland, but it is particular and was referenced in detail by some participants:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I mean Ray Darcy or someone like that, you know, on the Late Late Show or on Today FM... Ryan Tubridy on the Late Late Show might bring [heterosexual anal sex] up and people would be like 'Woo' you know? That can break down barriers and it can make people realise, well actually it does happen and I'm not the only person who would like to do it...

In a similar line of logic, the subject of pornography was introduced by some participants. One participant in Ireland asserted it as an influential means of sex education in and of itself, and acknowledged that it is not included in the sex education curriculum:

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] You know, whether they're discussing pornography [in schools]. I mean, see that's the – pornography is the huge one.

In Sweden, on the other hand, some educators are using pornography as a sex education method, watching clips with the students and, together, deconstructing them for their portrayals of bodies, relationships, sex acts, consent, pleasure and safer sex acts. One participant explained:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] We know, also, that most young people – especially guys – have seen pornography... you have to respect that they are watching. You can't just condemn their watching, 'cause otherwise you will [makes hand clapping gesture]... So, it's a way, how can you reach them to discuss and also be critical of course.

It is possible that the reason media-driven sexualisation of culture was not widely discussed by participants in Sweden is due to the practices of media critique embedded within some sex education programmes there. With sex education movements in Sweden rooted in feminist principles, pedagogical critique of sexism and sexualisation is not uncommon, but participants noted that such critiques are also not widespread or consistent practice.

Despite some participants in Ireland having expressed general satisfaction with sex education, whether referring to their personal work or the curriculum content, all participants who spoke to the issue of sexualisation of culture agreed that it is complicating sex education work. The paradox between a hyper-sexualised media and a culturally Catholic political sphere and social system leaves sentiments such as guilt and shame in limbo and without a meaningful pedagogy with which to work through these cultural veils and troupes. One participant emphasised working to 'strip away' these restrictions for children at a young age:

> [P12, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] So I would say in terms of the future of Ireland and sex education, like I would really just like to see a conscious effort to try and strip away that guiltiness that, whatever it is that probably comes from before kids even get to school or are trying to, even directly addressing the fact that, you know, that this is how a lot of us view sex and just looking at that and what can you do to, kind of, shift that understanding a little better.

An understanding of cultural and political histories and legacies helps us to situate the 'dream' of unpacking Ireland's guilt and shame around sexuality, and thereby bring us closer to workable solutions.

5.6 Discussion

The notion of decolonisation, in other words the undoing of the effects of colonisation, has always been a central tenant of feminist projects (Mohanty, 2003). Fanon believes that

decolonisation involves profound transformation of self, community and governmental structures which only comes about through active withdrawal of consent which has been given to current structures of domination (1963). In Ireland, this would require a cultural recognition that consent has been given to current structures of domination in the first instance. It is interesting that, although Ireland has seen increasing societal, activist and government discourse challenging the Catholic Church's involvement in both health and education spheres, there has yet to be a widespread societal outcry demanding a de-linking of Church and State biopower in this way.

The concept of decolonisation might also be a relevant exploratory exercise for Sweden. This would entail acknowledgement and awareness of colonising histories and the ways in which they continue to play out by way of international reputations and perspectives taken in undergoing international projects or hosting international guests. This might also allow Sweden to engage more deeply with the oppressive histories existent within their own borders, including issues such as eugenics and elements of inequality which comprise the underbelly of a social democratic investment in 'sameness'.

The concerns, barriers and limitations of those working in sex education in Ireland are real, and one cannot pretend that an exploration of good practice or contemplation of new pedagogies will serve to wholly dismantle religious influences, postcolonial legacies, neoliberal and austerity-influenced educational environments or fearful interpretations of outdated or non-existent legislative structures in Ireland. Despite having comparatively more funding, governmental prioritisation, professionalism and sexual acceptance, participant narratives illuminate that one similarly cannot rest easy, thinking Sweden has sex education completely figured out. Sweden has long boasted a reputation of sexual liberation and equality, though participants had as many, if not more, criticisms of their national sexuality discourses than in Ireland, particularly in relation to shortcomings with inclusion of diversity. Foucault argues how a 'steady proliferation' of sexuality discourses have emerged and multiplied within power structures as a means of exercising control (1978: 17). In other words, with an increase of discourse comes an amplification of power. All power is not abusive, however (hooks, 2000). Tapping into and understanding cultural histories and norms helps us to dismantle the ongoing restrictions placed upon those who work in sex education in both countries, and reclaim the power of sexuality on individual as well as societal and governmental levels.

Chapter 6

Sexual Orientation and Gender Inclusion: *Towards Pedagogies of Discomfort*

Existing research is divided when it comes to sexual orientation and gender inclusion efforts in sex education. Some researchers conclude that times are changing for LGBT inclusion within the sex education curriculum, asserting that inclusion is becoming normalised (Hayden and Scraton, 2002). This notion, however, has been widely interrogated by others who continue to be unsatisfied with the ways in which inclusion tactics are implemented pedagogically and the discourses resulting from such efforts (Røthing and Svendsen, 2010; Bromseth, 2009). Discourses differ widely when delivered through outside facilitation conducted by LGBT specific groups, or by teachers in the classroom.

This research is underpinned by queer theory and feminism, two disciplines particularly interested in the identity aspects of gender and sexual orientation. The interview dialogues, therefore, set out to specifically interrogate these aspects of inclusion. Participants spoke about gender and sexual orientation to varying degrees, with some – especially in Sweden – concentrating on it as central within the interview narratives. Other participants, particularly several from Ireland, were unable to discuss this type of inclusion to any extensive degree. Inclusive sex education is, of course, a much wider concept entailing intersecting aspects of identities and experiences. From an intersectional perspective, these factors must always be examined in tandem (Collins, 2012), yet in dialogue and in practice aspects of identity are much more frequently addressed as separate and distinct.

This chapter examines the ways in which diverse sexual and gendered experiences are considered within sex education in Sweden and Ireland. I look at silences as well as heteronormativity within curricula and practices. Many participants spoke to or offered up narratives which could be seen as promoting 'tolerance' or 'adding on' education about 'the Other'. Anti-bullying discourses are strong within attempts to include LGBT experiences, but this can come at the sacrifice of constructions of LGBT sexual realities. Normcritical pedagogies and other methods of questioning norms were discussed at length by participants, particularly in Sweden, but some participants met difficulty when considering trans* inclusion. Participants in both countries expressed lengthy narratives

about gender inclusion more broadly, and argued a variety of perspectives on gender-based classroom splitting as well as pedagogies for addressing sexism.

6.1 Silences

Epstein et al.'s work on school pedagogy and curriculum content has found that LGBT experiences are not only not included within sex education, but are actually silenced from the school milieu more broadly. They assert that 'without radically altered sex and relationship education programmes... it is unlikely that more widely held heterosexist views will ever be challenged' (2003: 5). By discussing almost exclusively adult heterosexual marital relationships, this scenario is rendered the most, or only, legitimate site for sexuality, and all other activities and relationships are thereby constructed as less valid or even invisible in their silence (Epstein et al., 2003; Rasmussen, 2006). Some participants in Sweden described receiving feedback from LGBT students who felt 'invisible' within sex education lessons they received in the school context:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] What they say is that actually they, they often feel invisible. Eh, or that it is too little. Or even if they are addressed sometimes they could say, well, sex education is a heterosexual festival...

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] You know, 'Today we had sex education and it was about this and this, and it was not about me. I don't exist.' They are invisible... that was [feedback from] an LGBT student.

The narratives of participants in Ireland strongly suggest that many students finish their formal education without experiencing any mention of LGBT realities introduced by a teacher[188]. Participants reported that, at most, a student might attend a school that implements some aspect of an anti-homophobic bullying campaign or have a teacher who goes to exceptional lengths to source information on and find a way to include LGBT experiences. Participants reported that most teachers are working within religious 'ethos' constraints, though interpretations of how 'ethos' translate into classroom practices vary widely. One participant in Ireland argues how silencing in the official curriculum has been

[188] Recent research in the Irish context also makes this suggestion. Mayock et al. (2009) found young LGBT people to report LGBT relevance in sex education as almost non-existant. Roe's (2010) study echoed these findings, in their study young people reported 'sexual orientation' as the least-emphasised theme within their sex education experiences.

systematic and intentional, and persists despite lobbying efforts from organisations representing or working on behalf of queer issues and queer young people:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] They [curricular materials] have minimal information on LGBT issues, I don't think they have anything on trans* issues at all... just have lesbian and gay... despite lobbying by (sexuality organisations) to actually have more inclusion, they refused to have more... except the most token inclusion, LGB issues and they completely excluded trans* issues... It's hard talking about this because it feels like we're so far from it, you know? There's just *so* many challenges.

For this participant, NGO work to achieve some aspect of LGBT inclusion in school settings has been met with a frustrating degree of 'challenges' and has faced resistance from government officials, except for the most 'token inclusion' of 'just gay and lesbian'. Another participant offerd that the unstructured curriculum could be conceptualised to provide an opportunity for queer inclusion, but young LGBT people report that this is not happening:

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... some schools and teachers are doing a really good job, but by and large I think LGBT identities are not on the curriculum. And they could be there, there is scope for it being there... but that's generally what's going on, and actually that's what the young people would say.

One participant expressed how fluidities of identity are not addressed, and was adamant that it is the responsibility of the curriculum to break those silences:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... It certainly wouldn't address young people who are either questioning or feel that their sexuality is much more fluid or anything like that... I don't think that students or the teachers are going to break those silences if the curriculum doesn't do so and if their policy doesn't encourage them to do so... there are probably *more* silences than even the silences in the curriculum, in terms of delivery of it.

This researcher asserts that the silences in the curriculum are problematic, but are perhaps even more pronounced in practice. For this participant, any mention of LGBT experiences constructs them as fixed identities, rather than fluid, and excludes those who are in a process of questioning their identity. Røthing's (2008) research exposes how conceptualisations of binary, 'stable' and 'authentic' sexualities are fundamental to the

Norwegian political context, and that these political constructions of identities are upheld by educational discourses in schools. 'Stable' LGBT identities could also be seen as fitting within Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism[189].

6.2 Heteronormativity

Heterosexuality and homosexuality are often constructed as binary opposites with no relation to one another; discreet categories without complexity or fluidity (Sedgwick, 1990). Kumashiro points out that, 'numerous researchers have documented the discrimination, harassment, physical and verbal violence, exclusion and isolation experienced... by queer students or students perceived to be queer... however, the harm results from inaction by educators, administrators, and politicians (2002: 33). Young people are often surrounded by heteronormativity[190] in numerous aspects of their lives, yet sex education discussions which include the realities for LGBT young people or those with queer family members are often absent or fall short of being useful (Epstein et al., 2003). Warner argues that 'almost all children grow up in families that think of themselves and all their members as heterosexual, and for some children this produces a profound and nameless estrangement, a sense of inner secrets and hidden shame' (1999: 8).

Heterosexuality is widely presumed as natural and normal (Butler, 1993). Heterosexism has been proven to pervade sex education curricula in the West, though it often functions covertly (Fine, 1988, Eyre, 1997, Kiely, 2004, Epstein et al., 2003). Heterosexuality of the audience is not only widely presumed in mainstream media, teenage magazines, advertisements and films, but also throughout most subjects taught in primary, secondary and third level education, and especially in sex education (Epstein et al., 2003). As Warner puts it, 'straight people can see a certain version of their straightness reflected back everywhere, from toothpaste ads to epic poems... the ones who pay are the ones who stand out in some way. They become a lightning rod not only for the hatred of difference, of the abnormal, but also for the more general loathing for sex' (1999: 23). Kumashiro asserts that 'educators do not often feel the need to address homophobia and heterosexism in schools' (2002: 11).

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[189] Puar (2007) argues that many gay activists have committed to a pursuit of normalisation and an assertion of assimilation.

[190] Widespread and taken for granted societal norms which imply that all people fall into strict gender categories of either male or female, and that the only acceptable way of living sexually is through marital, monogamous, reproductive heterosexuality.

Kiely found the Irish RSE programme to be 'implicitly concerned with producing, in a series of stages, 'normal' and 'natural' heterosexual males and females, who will eventually form married adult, heterosexual, monogamous relationships' (2004: 331). One participant in Ireland passionately argued that when options besides heterosexuality are mentioned, it is about 'respecting difference' for a perceived population which exists outside of the classroom, and is ignorant of the reality that most classrooms have several LGBT students:

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] The significant mentions of homosexuality, I don't like the fucking language that's used as well, is around respecting difference, I guess. That's really problematic as well, because what it's saying to a class is that there are gay people out there somewhere else, you know. And we're kind of going, 'Well no actually there are probably 3 LGBT people in this classroom at the moment'. You know, and that's kind of, when you get that kind of respecting difference stuff, I think it's really Othering. It's not really helpful.

For this participant, 'respecting difference' discourses are not only Othering, but reinforce assumptions that LGBT young people do not exist in Irish classrooms. Butler points out that, 'heterosexual privilege operates in many ways... naturalizing itself and rendering itself as the original and the norm' (1993: 35). Such norms are reproduced constantly, yet participants in both countries discussed how teachers may remain unaware of heteronormativity due to the impact of wider societal norms as well as the education setting specifically. Several participants in Sweden gave examples of how heternormativity manifests:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...some sex education doesn't mention sexual orientation in that way in that they mention that everyone has a sexual orientation. I mean they're so normative that they just assume that everyone is heterosexual and when they talk about love it is heterosexual love and when they talk about relationships it's – but of course there are many schools today who do include, I would say, homosexuality. Not very much about bisexuality and the transgender are usually completely out... it is common that they are mentioned in a kind of 'special session'. In a special way.

For participants in both Ireland and Sweden, the B and the T in the LGBT acronym are most silenced and least included, even by those who are highly aware of and trained in

such topics. In Sweden, though, participant narratives indicate that homosexual experiences are discussed in most schools, though often as a separate or 'special' session. These participants argue that it is within the separateness from the 'normal' lessons that LGBT experiences are constructed as abnormal.

6.3 Tolerance approaches

Previous researchers have demonstrated how same-sex sexual relationships are constructed as 'Other' within sex education lessons and resource materials, by privileging heterosexual sex acts, marriage and the marital family as a site for procreation and constructing this as the goal of all sexual intimacy (Kiely, 2004; Epstein et al., 2003; Bromseth, 2009; Røthing and Svendsen, 2010; Kumashiro, 2002). These researchers argue that when same-sex experiences are introduced, it is often not within a lesson on relationships, but rather directed towards learning outcomes that place LGBT tolerance as the central aim. Tolerance discourses in education serve to strengthen prevailing power systems and ensure that discreet categories and binaries of hetero/homo and man/woman remain intact (Kumashiro, 2002; Bromseth, 2009; Røthing and Svendsen, 2010).

Kiely asserts that, in the Irish curriculum, 'it is presumed that the students reading these materials are heterosexuals, who need to explore their attitudes toward people with different sexual orientations, 'accept' these people and show them 'respect and tolerance'. Teachers are also advised that the issue of sexual orientation 'is a difficult topic to discuss with young people'' (Department of Education cited in Kiely, 2004: 320). This participant echoed sentiments about tolerance:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I think the way they address sexual orientation is kind of give students the impression that this is the overall, what I'd summarise it as which is a bit reductionist but nevertheless, that there are gay people outside of this school that we need to tolerate and be nice to. But that's as far as it goes... even the kind of lesson around sexual orientation, that it's very much that the dominant way of being sexual is to be heterosexual.

Another participant in Ireland illustrates how this might look in practice by explaining their own pedagogy. Rather than including mention of LGBT experiences within the

relationship portion of the workshop, this participant believes it is most 'affirming' to teach about 'the gay thing' in the context of a 'stereotypes' conversation:

> [P17, Relationships Educator, Ireland] We work around stereotyping as well... the 'gay thing', that's the biggest thing, you know... we do a thing called the 'labelling exercise' – the three most usual labels would be: 'slut', 'alco or junkie' and 'gay'... you would say to your group, 'You have to spend the day with one of these people... So all the girls go behind the gay label... the slut is usually left on her own... So then we talk about stereotypes. Tell me about a gay man: 'loves shopping, good looking, fun, bitchy, etc, etc'... then we go on to talk about the whole aspect of sexuality, a person is a person who is gay... we all do the same thing, gay or straight, except for who we are sexually attracted to. That is it. So we talk a little bit about that, and that affirms anybody in the group who is gay or wondering about their sexuality... And we talk about why some women do have promiscuous relationships, why they are doing it, and I give examples from some of the girls I've spoken to... And I'm hoping that one of these [boys] is going to be their prince... who is actually going to say, 'You know what, I'd actually like to just lie here with you, I'd actually just like to hold you.'

In this practitioner's very attempts to educate on sexual minority experiences and breakdown multiple stereotypes, heterosexuality is effectively reinforced as the preferred and supported goal. The exercise upholds dichotomies of gender and ends with the heterosexist hope that the 'slut' will find her 'prince'. At face value, the facilitator truly believes that by mentioning 'the gay thing' the lesson has been inclusive, but seems unaware of the myriad stereotypes this pedagogy actually introduces in the context of purporting to unpack stereotypes. Given that LGBT inclusion is not a requirement in Ireland (see also O'Hagan, 2009), many could argue that this exercise is progressive in context. A closer look at the exercise introduces doubts about the assertion that those 'gay or wondering about their sexuality' are indeed 'affirmed'. This exercise illustrates the argument of one participant in Sweden who asserted that homosexuality 'being discussed' can feel 'difficult and horrible' to a young LGBT person:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] Because usually during sex education it's extra heterosexual and they're afraid of course, and also afraid for these discussions about homosexuals and so on... silence is worse than it is being discussed. But *being discussed* is of course also very difficult and horrible.

Participants in Sweden particularly critiqued teacher-led implementation as creating 'tolerance' discourses. Bromseth outlines how, within Scandinavia, pedagogies and curriculum have moved from 'morally judging or completely silencing non-heterosexualities' to promotion of 'tolerance' for the non-heterosexual 'Other' (2009: 164). This can take the form of discussions within a civil rights context rather than a discourse of love, sex or relationships. One participant in Sweden outlined their experiences of teacher-led sessions:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...the tolerance discourse, for example, is very much something you do beside the Other... talk about being nice to each other. Yeah, talk about the poor LGBT people out there... So 'everybody who thinks that homosexuals should be able to adopt please stand here' and you know, and then when the students will express all of their really awful things... That's really bad practice. But that's something that is very common.

For this participant, placing discussions on LGBT experiences within the context of lessons on 'differences' is, in and of itself 'Othering'. The example given in the narrative describes an activity which several participants in Sweden referenced whereby a debate on the right of same-sex couples to adopt children is facilitated in the classroom. By introducing a debate on rights for LGBT people as a learning tool, this pedagogy upholds that equal rights and opportunities should be issues for debate by society. It gives space to expressions of negativity towards LGBT experiences, allowing for messages of hatred and intolerance in the classroom. Such pedagogies disallow opportunities to introduce LGBT realities as liveable sexual and relationship possibilities for young people.

Another variation on the 'tolerance' discourse is the 'normalising' approach, which was viewed as preferable by several participants in Ireland. One participant proudly described receiving feedback from young people in a workshop that' normalised' LGBT experiences:

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland]... we wrote on two flip chart pages, 'What would change for you because of today?'... a lot of it was around people being the same as us... 'They're just normal.' Like, 'They're just the same as us.'... And, 'I will be cool with my gay friends.'... we kind of normalised it a little bit for them.

A discourse that sees achievement in young peoples' willingness to 'be cool with [their] gay friends' seems analogous to one which views tolerance as the goal. Another participant in Ireland deliberated on the benefits and drawbacks of 'normalisation':

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] Within the school system there's, I kind of hate the idea of it in one way but I think actually it could be a good, kind of, almost end goal that being LGBT is really normal... normal is the wrong word, but really just part of the fabric of what goes on in education, you know.

For this participant, while recognising that 'normality' is not necessarily the goal of LGBT activism, or indeed queer theory, normalisation can be an indication of integration and a way to demonstrate LGBT as 'part of the fabric', rather than as separate. This sentiment was echoed by one participant in Sweden who posited that 'sometimes tolerance can be ok' and can end up emerging unexpectedly in the classroom from the normative reactions of pupils, even within the context of a lesson which seeks to critique norms:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] I think sometimes tolerance can be ok because if you try not to be normative as a teacher and you say, for example, ok let's discuss a love relationship. Let's discuss that Matt and Michael are together. And people will start to react. They'll say, 'What do you mean with Matt and Michael – what is this a homosexual lecture or lesson?' Even though a teacher tries to be non-normative, discussions might occur. And, you know, the teacher might respond to that and it can be – I mean, the *meaning* of the response can be tolerance. To say, you have to respect people and there are different people in this world... of course it can be very nice for a student to hear. If you're a non-heterosexual student it can be wonderful to hear a teacher for the first time in your life standing up and saying you should be nice! And you should tolerate this!... of course if you discuss tolerance in a classroom it can marginalise people in the room, but at least tolerance is better than hate, so what can I say! ...I prefer teaching about tolerance more than hate or complete silence.

This narrative is interesting in that it illustrates the ways in which a normcritical approach might be resisted by students. Participants critiqued 'tolerance' discourses, but qualified that these were preferable to overt homophobia or complete exclusion; this type of narrative was common in Sweden.

6.4 'Add-on' Lessons

Participant narratives indicated that lessons on LGBT experiences are frequently part of sex education in Sweden, though often in the context of a special or separate portion of the curriculum delivered by an outside facilitator. Eyre (1997) asserts that these 'special sessions' are 'add-ons' which often supplement an existing heterosexist curriculum. Eyre's (1997) work theorised that educational institutions often justify the exclusion of LGBT experiences using a rationale that sexual and gender diversity is statistically insignificant. These exclusions within the curriculum serve to construct LGBT experiences (as so many other societal discourses do) as deviant, rare and abnormal. One participant in Sweden articulated a similar perspective:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] But if the teachers do have five lessons, for example, and they are very straight, they're very heterosexual and very normative and then you get two people from (sexuality organisation) coming then it's really like, you know, the aliens are coming please look at them! And it is not ok!

According to Epstein et al., 'recommending the inclusion of queer experience in sexuality education is not a simple matter. We need to consider carefully the implications of who delivers sexuality education' (2003). If LGBT experiences are to be included in an extensive, comprehensive or dedicated way in either context, it is likely to be done through outside facilitation, although LGBT-specific outside facilitation of sex education is rare in Ireland. One participant in Sweden elaborates that it is the integration of LGBT into the wider curriculum that is a challenge for teachers who remain stuck in the 'add-on' paradigm:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... it's still, you know, a little bit like 'Ok, now we're talking about sexuality, and now we'll take the issue of LGBT.'... teachers think it's difficult to integrate it. To really integrate it... what has been a problem, then, is that, well it has also been an excuse that 'well, ok, we have these people coming from... (the) gay and lesbian organisation, and so then we don't have to bring it up in the rest of the sex education.'... teachers say sometimes 'oh, but I don't, I don't know – it's better if they could come and really tell how it is and they will do it better than I can do and, em, and eh also they, they-'...

To this participant, lack of awareness and training on LGBT issues has become a catch-22 whereby it provides teachers with an excuse for not being inclusive. Singling out LGBT discussions, rather than integrating them, can serve to isolate and silence the issues. Another participant in Sweden discussed having experienced that even the 'good teachers' treat LGBT topics as a separate issue:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] The good teachers, they sort of, they talk about heterosexuality without thinking about it for 55 minutes and then they sort of take one step aside and they say, 'And homosexuality is of course alright, too.' And then they step into the role that they know and they continue talking about heterosexuality… And then they think they've done a good thing for the students who are not heterosexual, but they haven't. They made sure to treat it as a separate topic, and I don't think that's right... so we talk inclusively.

One participant in Ireland discussed how any mention of LGBT is completely optional, and the creation of a recent 'add-on' LGBT resource in the curriculum resulted in a 'bitter fight' between NGO advocacy groups and governmental employees about the separation of 'trans* issues' within the resource:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] It's totally optional... this LGBT resource, and then within that they can drop trans* issues in particular – it's separated. So, it's easier to drop. And there was a bitter fight about that, and that was really horrendous, and it's really, it's upsetting to talk about it. And I couldn't win, I couldn't win... the broader thing about the power relationship between NGOs and statutory sector is really, really tough.

The power relationship and differing perspectives on LGBT inclusion occurring between the NGO sector and government supported educational directives is a commonality in both countries, though again to differing degrees. According to participants in Sweden, schools sometimes invite LGBT organisations in to either conduct lessons on sex education more broadly, or an LGBT element specifically. In Ireland, an optional LGBT resource has only recently been introduced, as a separate 'add-on' to the curriculum itself, and within that a smaller portion on trans* experiences is an 'add-on' within the 'add-on'. Given that the core RSE programme is unlikely to be implemented in any extensive way (Mayock et al., 2007), the chances are small that a young person will be exposed to the new LGBT resources at all.

6.5 Education about the 'Other'

Kumashiro explains that full inclusion of minority experiences can be resisted because, 'such integration can work against the notion that teaching and learning about the Other can be achieved within a day's lesson' (2002: 41). To put it differently, there are advantages to maintaining LGBT lessons as separate, distinct and 'add on'. One participant in Sweden discussed the benefits and drawbacks of bringing in someone to 'represent the 'Other'':

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] Mostly in Sweden it's the teachers who do the sex education, but sometimes they invite (sexuality organisation) if they want to get some homosexual to be there and stand up for everybody, and I think it's a good thing to do, but the problem is that it will be 'something else' – the sex education is heteronormative and you get 'something else' to represent the 'Other' who is never in the classroom. So it's really bad you have this heternormative context, everybody's heterosexual in this room, but here we have an 'Other' – look at this person. And when they go away 'we' are still straight people.

For this participant as well as several others in Sweden, education provision from 'an Other' helps solidify perceptions that LGBT experiences exist only outside of the classroom. One named the practice 'Ask the Other', detailing how this pedagogy often incorporates a question and answer session about the facilitator's personal life:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ...because if you are out in school you talk about yourself, like, 'Hi my name is ___, I'm a lesbian, blah, blah'– if you meet homophobia it's really, the risk is that it's getting really personal... there are many who still work with, like, the 'Ask the Other' method.

For several participants in Sweden, the 'Ask the Other' method not only firmly positions LGBT experiences as 'Other' and as existing outside of the classroom, but inherently opens a space for overly personal and inappropriate questioning, possibly allowing for hatred and homophobic speech acts. Furthermore, these participants see 'Ask the Other' as promoting tolerance at best, but not facilitating reflection on oppressive actions or structures. Kumashiro explains that, within education about the Other, 'students learn little that challenges these stereotypes and misrepresentations' (2002: 40). While criticism of these practices is emergent in Sweden, some participants still felt that 'Ask the Other'

methods have benefits, particularly for those young people who have never knowingly been exposed to diverse realities:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ...showing what it's like to be an LGBT person is still important in that we still need to show the consequences of being subjected to the different norms in society... I mean all of society is one gigantic advertisement for heterosexuality. And when you don't belong to the norm you don't see your life reflected... you have to make that reflection and affirmation.

Some participants in Sweden acknowledged how inviting LGBT speakers into the classroom can provide a rare opportunity for role modelling, particularly in rural areas. One summed up the benefits of the method, while articulating where it falls short:

> [P8, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ...my experience is that people who are straight... with a straight mind – doesn't even *see* LGBT people, they are not aware of the existence! ...but I don't think it's enough to meet a gay person! I don't think it would have any effect on the power... I see so many similarities with oppression against LGBT people and against women and it's like, ok mostly people know a woman and obviously it hasn't helped the oppression!

For this participant, it is not 'enough to meet a gay person'. An analogy is made between the perceived benefits of meeting 'gay people' for the eradication of homophobia, and the feminist assertion that meeting women has not annihilated sexism. Several researchers have posited that an emphasis on education by 'the Other' serves to strengthen oppression. According to Freire, societal hierarchies are maintained by structures which require the oppressed to educate the oppressor on their experiences, thus affirming the very power differentials which create certain realities as Other (1970). In Lorde's view, 'it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor' (1995: 285). An ongoing concern with LGBT-led instruction is the disproportionate emphasis it can often have on the need for LGBT people to 'tell stories' and, in effect, educate the 'normative' majority (Srivastava and Francis, 2006). Previous studies have found LGBT-led instruction to conceal instabilities and multiplicities from their personal narratives in providing lessons, with many of the educators finding omissions and fabrications to be helpful in this context (Rieske, 2009; Srivastava and Francis, 2006). For a young person questioning or attempting to navigate the queries about sex, sexuality, sexual orientation

and gender identity, it would seem that truthful narratives that affirm the 'messiness' of sexual realities might be most helpful. Some outside facilitation groups in Sweden have taken the decision to leave behind the 'Ask the Other' method in exchange for approaches which focus on interrogating norms:

> [P25, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] I had one email today that said, 'We need to meet two homosexual persons. Can you please come?' And then I answered them, 'Ok, no. We cover the whole LGBT area, and our lessons are not about so the students can meet two homosexual persons and ask them about their lives. We look at the norm and talk about consequences about breaking the norm.' And when I tell them that they are like, 'Oh, ok! Ok, you have to come!'

For Kumashiro, 'the focus on difference fails to change that which is not different – namely, the norm... although a curriculum that aims for inclusion may succeed in teaching that the Other is as normal or important as the norm, it does not necessarily change the very definition of 'normal' and ways in which we traditionally see ourselves as such' (2002: 57). The silencing, rather than 'Othering', of non-heterosexualities has been demonstrated in previous research as a characteristic of the Irish sex education curriculum (Kiely, 2004; Mayock et al., 2007; Roe, 2010). Ireland is only beginning to explore methods of inviting LGBT-identified educators into schools, and this occurs only in the context of anti-bullying education, rather than within sex education[191].

6.6 Homophobia and Anti-bullying

When asked about inclusive sex education, many outside facilitators in Ireland felt that it was challenging enough to 'reach the majority', let alone worry about inclusion of minority young people. Few *outside facilitators* in Ireland offered critical thoughts in relation to reaching LGBT youth, indicating that outside facilitation in Ireland remains strongly heteronormative. Most *researchers* in Ireland, however, spoke at length of the homophobia they witnessed throughout the course of their sex education research projects in schools:

[191] In 2013, a group of University students and recent University graduates in Ireland formed 'ShoutOut', a group with philanthropic-funding which sends LGBT educators to Irish secondary schools to provides free anti-homophobia workshops with an aim 'to create a more tolerant school environment for all students' (http://shoutout.ie/about). ShoutOut's pedagogy is reminiscent of Swedish narratives of 'Ask the Other' lessons.

> [P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] All I can say is that there's huge – from my own personal experience and talking to the children – homophobia… Serious homophobic bashing is rife… if anybody was gay in those [participant's research] focus groups, I'll tell you one thing, they were not going to admit to that… Even if the teachers say 'it's ok to be gay', I would say the teacher might then start getting accused of being gay.

This narrative speaks to a more structural level of homophobia present in Irish schools, echoing previous research on the topic (Norman, 2004; Neary, 2013)[192]. Participants in Sweden – both *researchers and practitioners* – were, on the whole, more vocal in their critique of homophobia in sex education than participants in Ireland. Some participants in Ireland discussed current projects which comprise early stages of LGBT content introduction in Irish schools. One civil servant asserted that these projects are more focused on 'tolerance and anti-bullying', but fall short of introducing LGBT identities as valid ways of life:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] It's slow. Em, there is movement around LGBT... a lot of the work is still focused on anti-bullying. So it's on tolerance and anti-bullying rather than recognition of this as being a perfectly valid way of life or way of being.

One participant in Ireland discussed how an LGBT anti-bullying programme has been sent to schools to increase 'positive regard for LGBT young people' through friendship mechanisms:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... we have a pack that we send out to schools... trying to increase positive recognition, positive regard for LGBT young people. And, em, creating a sense, and kind of calling on their friends to support them. You know, because we don't want to just focus on bullying as something that's – we want to increase their empathy but not terrify them.

The narratives of several participants in Ireland strongly suggest a belief that anything outside of a tolerance or anti-bullying approach would 'terrify' schools and pupils. The friendship approach is also used in Sweden, and was criticised in-depth by one participant for being naïve in its premise that empathy and fostering of individual friendships will

[192] In 2004, researchers from Dublin City University surveyed Irish teachers specifically on homophobic bullying, finding that '90% of teachers reported that their school's anti-bullying policy did not include any reference to (sexuality) related bullying… (and) 31% of teachers said that their school had failed to meet the requirement to put an RSE policy in place' (Norman, 2004; 7).

dismantle the structurally sanctioned group norms that allow for bullying and discrimination to emerge:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] It's about integration and 'if we meet and get to know each other than we, you know, will like to be friends' and blah, blah, blah... the [anti-]bullying discourse is sort of part of a tolerance discourse, in a way, but it doesn't talk about groups, it only talks about individuals. It's very much about, 'If I understand how it really feels when I hurt you, then I won't do it.' But it doesn't talk about *why* I hurt you. Or anything about any power relations or norms in that discourse. But in a way they work, the government, they work to strengthen that work. And it's very much about all of that, anti-bullying, evidence-based methods. And everything is about evidence-based methods, that's really the thing. And that's where the normcritical approach – that's a big fight, I think.

This participant's narrative expresses frustration at the government-sanctioned methods of anti-bullying in a way which echoes narratives from Ireland about LGBT-inclusion. In both contexts, participant narratives suggest a government level investment in methods of education which avoid questioning of power structures, and a fear of what Boler terms 'pedagogies of discomfort' (1999: 187). This is perhaps not surprising as government entities, in and of themselves, comprise some of societies most embedded power structures.

6.7 'Get it out of sex'

When LGBT experiences are *only* mentioned in an anti-bullying context and sex education remains separate and heternormative, diverse sexual realities are left unacknowledged (Kumashiro, 2002; Rasmussen, 2006; Bromseth, 2009). This contributes to a context which implicitly allows for emergence of the LGBT bullying which the school purports to desire tackling (Rasmussen, 2006; Kumashiro, 2002). Not all LGBT advocates feel that discussions which include LGBT sexual realities are helpful, however. One participant from a Sexuality NGO in Ireland asserted that LGBT inclusion efforts need to get 'out of sex' education:

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] I kind of think that RSE isn't the only place that sexuality needs to be talked about in schools. And I think an overemphasis on it is unhelpful because I think it actually runs the risk of increasing the marginalisation of young people... But I

> think we also need to get it out of sex... we need to be talking about young people's identities, you know. As well, I think young people here find sex education quite difficult, and also they find talking about sex quite difficult... to have their identity be talked about in terms of sex. I think we need to kind of pull out of there and it should be placed elsewhere.

This participant believes that because young people in Ireland find 'talking about sex quite difficult', LGBT education needs to be separated out from sex education. The challenge with this viewpoint, as was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, is that a discourse of separation of LGBT experiences leaves sex education with no choice but to be heteronormative. This more pragmatic approach to LGBT education resonates with the earlier narrative from Ireland that wished to be careful not to 'terrify' schools with LGBT content. While LGBT experiences might be hyper-sexualised within societal stereotypes, it is important to consider the impact of sex education discourses which directly imply that sex is only for certain bodies, certain relationships and certain ways of being.

Another participant in Ireland further discussed how sex education work and LGBT work in Ireland are considered as separate and distinct, with little cross over:

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Most projects around don't have a specific, dedicated LGBT sexual health worker[193]... particularly with regards to the fact that HIV is, you know, a rising – always has been – a high priority issue for what's known to be gay men, but is now called men who have sex with men. And men who have sex with men can be found everywhere. So, em, from the point of view of prevention and promotion, it's impossible to separate those two things. If you want to reach that target group, you have to talk about it everywhere.

It is significant that this narrative is the only mention from Ireland of the need to implement LGBT inclusion work and sex education as integral 'everywhere' from an NGO perspective. Several participants in Sweden, on the other hand, used the rationale put forth by this participant to justify normcritical and LGBT inclusive work. Sex education NGOs in Sweden maintain an LGBT inclusive perspective, and LGBT NGOs dedicate much of their work towards sexual health efforts. Sex education and sexual health in Ireland is largely separate and distinct from LGBT work, which is primarily focused on obtaining

[193] Here, this participant refers to the fact that there are not youth sexual health workers in Ireland with full LGBT remits. As previously mentioned, there are gay sexual health workers in Ireland affiliated with the Gay Men's Health Service.

legal rights. This discursive separation readily translates to a distinction of the two concepts for young people in the classroom. If the discussion remains one about identities, as the earlier participant recommends, then it comes along with all the limitations and challenges that a focus on identity entails. Many young people are not in a position to take on an identity label, for a variety of reasons, but still deserve to have their experiences and realities affirmed and reflected within education. For Butler, 'identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression' (1991: 13). It is this dilemma regarding the limitations of identity categories that has led so many in Sweden to move towards queer or normcritical approaches.

6.8 Normcritical and Queer Pedagogies

In Sweden, most interview participants discussed the emergent and popular 'normcritical pedagogies' approach to sex education which is rooted in queer theory and seeks to challenge identity norms as a tactic for inclusion. Normcritical approaches focus on gender and sexuality norms rather than 'adding on' diverse experiences. They expose oppression by interrogating how societal norms work and why they are unstable, engaging students to think critically, analyse norms for themselves and consider their own oppressive actions. Norms that have traditionally been promoted through sex education – such as traditional masculinity and femininity, heterosexual coupling and penile-vaginal intercourse (Rasmussen, 2006; Epstein et al., 2003) – are exposed as constructs, thus opening up topics to include those students who transgress such norms. As one participant explained:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] We talk about norms and why norms become visible and the dilemma with the categories.

Throughout all of my interviews and literature-based research, it is normcritical practices which most closely resemble a feminist and queer pedagogy for sex education. Several participants in Sweden explained how the ideals underpinning normcritical movements are not 'new', exposing the queer theoretical and feminist roots of these pedagogies:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] So some think maybe it's something new, but it's not new and you get it also from the feminist teaching, the feminist movement.

Normcritical approaches aim for integrated inclusivity rather than an approach which assumes that the 'Others' are 'different', should be 'tolerated' at best (Bromseth, 2009). In Sweden, use of a 'normcritical' approach requires extensive education and training, which participants explained is not yet available to most teachers or school employees. According to participants, normcritical approaches have been implemented to varying degrees by some 'outside facilitators', but have not yet been wholly embraced or integrated within the teaching profession. Most participants to this project in Sweden who work as outside facilitators claimed to use normcritical pedagogies, though the narratives illustrate that these models manifest diversely among practitioners in practice. As one participant put it:

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] Normcritical has really been a word that has spread all over Sweden. Which is both good and bad... the analysis really differs, in these discourses. Which means that you get different results, very different results.

Despite taking multiple forms and achieving 'different results', normcritical pedagogies were widely touted as the way forward by participants in Sweden. Several illustrated examples of methods they use to 'apply it' on a 'concrete level':

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] And so when we say, you know, 'This is how this norm is produced and do you agree?' And it's always, 'No, no, that's not at all how it is, no, no, no.' 'Well, ok, have you been in a toystore?' 'Well, yeah.' 'What do you see in the toystore, what are the girls supposed to play with and what are the boys supposed to play with?' I mean there's no refuting it, it's the way it is... when we talk about the norm, we talk about it on a very theoretical level, to begin with, but then we apply it on a very concrete level. How does this affect people in their daily lives?

Like queer theory, normcritical pedagogies seem to be more readily described through what they *do* rather than what they are. Several participants discussed normcritical pedagogies as requiring a mental shift on the part of the practitioners. One participant called this the 'normcritical gaze' and maintained that it is 'not difficult':

> [P28, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] It's not difficult to work with a normcritical perspective - but you know, you have to have an awareness, and you have to have, kind of, a gaze. A normcritical gaze. But then, it's not difficult.

Other participants disagreed, and spoke in depth about the challenges in implementing normcritical approaches, which they asserted require more work when compared to the more traditional 'tolerance' based methods or 'gender equality work':

> [P27/1, Civil Servant, Sweden] But normally you go into the tolerance perspective really easy, and certainly if you're part of White, heterosexual society it's like tolerance 'I'm a good person', but it's so much more difficult, you have to like reinstall and think totally differently to be normcritical.

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] The normcritical approach in itself is, it's really, really challenging for everyone who is trying to work with it... you really need to think about very many things at the same time. Because you really, I mean you reproduce norms all the time... the more intersectional you go, the more *complex* it becomes. It's far away from just doing this gender equality work.

Kumashiro believes that an anti-oppressive pedagogy is one which will 'encourage students to 'queer' their understandings of themselves... deconstruct the norm/Other binary... how our sense of normalcy needs, even as it negates, the Other' (2002: 64). One participant unpacked normcritical pedagogies' disallowance of discrimination from a power perspective:

> [P25, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] If you work normcritically, you don't allow discrimination. If someone says 'Oh, I hate gay people', like before, we like tolerated that! Because we were expecting it. That's the difference...when you work normcritically, you, like, kind of force people to look at themselves. And that also leads to it's, like, more turbulent during our lessons now. Because suddenly it has to do with, like, *all* people. It's just, it's not that hard, looking at this LGBT person and thinking, 'Ok, that person is kind of ok.' But if someone comes to the school and says, 'There is a norm. There is a lot of norms, according to sex and gender and stuff like that, and we *all* participate in *all* these norms. And how do we do it, and why do we do it, and what categories do we make out of these norms? And which one has the power and which one hasn't?' If you talk like that, people are like forced to look at themselves.

Pedagogies of discomfort constitute affective education modalities for social justice whereby critical inquiry is used to facilitate radical shifts in pupils' worldviews, meanwhile evoking sentiments such as anger, grief, disappointment and resistance (Trifonas, 2003; Boler, 1999). Despite hailing normcritical pedagogies for their aims to

interrogate norms as an inclusion strategy, most participants in Sweden admitted to being unable to achieve full inclusion, and reflected critically on their own shortcomings. Participant narratives from Sweden strongly indicated that normcritical approaches are an ongoing project, necessitating refinement and ongoing interrogation, as well as integration within the formal curriculum and school environments. It remains to be seen how best to integrate normcritical approach into existing structures in a way that does not sacrifice its spirit or essence, and how to educate teachers in an intersectional and sustainable way.

It is significant that norms were hardly mentioned by participants in Ireland, though one researcher participant offered a suggestion which echoed the sentiments underpinning normcritical pedagogies:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I mean, coming at RSE from a minority sexuality perspective might actually break down barriers for straight kids, and for straight teachers or whomever, in terms of dealing with their own sexuality. It might. You know, it's like being faced with the Other and having a look at yourself. For the straight people to go, 'Well, what do they do?' You know, *them*, it's always *them*, and they're not the same as *us*, and 'I've never had an experience of questioning my own sexuality'. What a minority group could do is make – for critical minds – is make the critical self think about why are they different or what makes me different to them, and what's normative? So, primarily, what's normative?

Interestingly, and perhaps tellingly, this one suggestion of norm interrogation from the Irish context is still envisaged as being an educational intervention conducted from a 'minority sexuality perspective'. In other words, if the array of LGBT pedagogies were to be positioned on a linear trajectory, following the evolutionary path of such education from Sweden, Ireland is only beginning to enter the anti-bullying and tolerance phases. Normcriticism is not yet a vision in Ireland, but a post-structuralist or queer view on education would optimistically see that such pedagogies need not exist as linear trajectories (Valocchi, 2005).

6.9 Challenges and 'Good Practice' Examples

In Ireland, dialogues about LGBT mostly centred on why inclusion is a challenge in this context. Civil servants, in particular, were well versed on the challenges in implementing

an inclusive pedagogy. One civil servant justified teachers' embarrassment, lack of knowledge and school 'ethos' as the rationale for recently introducing a video[194] as a curriculum supplement. This resource could be seen as an 'Ask the Other' approach without the questions, whereby young LGBT people speak to the usual questions received from heternormative society:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] Teachers don't know how to open up the topic in the classroom. Again, partly ethos, partly embarrassment, partly feeling they don't know enough about it... we have young gay people who are happy to speak to camera about learning about their identity, how young they were, you know a lot of the issues that are not that well known to say teachers if they're not gay themselves or, and either to students.

It is important to note the manner in which this civil servant excuses the teachers from doing the work to learn about LGBT topics and overcome their fears, and implies an assumption that the students themselves will not be gay. Another civil servant argued for the need, first and foremost, to make LGBT experiences visible:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] Yeah. Maybe it has to be very visible, you know, and be pulled out and be visible to start with before it will be integrated, because it's been so invisible for so long. Em, and then the transgender bit is even more difficult... we're used to looking at gender, what it is to be male or female, so introducing the notion that it's a continuum and there are people who are both and there are people who are neither... I don't know of any school that's dealing with it.

As addressed earlier, there are limitations to pedagogies which simply introduce or make visible LGBT experiences. One NGO employee expressed frustration at government insistence that LGBT identities are constructed as problems:

> [P33-2, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] [The Department of Education] keep making mistakes, like they use transgender as a noun[195]... we're in a constant struggle to keep it away from LGBT identities being a problem. You know, 'You've got this problem.' 'How are you going to address this problem?' ...They immediately would see coming out as a problem, similar to realising that you have been sexually abused. You know, in that sense it's a

[194] Several participants in Ireland referred to the recent introduction of a set of videos on LGBT experiences, intended to serve as a supplement to the formal curriculum.

[195] In other words, this participant alludes to a reference of 'a transgender' rather than 'a transgender person'. The use of 'transgender' in this way is considered de-humanising by many trans* individuals and trans* activists (see also Bornstein, 1998).

> negative thing that's happened to you and, 'You know, you're going to be ok, but it's this difficult thing, it's a bad thing.' As opposed to being this wonderful thing, and 'People are different and these are the ways that we're different and let's celebrate that difference.' And you know, that there's a community out there.

In 2009, GLEN (the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) and The Department of Education and Skills in Ireland published guidelines for principals and schools on how to work with lesbian, gay and bisexual students, comprising the first governmental resource on the topic. The document overwhelmingly focuses on negative aspects of LGB experiences, asserting that LGB students have lower levels of supports, safety and participation and are at greater risk of 'not achieving their full potential', 'developing poor self-esteem', 'leaving school early', 'experiencing mental health problems' and 'becoming involved in self-harming behaviour' (GLEN, 2009: 6). The document does not contain an exploration of power and privilege, or make an assertion about the structural factors that give way to these negative conditions.

Not quite reaching the 'celebration' discourse that the previous participant envisions, some participants in Ireland offered, instead, a vision for an openness and 'nurturing' of young people in Ireland as sexual beings within an approach which emerges 'organically':

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Schools should be more respectful of young people... a more supportive environment towards people with different sexual orientations... the difference between a nurtured gay person or somebody who has kind of worked through and nurtured themselves, between a person who is comfortable in their sexuality and a person who is not, I mean it's phenomenal.

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ...I think if that space was created, that organically young lesbian and gay people would come out much easier in school, if they were protected and the space was provided for them to do so...

These narratives indicate that, according to participants, the classroom environment in Ireland is generally not a nurturing or safe space for young LGBT people. One participant from Sweden illustrated the use of a pedagogy in which, they assert, the language usage of the facilitator can create safety and inclusion in the classroom:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I just make sure that they know that I don't assume that they're all heterosexuals. I say, 'Some of you might be gay some of you might be straight, some of you might be bi... You can see them being nervous, and then I say, 'We're not going to talk about it but I know. I know that not everyone is straight' ...it's that easy to make someone feel comfortable. And we've had people writing on our, em, evaluations that, 'This is the first time I felt that sexuality education, em, was about me... the first time I felt included.'

The use of such pedagogies, of course, requires teachers and school staff who feel comfortable to do so. When dealing with topics of sex and sexuality, creation of a discourse other than heterosexual can take work on the part of the educator, to reflect on and deconstruct their own assumptions, values and background (Kumashiro, 2002; Rasmussen, 2006; Epstein et al., 2003).

6.10 Transgender Inclusion

Bornstein believes that transgender experiences serve to terrorise 'the structure of gender itself' (1994: 71). While many participants in Sweden explained that they focus on both gender and sexuality norms, examples and dialogues were disproportionately focused on sexual orientation and often highlighted the need for increased attention to inclusion of diverse gender identities. In Ireland, only a couple of participants engaged with the topic of transgender inclusion at all, mostly focusing on how difficult it is to introduce within sex education. As one participant put it:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] Em, and transgender is even less, em, it's less discussed, it's less prevalent, it's less out there. And in some ways it seems *even* more difficult for some people to accept than orientation. Maybe orientation has been around for a long time, whatever the prejudice and discrimination, it's been around so it's kind of slowly, kind of, gaining some sort of acceptance whereas transgender, it's only beginning to be talked about in any way. Em, so I think people still find it very challenging.

Even among LGBT groups advocating for inclusion in the curriculum, one participant encountered struggles in attempting to bring in 'anything other than lesbian and gay':

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... [some LGBT advocacy groups] don't really push for anything other than lesbian and gay.... So yeah, that's been a struggle including bisexuality and including trans* issues.

This narrative touches upon broader LGBT rights issues by articulating how much of the NGO advocacy work to bring inclusive education into schools has argued for inclusion which sidelines or ignores bisexual and trans* experiences. According to this participant, the result has been that trans* experiences are separated out from LGBT not only in dialogue but also in practice, in the new supplementary video materials for sex education:

> [P33-2, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] Well one thing that's not ideal that I'm really not happy about... transgender issues is listed as separate... in a separate lesson... if people are really in a rush, it's like 'woah' skip.

Another participant admitted the normative nature of their organisation's materials and the lack of inclusion of trans* experiences, but justified that 'transgender doesn't come up very much':

> [P12, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] I'd say that's probably one that does get glossed over. A bit. Like there's articles 'puberty for girls' or 'puberty for boys' ... transgender doesn't come up very much, it just doesn't, it's not that there aren't people out there, it's just that we're not interacting with it.

Examination of gender structures in society makes visible the ways in which individuals become gendered through practices and discourses which render a particular version or trajectory of maleness and femaleness as 'normal' (see also Butler, 1993). Perhaps not surprisingly, participants in Sweden were able to speak more extensively to trans* experiences than their counterparts in Ireland. Despite Sweden's emergent normcritical pedagogies approach, most participants admitted defeat when it comes to trans* inclusion:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]: ...actually the hardest part for many, [is] to work on transgender. And we haven't been very good at it either.

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] But the problem is, like when you separate boys and girls... you do get that problem... We mention trans* issues, but of course we could do better.

One participant in Sweden asserted that trans* identities are not spoken about to any great extent within sex education, because it is seen to be an identity rather than an orientation, and therefore less relevant to discussions on sex:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] When we talk about, em, sexual identities and preferences, we talk about hetero- homo- and bisexuality. So we don't include the 'T'... preferences is one thing and identity is one thing... of course, we say that, 'If you feel like that might be something that's happening to you or that you're living in the middle of, like not being comfortable in your body, than this is where to turn and there is help if you need it.

It was surprising to see normcritical advocates who promote integration and a focus on norms using a discourse which clearly separates out trans* identities as 'Other', constructing these realities as problems which necessitate 'help'. Perhaps problematically, this participant has conflated trans* experiences with 'not being comfortable in your body', a phenomena which echoes narratives of some trans* people but has been increasingly challenged as a stereotype by trans* advocates (see Schofield, 2008). Despite recognising that trans* is not a sexual orientation, few participants put forward a pedagogy which specifically includes trans* bodies or sexual realities. Swedish research by Orre and Gäredal (2012) found transgender respondents to widely report trans*-relevance to be missing from sexual health information provision. Some participants in Sweden observed that the difficulties faced in trans* inclusion could actually be a result of the perception that Sweden has 'reached gender equality', and therefore does not need to do any more work on gender:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think transgender is an especially difficult norm to overcome when we think that you have reached gender equality!

Based on participant narratives, more widespread gender equality conversations in Sweden require an update and a broadening of scope in order to consider trans* inclusion within gender discussions.

6.11 Gender Norms and Gender Diversity Inclusion

According to Butler, '*gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*' (1991: 21, emphasis in original). It can be challenging, if not impossible, to educate thoroughly on sex without reference to gender, or at minimum to highly gendered body parts and experiences. For the participants in Sweden who have been thinking through and working with a normcritical perspective on gender, it is the distinct divisions between male and female, and all that goes alongside these divisions, that comprise the root cause of gender exclusion:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think that sometimes gender differences are almost like fetish. They get so – so possessed with it in a way. So, and that is something that I've seen everywhere and that is quite interesting since one of the goals with the sex education is to overcome gender inequalities!

One participant provided an in-depth illustration of a pedagogy to deconstruct and make gender norms visible with young people:

> [P25, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] And then we talk about, 'Ok, when new children are born we have two categories of gender here. We have girl and we have boy.' Very easy. And then we talk about this, how it works in Sweden, that what you actually do is that you can't ask this little child, 'Are you a boy or a girl? How do you feel?' The thing that you actually do is that you look at the child's body. Yes, that's what you do. Just make people aware of that, 'Ok, there's a girl, you're expecting her to be girly.' And, 'You expect this boy to be boyish. And what is that? Open it up and make them think about that. And we try to be very concrete. Like, 'Ok, you say that the colour pink is a girly colour. Why is that? Who decided that?' And they're like, 'Oh, the whole society.' Ok, 'Who is the whole society? Can we change this? Why is it this way?' So that kind of discussions.

This exercise seeks to accomplish Bornstein's priority that 'when we get to a point of knowing we're not gendered in the same way as our friends, relatives and co-workers – it's then that we get angry and start to do something about gender' (1994: 79). Such exercises are not part of the official curriculum in Sweden, and were only discussed by LGBT outside facilitation groups, though participants explained that this type of gender deconstruction and gender pedagogy is beginning to make its way into some teacher training curricula in Sweden. Participants in Sweden repeatedly reiterated the importance

of teacher awareness and competency regarding questions of gender. One participant emphasised that it is 'informal talk' in the classroom that most strongly enforces gender norms:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] What's interesting is that researchers in to it found that it is more an *informal* talk. Eh, it's informal talks when the teachers are actually, em, confirming gender stereotypes... that is coming in sex education, and they don't really, some are not aware about it.

Sexual orientation and gender norms are bound up and intertwined with one another (Bornstein, 1998). Indeed, the very definition of sexual orientation depends on a notion of gender, the gender towards which one is oriented. Societal norms about gender impact upon conceptions of what it means to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight. As one participant in Sweden put it:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] You can't have one without the other. We have pointed out the gender norm, while pointing out the heteronorm. So they're sort of co-dependent, and that's also very obvious of course to everybody, but sometimes it's been forgotten... I go to meetings and when there are politicians coming it's always about, 'Oh, I can't really understand why people just aren't, you know, being allowed to love who they want' and it's like, 'Well, that's not really the whole picture.' That's why we also choose to not just talk about the heteronorm, but also the gender norms. Because that's sort of the first step. And then when we move on, I think we could sort of incorporate it into the heteronorm again, but it needed to be broke loose, first.

For this participant, the interconnectedness between sexual orientation and gender is 'obvious', but 'forgotten' and must be 'broke loose' when discourses on LGBT inclusion become reduced to a conceptualisation about 'being allowed to love who they want.' This unpacking of the heteronorm relates to wider societal and political discourses as well as the micro-society of the classroom setting (Finch, 2002).

Few participants in Ireland made the connection between sexual orientation and gender norms. One researcher in Ireland critiqued what they called a gender 'barrier':

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I still think there's an underlying, kind of, male/female, kind of barrier that's not kind of – the positioning of males and females relative to each other is not being discussed.

Kiely's research found the Irish RSE materials to perpetuate the myth that heterosexuality is something that males do to females and invites students to learn their sexual scripts or gender appropriate behaviour in relationship negotiations (2004). Females are often constructed as unable or lacking in confidence to turn down sexual advances, yet the scripts available to them through the media and, indeed, the sex education curriculum rarely offer alternatives. Previous research in Ireland points to young women feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable asserting condom use or carrying condoms, often citing fears of being seen as 'loose' or 'easy' (Mayock and Byrne, 2004; Hyde, 1996). Some participants in Ireland offered narratives which illustrated evidence of the perpetuation of gender stereotypes within sex education pedagogy:

> [P17, Relationships Educator, Ireland] Girls are better at talking. Girls, from the time you're born, if you're a little girl, you will talk more descriptively, you will talk about your feelings, you like talking about yourself. If you listen to little girls playing, they often play relationship games, mummies and daddies and doctors and nurses and school, all of these about behaviour. Boys play doing games, a lot of the time, a lot of the time they will play doing games. They don't do the relationship games, usually. They don't talk as descriptively... and this is *every* group of boys of that age.

As one participant admits:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] A lot of the time the broad sweep is I just think about, you know, nearly like the stereotypical girl and boy.

These participant's narratives are rooted in their own experience of facilitating sex education, and match wider discursive socialisation narratives of gender. The participant's own norms and assumptions of the girl who is able to talk about feelings and bodies and the boys who play 'doing games' are revealing. By their very generalisations and gendered expectations, to what extent could the participants in Ireland be reproducing the sex education student as Butler's 'imitation for which there is no original'? It is, of course, more complicated than this. Societal norms impact upon educators' own conceptualisations of gender, and often remain unchallenged in the absence of widespread societal discourses

which unpack these stereotypes. By contrast, normcritical discussions in Sweden have gained traction within wider society, a society which has long prided itself for its 'gender equality successes' (Nordenmark and Nyman, 2003). For many participants in Ireland, in a sex education context where basic level provision is not a guarantee, several expressed feeling that inclusive pedagogies are currently an unachievable ideal.

6.12 Separatism in Sex Education

One of the most frequent manifestations of gender discourses within participant's narratives came in the form of discussions about gender-splitting. A common pedagogy in sex education, particularly in Sweden, is to split a classroom into two groups, a 'boys group' and a 'girls group', with varying rationales for doing so. This phenomena is also reflected culturally in popular written resources directed at adolescent boys or adolescent girls and, indeed, in the differing and distinctly gendered societal narratives and stereotypes about puberty experiences. Most participants in this study held strong convictions regarding whether or not groups should be split by gender and why. In Ireland, a few participants alluded to the gender divisions that already exist strongly within Irish society and the Irish education system. One participant pointed to the fact that many Irish schools are sex-segregated and unpacked the premise behind this split as relying upon heteronormative assumptions:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] The relationship between gender and sexuality is huge, you know. We have a huge issue with, I mean at least 30-something percent of our schools are single-sex. You know, and on top of that a lot of them are voluntary religious schools. So, em, institutionally we've got a big problem... they're in all male settings or all female settings where sexuality is not talked about. Where, you know, the whole premise of our school system was that the boys should be kept away from the girls... which means that homosexuality can't actually exist!

A number of participants in Sweden spoke to the heteronormative assumptions underpinning methods which split by gender:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] And I think it's the same with the sex education, I mean why is it – you have no idea really which sexual orientation or gender identity the students have, so why just assume and why just assume that they need to be taught about each other so that they can meet and have sex! I mean, these preconceived notions are really

> heteronormative and I think a lot of people, I mean if you tell them I guess they would be able to realise what you mean but they don't think about it because it's so natural to them.

One of the ways that heteronormativity can emerge is through normative conceptualisations about romance and relationships, which can make assumptions regardless of whether a group is split or not. Several participants in Sweden critiqued pedagogies which facilitate gendered groups to ask questions of one another:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] A very common method that is used is that you divide the group in two, in a girls group and a boys group. And you ask the boys to write down questions to the girls about sex, and you ask the girls to write questions about the boys. And it's a very, I mean many teachers really, really like this and feel it's very useful. Of course it is horrible to sit there and pretend you're interested in the other sex when you're not!

One outside facilitator in Ireland illustrates use of this exact approach, finding it 'very useful':

> [P17, Relationships Educator, Ireland] A very useful exercise that I always do, especially where it's a mixed group, get the boys to say what they want from the relationship and what they think girls want and then the girls do the very same, what they want and what they think boys want – and then we compare the two lists… so enlightening… We deal with roles as well… Describe a wife, describe a husband … Describe a mother, describe a father…

This narrative illustrates Epstein et al.'s assertion that, 'sexuality in the secondary school is still primarily a discussion about heterosexually imagined futures' (2003). Once again, in this practitioner's very attempts to break down gendered stereotypes as they play out in relationships and sexual scenarios, the heternorm has been solidified, leaving no space for experiences that sit outside of what Butler calls the 'heterosexual matrix' (1999). Another participant in Ireland gave the following example of an attempt to break down gender stereotypes within a mixed-sex groups, but – as was the case in several narratives from Ireland – appeared unaware of the presence of the heteronorm within their discourse:

> [P18, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Well, it kind of works two ways. In one way it could be quite good to have boys and girls together because they learn off each other... we

had a guy come up with, 'Well if girls carry condoms they're slags'. Ok. And that opened a huge discussion between the girls and the boys and we kind of put it to the person who said it, 'Well, what about girls and choice and having a choice and being responsible for your own health.' So in that way it worked really well. In another session it worked, it kind of, the girls sat at the back and they didn't want to hold condoms in front of the guys, they didn't want to do condom demonstration in front of the guys when you roll it down on an artificial penis it was almost like the guys would, you know, remember that... I'd say if we probably had done the session one-on-one with the girls they would have opened up a lot more.

This narrative echoes findings from a body of research which demonstrates that sex segregation in schooling can serve to empower young women and girls, in that it removes the oppressive forces of male dominance in the classroom, allowing space for more meaningful engagement and, in the long run, higher educational achievement (Riordan, 1990; Hasday, 2002; Sadker and Sadker, 2010). While some participants rationalised gender splitting as a method for teaching boys and girls differently, several participants in Sweden directly articulated gender splitting practices as an act of feminist separatism:

[P8, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] Because I'm a feminist, I've been working with feminist issues for a long time, so I really see the point of dividing into groups if you have, like, a purpose and a power perspective on it I think it's less problematic. But when you just divide into groups and you call that working with gender I think that's, yeah, that people really misunderstand – and this is often the case in schools, that you divide into groups.

These studies which have found benefit for girls in the context of sex segregated schooling do not consider trans* inclusion or contemplate the strengthening of gender norms through such segregation. Feminist separatist movements have, in recent years, had to carefully consider the relevance and rationale for separatism, as well as what it looks like in practice for trans*-inclusive feminists (Browne, 2009).

6.12.1 The Gender Normative Body

Participant narratives which advocated gender splitting often justified its necessity through a discourse of gender differences in the body. One participant in Ireland explained the notion that bodies develop differently, necessitating separate discussions to be held:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] Now in terms of doing that conversation with them, which might be the bit around getting ready for your period and the fact that your mood changes you might be feeling a bit spotty, you know, you might be feeling fearful about your breasts developing or worried that they're not developing, I would do that in a single-sex group with a same-sex teacher. And the same thing for boys, talking about wet dreams, talking about masturbation, any of those kinds of things, body hair, whatever.

What is interesting about this and more widespread gendered discourses on bodily development at puberty is the common trend for boys to be taught about masturbation, wet dreams and body hair while girls learn about menstruation and breast development (see also Sherlock, 2007; Diorio and Munro, 2000). Masturbation, wet dreams and body hair are all universal experiences, and not limited to boys. When it is seen that boys and girls have different experiences of puberty, it appears that these differences become more pronounced and constructed in an effort to amass distinct lists of content which justifies a split by gender. For one participant in Ireland, the gendered differences in what is seen as content for girls and content for boys regarding the body serves to uphold a wider Irish national health promotion discursive agenda which sees girls as becoming women and mothers 'responsible for children':

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] The way women's bodies are conceptualised is, you know, why women have breasts is because they feed babies, and, you know they also have responsibility in terms of that they're going to be, em, the mothers, they're also going to be bearing children and, you know. So I think that's very much the way. It's like a health promotion discourse, the way it targets young women in the context of the fact that they're the ones that become pregnant and become mothers and largely are responsible for children.

This narrative echoes Diorio and Munro's (2000) research findings, which elucidate responsibility discourses of motherhood and menstruation, arguing that such pedagogies construct sexuality as 'problems' for girls, while boys receive content on 'exciting' and 'powerful' bodily changes. Some participants in Sweden agreed that certain discussions on the body, particularly in adolescent ages, might evoke embarrassment in mixed groups, thus justifying gender splitting[196]. Other participants in Sweden challenged the assumptions underpinning the different discourses, offering course content that begins

[196] Participant narratives suggest that gender splitting is a common practice in Sweden amongst outside facilitation groups which send two educators, one taking a 'boys group' and the other a 'girls group'.

from a place of commonality of experiences, even if doing so within groups separated by gender:

> [P8, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] You can give both groups the same information more or less and not focusing on, like, because often also you focus on like reproduction with girls and like sexuality with boys.

> [P24, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] We try to be gender-aware, but not focused on that if you're a boy you can feel like this and if you're a girl you can feel like this. I mean we have a text regarding women's breasts, and we now have a text regarding young men's breasts as well.

When different puberty discourses are taught to boys and girls, not only does this presume that bodily experiences are more distinct by gender than they actually are, but it reinforces the heteronorm, disallowing for learning about experiences different from our own. Furthermore, it presumes that everyone in the classroom is cisgender, with a gender identity that matches with the sex they were assigned at birth. One participant in Sweden recounted their experience as an outside facilitator working in a school with a trans* pupil:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] Actually two months ago I went to a school and I got my girls group, you know, the other half of the class was with another educator. And, we missed someone and they said 'Oh this person hasn't come yet.' And then a teacher comes in and says we have a bit of a problem. And I said, 'What's the problem?' 'We have an LGBT person.' And I said 'What kind of LGBT person? I mean is it an L, B or T – what?' And, finally I realised that this was a transgender student - and, I've been waiting for this! I was surprised but the thing is that this person whose identity was male, a masculine identity – the teachers tried to, to get him into my group! But the weird thing is that he has always been accepted in the school as a 'he'. Because it was a very nice school and the teachers were so nice and they said 'We've never had problems with this actually but now we were thinking, when you were dividing that 'she' – they started to call her 'she' that 'she' should be in your group!' And it was such a drama! And it felt good because in another school you would just drop out. You wouldn't go there! And he was standing next to the wall and crying and he had friends around him who tried to support and it was like 'Oh my God this is a good school!' And I was like, 'Of course he's allowed to choose!' He's allowed to choose which group he wants to be in. And when he heard that he was like, 'Ok, I can be with the girls.' So that wasn't the problem as long as he knew, but usually it's not this way. Usually you sit there and you feel 'I'm a boy. And

this is so horrible because everyone doesn't think I'm a boy, and now it's even worse because we're divided!'

This narrative reveals how, even for a 'good school' that accommodated well for a trans* pupil generally, the notion of a gender split sex education session can evoke a crisis for teachers as well as the trans* student. This participant discussed this scenario as a success story in that the trans* pupil was given a choice about which group he would participate in. Other participants in Sweden argued, however, that it would be unacceptable for a male-identified student, for example, to have to attend a 'girls group'.

6.12.2 Other Ways of Dividing

Participants in both countries offered reasons why gender divisions might not be necessary:

[P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] They [schools] think that girls and boys are different and need completely different things. .. it's also heteronormative, of course. So the good example is when you, you actually analyse your class. Who needs to be strengthened, who needs to learn empathy, who needs to learn – certain things? And then you divide them up in that way.

[P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] Well, if – I mean, do you separate by age, religion, culture, ethnicity, the gender one is the obvious, again I think it has to be learner-centred. You know, do you feel awkward talking about sex in front of boys or in front of girls?

Renold (2005) discusses the ways in which gender divisions are enforced variously throughout a young person's educational journey, how these are often not reflected upon by educators, and how such divisions serve to reinforce gender stereotypes, damaging gender relations more broadly as well as individual young peoples' sense of self. Several participants offered up the notion that methods of dividing a class can depend on the needs of the group or the educator, with one participant suggesting that these needs might vary depending on socio-economic factors:

[P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...this depends on the socio-economic group, I think, because there's more affinity to hegemonic masculinity in lower socio-economic groups... the educator might say, 'Does anybody here know how to use a condom?' And if a girl says, 'Yeah, I do.' You get boys saying, 'Oh yeah, you would alright' ...In the girls

> groups, you get people who judge others as sluts because they think that they're superior... I think do whatever makes people easy, or comfortable.

For a couple of participants in Sweden, the ultimate deciding factor in the debate about gender splitting came down to the experiences of young people with diverse gender identities:

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] I mean, if you don't feel comfortable as the sex you are looked at as, I mean there are so many different things and I mean, there could be other divisions that could be better... that's a constructed division... it's a really big danger that you just reproduce this kind of structures and norms.

This participant passionately argued that gender is a constructed division, and that divided classes reinforce this norm. For one civil servant, the feminist arguments for gender divisions which site 'taking space' as the rationale might be more practically solved by splitting between loud and quiet students instead:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] We were asked to give examples on active measures when it comes to transgender identity and expression in schools and we said that you need to stop doing this gender division. Although there were good intentions behind it, it's the wrong way to go... are there other ways to achieve the same? ...because the boys usually speak louder and take over, well then you should make the division between the loud pupils and the more quiet pupils, not on the basis of or on the grounds of gender.

Not all participants in Sweden who claimed use of normcritical pedagogies were in agreement about the 'gender-splitting' debate, with feminist separatist arguments sitting in contrast to those arguments about trans* inclusion, citing the difficulties for trans* and gender questioning pupils in having to be split by gender. This queer-feminist discursive disagreement interestingly mirrors ongoing debates within feminism and queer movements about (feminist and, often, 'women-only') safer spaces and trans* inclusion (see also Browne, 2009; Stryker, 2007; Heyes, 2003). Writing about the two in opposition to one another can risk constructing queer and feminist approaches as oppositional, when the reality is that all participants striving for a normcritical approach did so using both feminist and queer aims, regardless of how that manifested itself in their diverse opinions on gender splitting.

6.13 Sexism and Sexual Harassment as Gender Discourses

Whether groups are split by gender or not, discourses of sexism, sexual harassment and consent were raised by a small number of participants in both countries. These participants passionately expressed the need for these topics to be addressed in more comprehensive and meaningful ways. As one participant in Sweden emphasised, 'you have to do both' – the positive side of sexuality, and the reality of gender and sexual discrimination:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] You have to do both. You cannot talk about just sexuality and human beings, sometimes you also have to talk about gender, specific things, sexuality discrimination, all that.

One participant in Ireland argued that sexism is particularly strong within health promotion approaches regarding teenage pregnancy and, what Reiss (1960) coined as, the 'double standard' of sexual relating, more recently known colloquially as 'slut shaming':

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] There's massive sexism in particular around teenage pregnancies, it's just huge. And, you know, 'She's a slapper.' You know, 'Look at the state of her, what she's wearing.' ...if deconstruction could be brought into curricula it would be fantastic.

Participants in both Ireland and Sweden contributed similar narratives on attempts to counter 'slut shaming' pedagogically:

> [P17, Relationships Educator, Ireland] The slut thing, 'What's a slut? Describe a slut to me.' They say, 'Well, she wears short skirts, she has her top really low, and she flings herself on the fellas.' Ok, 'What if it's a boy, is he a slut?' 'No, he's not a slut.' 'Well what is he? If he's doing the very same thing, what is he then?' 'A player.' 'Oh, player's a nice word, isn't it now? You wouldn't mind being a player, but you wouldn't want to be a slut.'

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] And then sexual harassment is almost always a discussion about rumours. So we say, 'It's common for girls to get rumours?' ...they all start talking about, like losing your reputation and becoming a whore or a slut and you say, 'It's easy for boys to get a reputation?' And they're like, 'Yeah, being a pimp or king or player.' 'But those are, like, that's a good rumour, that's a good reputation to get.'

One researcher in Ireland discussed the problems with discourses that place responsibility on girls, asserting that notions of choice need to be opened up for pupils in order to bring awareness to gendered norms and expectations within relationships:

> [P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I think making people aware of the fact that we live in a very gendered world and these seem to be the rules... you might be saying, 'Guys, if a girl looks like she's backing off', but then inadvertently you're reinforcing the fact that girls are the ones to create boundaries. So it is problematic. But I do think that would be the big thing about the sex education, that if you opened this discursive field... I mean choice is only going to be influenced by whatever discursive thing is available to us.

Only one participant introduced the issue of consent within a gender frame, passionately arguing the need for education on 'how to accept 'no'' without aggression:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] That's the stereotype, isn't it? The predatory man and this, you know, virginal young woman... there's *never* any work done in schools or anywhere else on how to accept 'no'... without it being such a blow to your self-esteem that you've got to be aggressive and, there's never that piece around that... There's always this bit about the young woman having to manage herself and manage this predatory male.

As with many of the gaps in sex education, the perspectives participants offered linked this issue to the practices of teachers. One participant in Sweden affirmed that the sexism reproduced in these protective discourses is well intended:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I can understand teachers... they have very good ambitions and they want to protect girls and I think that is one of the main problems when it comes to sexual education, that you see girls as potential victims that have to be protected. That they are not sexual creatures in the same extent that boys are.

In both countries, participants articulated a diverse and complex set of dilemmas when considering gender inclusive sex education pedagogies and perspectives.

6.14 Discussion

Participant narratives to this study indicate that inclusion of sexual orientation and gender diversity is not a simple matter. Silences and heteronormativity pervade curricular documents as well as wider societal discourses, making LGBT inclusion a complex task for many. Normative assumptions on the part of teachers, educators and resource materials create a situation whereby LGBT experiences are frequently positioned as 'Other' and oftentimes presumed to exist outside of 'this classroom'.

From teacher-led 'tolerance' lessons to inclusive 'outside facilitator' scenarios a similar phenomenon occurs to differing degrees. Participant narratives to this study indicate that if LGBT is added on briefly by the teacher or added on in a more official way by an 'outside facilitator', the fact remains that inclusion has yet to be integrated holistically and comprehensively in either country. Lessons on LGBT identities by specialists as a 'once off' is common in Sweden and is likely preferable to no mention at all, which participants asserted was more frequently the case in Ireland. In some ways, according to participants, what would seem like 'best case' inclusion of LGBT experiences in Ireland is on par with what is 'worst case' in Sweden. Given the religious 'ethos' of most Irish schools, any gender deconstruction work and a mention of 'gay' at all could be seen as extraordinarily progressive for the context.

Whether examining inclusion of gay, lesbian and bisexual sexual realities, deconstructing gender and meaningfully embracing trans* experiences, or working to combat discrimination in the forms of homophobia, transphobia or sexism, the pedagogies and arguments for their use are diverse and often situated in opposition to one another. Many participants in Ireland had little to offer by the way of 'good practice' for LGBT inclusion, and those who did suggested practices which could be seen as 'normalising' or promoting 'tolerance' from an anti-bullying perspective. Participants in Sweden widely promoted examination of norms as a way of providing new insights and critical thinking tools for young people within sex education. An approach which critiques norms is still new to Sweden and has not yet been implemented fully within outside facilitation organisations, and is even less likely to be used by teachers. Normcritical methods require thorough training for teachers and facilitators, so that the educators themselves are comfortable enough to lead these pedagogies of discomfort.

For participants in both countries, terminology, concepts and content on trans* experiences require work to reflect more recent discussions on gender and sexual orientation. Particularly in Sweden, emergent and popular normcritical approaches necessitate further exploration with consideration to trans* inclusion. Gender-splitting sex education practices are widely used in Sweden, while a significant proportion of schools in Ireland are sex-segregated. Despite the extensive arguments on all sides of the debate, it was not possible to separate out the opinions expressed along the lines of occupation, organisational affiliation or even national context regarding the use of gender splitting. Many participants in Sweden held strong criticisms for gender-split groups on the basis of heteronormativity, a critique which was nearly absent from participants in Ireland who facilitate sex education lessons. Perhaps surprisingly, those participants in Sweden that felt most strongly about the benefits of gender-split groups utilised feminist separatist arguments and insisted that gender splitting should only be practiced while upholding an awareness of and reflection upon norms[197]. Participant narratives about gender norms met challenges when attempting to reconcile approaches to confront highly-gendered experiences such as harassment and 'slut shaming' with an approach which deconstructs gender norms as a core priority. Narratives in both countries were striking for their absence of a consent discourse.

[197] It is also important to recognise that most participants in Sweden expressed feeling as if, as outside facilitators or researchers, they had reflected much more extensively on gender norms than those who work in schools, and as such their pedagogies are not reflective of methods used by teachers.

Chapter 7

Intersectional Inclusion: *Exploring Tensions, Norms, Systems and Privileges*

The intersectional facets of individual lives and identities combine in various ways, making each young person's needs in sex education nuanced and unique. Intersectional feminist theories see categories such as race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and age are seen as always already relational, co-constitutive and intertwined (Collins, 1999). Even for those who strive to work in a way which critiques norms, certain discourses of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, able-ism, anti-immigrant sentiment and White supremecy, for example, arise in subtle, systemic and often unchallenged ways. Both Sweden and Ireland have anti-discrimination grounds within their equality legislation, which provide legal protection with regards to specific named grounds of equality[198]. While this legislation is not accessible for use by individual young people in schools in Ireland, the paradigm remains in both countries that inclusion is widely conceptualised as an 'add-on', a 'boxes' approach which sees identities as singular rather than multiple. Participant narratives indicated that the equality grounds in both countries serve to simultaneously provide for and limit conceptualisations of equality. Despite an emergent normcritical pedagogies movement in Sweden, these methods and approaches have primarily been applied in working inclusively with sexual orientation and gender.

Disperate facets of the school environment also strive to work intersectionally, according to sex education curricular requirements in both countries. In Ireland and Sweden, the governments mandate a flexible sex education curriculum which strives for a 'whole-school approach'[199]. While a flexible approach provides opportunities to cater to the unique needs of those present in the classroom, participants in both countries indicate that challenges emerge from a lack of structural supports which could facilitate intersectional curricular implementation as envisaged. Further complications to inclusive sex education arise where training for teachers and school staff members is limited or non-existant. Many

[198] In many EU countries, equality legislation names specific anti–discrimination grounds of protection. Sweden's recently expanded seven equality grounds include sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. In Ireland, equality legislation protection is afforded on the basis of gender, marital status, family status[198], sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community (Irish nomadic people).

[199] A 'whole-school approach' means that objectives of sex education are promoted through a school's entire curriculum provision and throughout the school as a whole (Government of Ireland, 1997).

educators have not been facilitated to have an awareness of how norms function within religions, nationalities, abilities, cultures, ethnicities and socio-economic structures. This chapter examines discourses in relation to topics of inclusive sex education beyond the inclusion of diverse gender and sexual experiences. It investigates participant narratives for good practice, and makes suggestions for contemplating intersectional inclusion through a 'whole-school approach'.

7.1 Inclusion

Participant narratives about inclusion of a broad interpretation of diversity were disproportionately fewer than those narratives which discussed good practice for gender and sexual orientation inclusion. Particularly in Ireland, as one participant put it, diversity inclusion is something that 'hasn't been grasped yet':

> [P12, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... it's something that we haven't quite grasped yet, to be honest, to actually reach different groups... there are so many different marginalised groups, it could be asylum seekers, refugees, different migrants, Travellers. It's something we just haven't really been able to grab yet.

While this participant is aware of the need to be inclusive, and articulates aspects of diversity which require attention, the awareness has not yet been put into an action plan or practice. Another participant in Ireland explained that their research had found what they considered to be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, and pondered 'what do we do?' about diverse groups, but did not provide an answer to this query:

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] Whatever sex education was there was, you know, generally assumed one-size-fits-all. Em, so, well yeah, religious differences, what do you do about mixing religious, class, gender and so on... diversity, what do we do?

Many participants in Sweden were quick to mention normcritical pedagogies when asked about good practice approaches for intersectional inclusion:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ...that's the beauty of being normcritical. Is that once you start to look at, what are the norms around gender roles and sexual orientation, you start looking at, yeah, well what kind of norms do we have around religion? When you look at all of these days off we get in Sweden as national holidays, well they're all Christian

> holidays. And when we look at TV and, you know, everyone on TV is White! A majority, anyway. And there's a norm around age, you know, it's not the very young or the very old that you see but there's this particular area, and this is what you see and this kind of eternal youth, everyone should be 25 their entire life, you know.

For this participant, once norms around gender and sexual orientation have been deconstructed and made visible, norms such as those regarding religion, ethnicity, and age become more readily apparent. In theory, this type of approach strives to consistently see and simultaneously maintain focus on a multiplicity of norms. Once the interview dialogues went more in depth into what inclusive pedagogies look like for those young people who might traditionally feel marginalised within sex education, participants in both countries struggled to provide a substantive body of good practice narratives. In both countries, dialogues about inclusion of aspects of diversity beyond sexual orientation and gender were striking for their focus on challenges and barriers to this wider vision of inclusive sex education.

7.2 Religion Inclusion and Christian-Centricism

Endsjø, argues that 'few things cause more involvement, passion and zeal within a religious context than sex' (2011: 5). Despite the ever-increasing diversity of faiths, ethnicities and cultures in Ireland, religions other than Catholicism were hardly mentioned by participants. The Catholic influence on sex education discourses in Ireland was comprehensively examined in Chapters 4 and 5. When participants in Sweden spoke of religious differences, the Muslim religion was most frequently highlighted. Only a few participants in Sweden spoke about the influences of Christianity. Both implicitly and explicitly, norms of Christianity and Whiteness were common within participant narratives in both Ireland and Sweden. One participant in Ireland spoke of the assumption of Christianity and of Whiteness as reflected in sex education curricular materials:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] Christianity is assumed... everyone appears to be White.

Participant narratives frequently offered a homogenised view of the discourses on sexuality which stem from Catholic, Christian or Muslim religious traditions. According to Rasmussen, 'perspectives on sex education are incredibly diverse, there is not a definitive Muslim, Christian, secular or queer perspective, and these perspectives can be and are

intermingled' (2010: 702). Within narratives from both countries, it was striking to observe what could be seen as the construction of binaries between concepts such as Catholic/secular, Muslim/Swedish, Christian/Muslim in the dialogues on religious inclusion.

7.2.1 Opt Out Clause

The specific religions mentioned by participants in both countries were limited to Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant, Christian and Muslim. The discourses of these religions were often homogenised and frequently positioned in opposition either to one another or to what could be seen as a 'secular' notion of sex education. One civil servant spoke of the 'opt-out' clause in Ireland, a provision which gives parents the right to take their child out of sex education should they wish. This participant asserted that the clause tends to be utilised by Muslim families:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] Em, the Muslim families have a very, sort of, strict policy in that they don't want children taught sex education in a mixed class. So if a Muslim girl is going to a mixed school, they tend to take them out... they're kind of quite rigid about that. But, you know, all we can say to schools is that... parents have the right to opt their child out. Some people say we shouldn't give parents that right, but I think you have to really. I think you have to.

One civil servant in Ireland felt that there are 'too many opt out clauses', and tied these provisions to a Catholic agenda:

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] So, I believe we give too many opt out clauses all over the place... it's nearly like a shadow of the morality or sexuality and the Catholic Church and that whole kind of agenda is, and we never got our head around being able to say, State is one thing, religion is something else.

While, in Ireland, many asserted the need for a separation between 'Church' and 'State' (or, to put it differently, 'Catholic' and 'secular/health promotion'), none of the participants offered a critique of the ways in which Catholic discourses are, in Ireland, possibly bound up with notions of secular values (see also Bacik, 2013).

The case of Muslim families is used to illustrate why, for this civil servant, it is important and necessary to uphold the provision offered by the 'opt out' clause. In Sweden, a change was made recently to remove the 'opt out' provision for sex education, a move that contrasts strongly with the previous narrative from a civil servant in Ireland insisting on the importance of it.

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] ...The minister for gender equality wrote a debate article just last week together with the Minister of Education. In that they said it would no longer be accepted for pupils not to follow sexual education. Before you could for example, for religious reasons, you could say 'No, I don't want to attend this education' and that is ok... now they have decided that that would no longer be. You have this, em, communities where girls – not just are supposed to be a virgin until she gets married, she *has* to be, for example. And you can't just shut your eyes and pretend that it doesn't exist, that is something that you have to think about. If you want to reach that kind of young people as well... I think that is really difficult. Really, really difficult... you also have to be open-minded in those questions, to be able to address all kind of young people, if you want to be inclusive.

For this participant, the requirement that young people take part in sex education lessons without an 'opt out' is the only way to tackle cultural and religious norms which limit sexual freedom. When this participant discusses that it is 'really difficult', the narrative articulates a dilemma about imposing a certain notion of sexuality onto individuals who might adhere to religious teachings which disallow or condemn certain sexual practices or expressions. Other participants in Sweden criticised the recent removal of the 'opt out' clause, arguing that it was an anti-immigrant move put in place by a neo-liberal governmental agenda. Within narratives from both countries, participants articulated the difficulty of reconciling and balancing minority or non-Western religious discourses with what was frequently constructed as 'secular' sex education curricular and health promotion mandates.

7.2.2 Christian Undertones within Secularism and Democracy

For Rasmussen (2010), constructions of secularism and religious discourses within sex education are often packaged as a binary, with pedagogies and curricula seen to be *either* secular *or* religious, a division which she asserts requires deconstruction. Butler (2008) argues that the concepts of modernity, secularism and anti-Islamic sentiments are co-

constituative and reproduced for the purpose of their own self-legitimation. To put it differently, a binary of religious/secular or modern/Islamic is necessary in upholding taken-for-granted discriminatory undertones within national policy discourses. One participant asserted that the Swedish governmental anti-discrimination grounds of value contain Christian, Lutheran and Humanistic underpinnings. For this participant, similar to the assertions made by Butler (2008) and Rasmussen (2010), concepts of Christianity are intertwined with a Swedish conceptualisation of secularism. This participant argued that a mandate for religious equality which comes from a Christian-normative perspective contains an inherent 'clash':

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] I think, you know, the basic [anti-discrimination] value work has sort of been from a Christian/Lutheran/Humanistic perspective, so there could be some sort of clashes... this strong Christian bias in one of them and you have to work against religious discrimination on the other track, they could sort of clash.

A second civil servant in Sweden illustrated how this might manifest in practice, with an example of how the educational system has discriminated against a woman wearing a niqab who wished to train as a teacher, arguing that this discrimination was rooted in a privileging of 'Christian values':

> [P27/1, Civil Servant, Sweden] ... (there was recently) a woman who wore a niqab, who was not allowed to do her education to become a preschool teacher. And I read some of the regulations from the Skolverket [Sweden's National Agency for Education]... in their argument about niqab they talked also about the Christian values... as if the Christian values would be like values of equal rights, gender equality and it was like an argument that was problematic, I thought. I read like the whole thing and they opposed the niqab that would be like a symbol of gender inequality but they're not problematising the Christian institution and the inequality in the Christian institution... I reacted to the fact that they were writing about Christian values and Western values as opposed to, like, the Muslim values... because we are, the State and the Church is separate in Sweden, but you have like policy writing on Christian values in the school, I think that's very problematic.

Here, the participant illustrates a poignant example of the ways in which Christian and secular values are intertwined in Sweden, despite the perception that 'Church' and 'State' are separate entities with distinct discourses.

The previous narrative from Sweden sheds light onto the situation in Ireland whereby Christian values overtly underpin the 'ethos' of most schools. Adding to the constraints on inclusion for immigrants in the Irish context is the requirement that primary school teachers have sufficient fluency in the Irish language to be able to qualify as a teacher[200]. Participant narratives indicate that both systems have significant structural barriers in place which could serve to dissuade or prevent some elements of religious, ethnic, sexual or cultural diversity to be reflected for students by their teachers or school administrators.

The civil servant from the earlier narrative in Sweden went on to argue that Christian and Lutheran values have permeated the curriculum in Sweden, in an insidious and nearly invisible way, to the point that concepts of Humanism and Democracy have come to be taken-for-granted as synonymous with Lutheran and Christian values:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] ...I think the way the [Lutheran] Church looks at sexual practices, I think it still sort of effects how you teach about sex education in schools... I don't think it's so much about teaching morality to the pupils, I just think that all the materials you can use to teach are just biased in that way. But I don't think it's openly, like it's not like priests come into the school and teach, but it's just sort of permeates the whole of the material, as such... the whole society is based on these Christian/Lutheran values which we now see as Humanistic and Democratic but I guess if they sort of, if they'd been put to the test I guess you would see that they aren't always that Democratic and Humanistic, so.

This narrative illustrates what Rasmussen (2010) argues to be the constructedness of 'religious/secular divides' within sex education. Her work argues that secular perspectives are as seeped in value as religion, and in a Western context secular values are often indiscernible from certain Christian values. It is noteworthy that this civil servant makes a point to emphasise the invisibility of the religious influence, in that 'it's not like priests come into the schools and teach', an analogy which highlights in contrast the overt nature of Christian, and primarily Catholic, influences in Irish schools.

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[200] Primary school teachers must satisfy the Department of Education and Skills (DES) that they can teach the Irish language as well as a range of primary school subjects through Irish. Teachers trained outside of Ireland whose qualifications have been assessed but who do not possess a sufficient proficiency in the Irish language will be granted a provisional recognition to teach during which time they must work towards meeting the language requirements. See also:
http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary_and_post_primary_education/teachers_and_schools/teacher_qualifications_at_primary_and_post_primary_level.html

7.2.3 The 'Othering' and Conflation of Muslim and Immigrant Experiences

The narratives from both Ireland and Sweden were quick to link, explicitly or implicitly, the concept of an 'opt out' clause to a discourse about its use by Muslim families, serving to situate Islamic teachings on sexuality in opposition to dominant Christian or secular underpinnings of the mandatory curriculum. Rasmussen (2010) unpacks the ways in which, in Western nations, the relationship between Muslims and secularism is not the same as the relationship between Christians and secularism, and asserts that Christianity holds a level of national moral authority[201]. In Ireland, where more than 90 percent of schools have a Catholic patronage, concepts of Catholic and secular discourses in education are inherently bound up with one another.

Similar to the narratives from Ireland, when participants in Sweden discussed non-Christian religious influences, it was the Muslim religion that was highlighted:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Some religious groups have taken a step forward... more conservative, eh, religious groups – both Christian and Islamic. I mean you can see that and they kind of, they are not building alliances in Sweden in this case.

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] We're not getting bookings from, like religious schools like Muslim schools, that doesn't happen. If we got someone applying to become an educator, and say it was a woman and she was wearing some kind of veil?... It would be grand... I'd say that woman would be hard to find, still.

When these participants explain with regret that religious groups are 'not building alliances in Sweden' and that a sex educator wearing a veil would be 'hard to find', they articulate a wider Swedish national imperative for some aspects of diverse experiences to integrate into the cultural 'we', an issue discussed in Chapter 5 (see also Bredström, 2008). One of the manifestations of expectations that groups 'build alliances in Sweden' has been the removal of the 'opt out' provisions. When asked about inclusion of religious diversity, a number of participants in Sweden immediately spoke about the 'sensitive' topic of 'honour killings', frequently linking these discourses to Muslim experiences:

[201] With Christian discourses intertwined within Western conceptualisations of secularism.

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I think maybe the most sensitive topics here is... when you're talking about *honour*.... when young girls with, for example, traditional Muslim background. Let's say a girl is having sex with her boyfriend and she is expected to be, you know, the so called 'virgin' and she's having sex with someone, she has a boyfriend, and she gets killed by a male relative, for example. Of course that happens in Sweden, like in many other countries. This is a reality. But how shall this be discussed? I mean, what are the causes of this? Is it about *religion*, is it about *tradition*? Is it about their culture, you know all of those debates that have been going on for maybe 20 years. Em, I think *this* is a very sensitive area, maybe.

Bredström (2008) explains that, in 2002, the murder of Fadime Sahindal by her father was given significant attention within the Swedish media, and argues that these discourses served to shed light upon and question the practice of honour killings, while simultaneously situating this woman and her father as having oppositional 'Swedish' and 'Kurdish[202]' sexual values, respectively. The discourses from participants in Sweden about inclusion of Muslim religious experiences within sex education portrayed a relatively homogenised version of Islam which did not account for intersectional diversities within the religion such as culture, nationality or socio-economic status (see also Svendsen, 2013). Participants in Sweden widely discussed inclusion of Islam experiences as a 'difficult' and 'sensitive' topic, portraying a discourse that constructs the relationship between Islam and sexuality as inherently problematic. It was clear that many participants in Sweden desired to avoid the 'Othering' of Islamic experiences, though their narratives frequently inadvertently did exactly this. Feminist researchers have critiqued discourses which position the Muslim religion as 'backward' and 'foreign', arguing that such dividions serve to strengthen existing efforts of colonising regimes on a global scale, contributing to, rather than emancipating, these individuals from oppression (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2013; Sholkamy, 2011; Mirza, 2005). One participant in Sweden argued that a societal discourse on 'honour killings' might serve to invisiblise the violence that takes place 'everywhere':

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] What it very problematic with this [honour killings] discourse that points it out as something very specific, is that it really points out

[202] The discourses on 'honour killings' were, within participant narratives, exclusively linked to the Muslim religion. None of the participants to this study discussed 'Kurdish' sexual values as such. This reference comes directly from Bredström's (2008) work. It is important to distinguish that not all Kurdish people belong to the Islamic religion. Kurdish people adhere to a large range of diverse religious practices. Participants in this study did not mention Kurdish people specifically.

> immigrants as very problematic and Swedes as not ever thinking of violence, doing anything. I mean, I think it makes the violence going on, you know, everywhere just very invisible... I think that really simplifies the whole question about violence and really, I mean, for example, violence against LGBT people and all the youths coming out and – that are silenced by their parents to not, you know, disturb the family and you know. So I think it's the discourse itself that's problematic and, really, yeah I think it's racist. I think so, really.

This narrative speaks to the invisible norms which operate within groups and are perceived to be mainstream and normative, yet contain oppressive and discriminatory rules and practices as fundamental for upholding their privileged position. This participant considers a discourse which highlights 'honour killings' to be 'racist' and 'problematic' in that it 'points out immigrants'. In other words, according to this participant, a focus on this specific type of violence serves to strengthen a conceptualisation of immigrant experiences as 'Other', simultaneously normalising or rendering invisible the 'violence going on everywhere'. This participant does not advocate that sex education pedagogies ignore the realities of violence, but rather suggests an approach which condemns and makes visible the full array of sexual related violence that exists within societies.

7.2.4 Normcritical Pedagogies and Religion

Whenever participants in Sweden discussed the subject of religion, their narratives illustrated what Sejersted (2011) describes as the age-old Swedish national dilemma of attempting to reconcile the seemingly perpetually-contradictory and binarised ideals of freedom and equality[203]. 'Swedish' priorities for 'sexual freedom' were consistently portrayed as experiencing tensions when attempting to be reconciled with ideals of 'equality', specifically with respect to diversities of religious experiences and expressions. Despite widely advocating normcritical pedagogies as best practice for inclusion of all elements of diversity, none of the participants in Sweden offered a success story of whole-scale inclusion of religious diversity in the sex education classroom.

[203] For example, a religion may see queer identities as sinful. To *require* sexuality education that presents queer identities positively might be argued as an attack on religious freedom, yet the freedom for religions to actively discriminate undermines equality for queer people. Here, religious freedom is posited in opposition to queer equality. These discourses remain ignorant of the reality that a person can simultaneously identify as both religious and queer or LGBT.

The earlier narrative which sought to make visible the normalisation of certain types of sexuality-based violence provided one example of how normcritical pedagogies might be utilised in an expanded way to identify norms around violence, for example. Many participants in Sweden speculated about and gave narratives illustrating attempts to integrate a normcritical perspective on religion, but the stereotypical sex-liberal Swedish ideologies seemed in constant conflict with the perceived 'ethos' coming from more conservative religious doctrines. One participant in Sweden asserted that the answer lies in critiquing some of the religious structures:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] I think it's a bit different. Not to say that you shouldn't work with normcriticism when it comes to religion, but I just think that, you know, if a person is being heteronormative I think the normcritical perspective is also focused on changing that person's heteronormativity, but you can't really ask for that from a religious person because you can't say that, 'You should change your religion' because it's a personal matter in a different way. But I think there are some built in discriminatory structures in some of the religious institutions and you need to sort of challenge them as well, in the same way that you need to challenge the structures and the obstacles based on other grounds. And I think that, sort of, religion is something that we haven't gone into yet and also because there's been these problems with LGBT issues and religion they sort of assume that there would be a crash and it would be sort of a 'no-go' area, but I think it needs to be done.

This narrative was one of the only moments that a participant dared to assert the need to critique 'discriminatory structures' *within* religious institutions, particularly highlighting trends which avoid confronting religious discrimination against LGBT experiences. This participant maintains a vision of integrity regarding inclusion for religious diversity, but argues that this respect does not necessarily imply wholescale acceptance of institutional structures which could be deemed as unquestioningly discriminatory. The binary of religious/LGBT constructed by this participant, however, ignores the reality that many individuals simultaneously identify as both religious and LGBT. The consensus in Sweden seemed to be that finding a balance between sex education discourses and religious discourses is a delicate, difficult and challenging endeavour. For the participant above, however, 'it needs to be done'.

7.3 Inclusion of Immigrant Experiences

Narratives from Sweden were striking for their tendency to conflate religious diversity with immigrant experiences, or to articulate the challenges with inclusion of religious diversity through a focus on immigrant inclusion. Røthing and Svendsen's (2011) study on sexuality in Norwegian textbooks found a similar conflation between conceptualisations of 'immigrants' and 'religious differences'. According to Bredström (2008), the terms 'immigrant' and 'Swedish' have been constructed as a problematic binary within Swedish literature on sexual health. Her work troubles the definitions of both, arguing that the term 'immigrant' has been used to evoke a racialised discourse which she considers amounts to 'cultural racism'. Svendsen's (2013) PhD research asserts that, within Nordic strategies to address cultural diversity, a wide range of ethnic groups have become conflated under the broad categories of 'immigrant' and 'Muslim'. One participant in Sweden reflected critically on this trend:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] When they talk about it like it has to do with religion, it's rather about immigrants and a specific group of immigrants that they are addressing more.

Several participants in Sweden argued that many of the challenges with inclusion have emerged alongside the more recent influx of immigration, and constructed Sweden as having been previously 'pretty homogenic'. According to one participant in Sweden, when it comes to attempts for inclusive sex education, 'the Middle East is the biggest problem':

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Sweden is, is pretty new as a multi-cultural country... Sweden had been a pretty homogenic country... the sex education in - in areas or suburbs where the majority are immigrants and a lot of people from the Middle East because I think it's the Middle East that's the biggest problem... you have to be a little bit more careful maybe... because it is often [that teachers would say], 'Ok, I don't know about, em, how Arabs think', [and my response is] 'No I don't either, I don't even know how Swedes are thinking!

While this participant implements a degree of normcritical thinking in their attempt to expand the dilemma coming from educators who argue that they 'don't know how Arabs think', in their precise attempt to criticize this generalisation they, too, generalise 'the Middle East' as problematic, illustrating perfectly the very dilemma this participant

attempts to deconstruct[204]. According to Bredström (2008), sexual health literature in Sweden has served to construct and uphold notions that the sexual values held by immigrant communities sit in opposition to 'Swedish' sexual values.

When asked about diversities in ethnicities and cultures, many respondents in Ireland struggled to find an answer or admitted, not unlike the narratives from Sweden, to not having thought much about the topic. Perhaps surprisingly, participants in Ireland did not discuss immigration as a new phenomena, as participants in Sweden had, but instead hesitatingly admitted to a complete lack of inclusion with regard to immigrant experiences:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] There's nothing around that... even the dominant new communities within Ireland, like Nigerian or, you know, some of the like Polish or Eastern European, or whatever, there's no, yeah, there's no mention of that or reference to maybe cultural sensitivities...

> [P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...I have to say we probably didn't pay enough attention to that... ethnicity, there were very few... I think one black person or person of colour was a participant in my study.

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] We do need to do more... around language as well, like, yeah. Language, like none of us [in my workplace] speak another language as such. All of our [organisation's] materials are in English.

For many participants in Ireland, my questions about inclusion of diverse ethnicities and immigrant experiences seemed to introduce concepts they had not previously contemplated, with many seemingly surprised by the question and at a loss for an answer. One participant talked about attempts to deconstruct misconceptions about ethnic diversity, doing so in a way that is reminiscent of the 'tolerance' discourses on LGBT experiences introduced in the previous chapter:

> [P17, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] So we will always name it... I would always remind them that you are born in the country that you are born in by accident of birth, you didn't *choose* to be born in Ireland or Liverpool or Pakistan or Kenya, you were born there because it was an accident of birth and... if Rosa Parks wouldn't have made that stand,

[204] This participant simultaneously argues that 'the Middle East' is problematic, while attempting to critique the norms which homogenise 'the Middle East'.

> which started off a whole load of other movements, Barak Obama wouldn't be in the White House. It's as easy as that. You know. And I think it is taking small personal responsibility for your actions, that's what I would be encouraging them to do, personal responsibility. Don't laugh at racist jokes. Don't call somebody racist names.

This participant evokes what Butler calls a discourse of 'prohibition', a 'repeated renunciation' (1995: 165). This prohibition pedagogy does not serve to question or abolish the instinct towards hatred by way of 'racist jokes or 'racist names', but rather simply prohibits them. Here, we also see a manifestation of the concept introduced by a participant in Sweden in the previous chapter whereby oversimplification of inclusion occurs when it is seen as an issue of 'personal responsibility', a viewpoint which ignores structural discrimination, societal hierarchies and group dynamics. Indeed, all one has to do is look more deeply at the Rosa Parks story to see how it was the result of a concerted movement (Zald, 1996) rather than the simplified narrative of 'personal responsibility' which, as this participant constructs it, places responsibility on the marginalised person to confront oppressive structures. Lorde (1995) infamously critiques widespread societal notions that oppressed groups must hold responsibility for raising the consciousness of oppressors. According to Zald (1996), cultural frames and scripts are strategically produced to uphold the embeddedness of societal hierarchies, in this case ones that preserve Othering and tolerance discourses at their core. If we scratch the surface we quickly see that it is likely not, as the participant asserted, 'as easy as that'.

7.4 Including Asylum Seekers

Perhaps surprisingly, pedagogies or discourses of inclusion for individuals seeking asylum were not discussed in Sweden. A few participants in Ireland mentioned the situation of people seeking asylum in Ireland, arguing that inclusion of these experiences poses particular and complex challenges. Breen (2008) argues that the 'inadequate' conditions for asylum seekers in Ireland living in 'Direct Provision[205]' compound the reality that these individuals are simultaneously coping with traumatic pasts while living with an uncertain future under living conditions which lack privacy and contain limited health care options. One participant in Ireland spoke of the manifestation of this vulnerability and compounded oppressions faced by, in this narrative, a young LGBT refugee:

[205] In Ireland, Direct Provision centres house asylum seekers while their claims for refugee status are processed. Introduced in 2000, this process severely curtailed welfare entitlements for asylum seekers. Breen (2008) argues that Direct Provision violates asylum seeker's rights to an adequate standard of living.

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ...racial diversity is often represented [within educational materials] by people who are vulnerable and are not able to be in posters or in videos... I had the awful experience of having to remove a young black man from a photo [in one of our organisational resource materials]... the photo ended up being all White. Because he's in the care of the State, he's a refugee.

In this example, just behind the narrative of attempts to represent an inclusive approach pictorially within resource materials, the complex and compounded vulnerability of one young person conjures a challenging image of this participant's attempt to represent services which invite and welcome diversity. This same participant linked their own hesitancy to have an answer to dilemmas around inclusion of ethnic and cultural diversity to a wider societal milieu:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] But there's a big challenge in Ireland... immigration and asylum policies operate to exclude people. So there's very limited, em, racial diversity and then people continue to be vulnerable.

For this participant, the inclusion of the experiences of individuals seeking asylum and those who are immigrants to Ireland is a complex structural issue which requires efforts of inclusion to extend far beyond the work of individual NGOs or sex education practices.

7.5 Including Irish Traveller Communities

The image of the sexually conservative Irish Traveller[206] was mentioned by several participants in Ireland, often alongside a narrative which constructs Traveller populations and sex education in opposition, articulating the need for a pedagogy which reconciles any tensions met by a mandate to provide sexual health information to a 'traditionally conservative' cultural group. As one participant in Ireland put it:

[206] In 2006 the Irish Equality Authority produced a report which argued the case for inclusion of Traveller status within governmental conceptualisations of ethnicity. Membership of the Traveller community is one of the nine grounds of discrimination in Ireland. 'Ethnicity' is not an explicitly protected ground in Ireland, though 'ethnicity' is protected under 'race'. The Equal Status Acts define the 'Traveller community' as 'the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.' (Equality Authority, 2006).

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...you know Travellers particularly. I mean the idea of, you know, Traveller children being taught about sex they would go bananas, I would imagine. I mean they are very traditionally conservative.

Irish Traveller communities have social as well as logistical scenarios which complicate access to services, particularly reproductive and sexual health needs (McGorrian et al., 2012). These complex barriers are not without their own sets of stereotypes and invisibility, as we see from these narratives:

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] [Our organisation] has had partnerships with Traveller organisations for years and years, but we don't, we don't – there's never been a representation [within our resource literature] of someone who was visibly Traveller.

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] Yeah, well we do a bit about, em, we talk a little about the, about different cultures and how they, em, how Travellers – how lesbian and gay people are perceived in their culture. So we talk a little bit around Traveller culture and how it's not ok to be gay within Traveller culture.

The pedagogy presented in this last narrative, if presented to a group which happened to contain anyone of Traveller background, might simply serve to 'Other' their experience, rather than facilitate a safe space to discuss such topics. This narrative also eliminates space for the existence of an intersectional experience whereby an individual might simultaneously identify as Traveller and gay[207].

7.6 Conceptualisations of Race and Ethnicity

Within the narratives from Sweden, several participants articulated what they perceived to be hypocrisy of Swedish culture in that Sweden prides itself on open-mindedness and tolerance, but avoids truly confronting issues of ethnic diversity and inclusion:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] An 'open-minded' country, this 'Sweden is so good', 'Swedish people are so *good* and *tolerant*!' (laughs) Or not. And behind this kind of tolerance you have a lot of other stuff hiding... it's kind of a fear to talk about ethnicity and race.

[207] In recent years the group and online forum LGBT Pavee was created to support LGBTQ members of the Irish Travelling and Roma Community and to facilitate mediation between communities, cultures and experiences sexual identities (see http://lgbtpavee.yolasite.com/).

Another participant explained that the term 'race' itself in Sweden is seen as a 'forbidden' term, with the legislation focusing instead on 'ethnicity':

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] Race is a very, it's not used in the Swedish language. It's a very sort of forbidden word, in a way... People don't like to talk about race. Yeah, it's very interesting. But it's included in ethnicity, in the legislation.

Depictions of 'race' as a 'forbidden word' reminds us again of Butler's (1995) notion that 'prohibition' of terminology can manifest as prohibition of a discourse on certain identities. Svendsen (2013) outlines that, in recent years, research and interest in critical race theories have increased in the Nordic context. She traces that the concept of 'race' has, since the 1930s, been inextricably linked with the concept of 'racism'; she outlines how the use of the term 'race' has progressively diminished in Europe since the Holocaust, following on from scientific research and political discourses which discredited notions that multiple 'human races' exist (Svendsen, 2013). According to Svendsen (2013), it is only with difficulty that inclusion discourses have come to adopt and prefer the terminology of 'ethnicity'. Perhaps interestingly, the nine grounds of discrimination protected by Ireland's equality legislation names 'race' but not ethnicity, while in Sweden the grounds of protection names 'ethnicity' but not 'race'[208].

Another participant in Sweden asserted that race and ethnicity are not on the agenda in sex education, in an overt way, but can be seen in discourses about experiences of the oppression of women in certain immigrant cultures. Similar to the dilemmas about discussions on the sexually damaging practices of certain religions, this participant expresses how such realities are important to discuss, but argues that these discourses must exist alongside deconstructions of Whiteness and the Othering and racialising of certain bodies within mainstream society:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think race and ethnicity is not on the agenda, and if it is it's more about people with immigrant backgrounds harass young women and they're denied sexuality – which is really important to talk about, absolutely. But it's also, it's not so much about how we raise sexuality, too. And since young people are consuming a lot of

[208] In Sweden's equality legislation, the definition of 'ethnicity' includes 'race', and in Ireland 'ethnicity' is included within the definition of 'race'.

> pornography they see that it's racialised. They see the black man with big dicks and all this stuff. But I don't think that they talk a lot about this in sexuality in schools.

In other words, this participant has argued that oppressive cultural norms regarding sexuality must not be ignored in any way, be they norms that emerge from marginalised communities or those that emerge from dominant and privileged groups or wider societal discourses. This same participant gave an example of experiencing online bullying tactics for daring to simultaneously challenge norms of ethnicity and sexual orientation together in an example given during a media interview:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] The racists in Sweden have put me on the internet because I said that in an interview. I said 'Change [the example in textbooks from] Pelle and Lisa to Joseph and Muhammad and let them buy' so the racists in Sweden think I'm really horrible. (laughs) So maybe it is all to change, but I don't think so.

Here, we see shades of despondency and hopelessness from those in Sweden regarding the meaningful inclusion of diverse ethnic and immigrant experiences by way of normcritical pedagogies. Similar to the dilemmas of queer theory after its emergence in the 1990s[209], participant narratives indicate that normcritical pedagogies can fall short in their attempts to expand notions of inclusion beyond the concepts of sexuality and gender. For many advocates of normcritical pedagogies in Sweden, inclusion of ethnic, cultural, immigrant and non-Christian religious experiences must begin with a realisation that we all have an ethnicity and a culture, and must work to make visible the norms about culture and ethnicity:

> [P24, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] If you are a stereotypical Swede, you also have an ethnic background. But we're not used to that, if you talk about ethnic backgrounds it's – we're talking about the immigrants.

This narrative illustrates a normcritical perspective which could be used in sex education to discuss norms around ethnicity as a tactic for inclusion. One civil servant in Sweden

[209] Queer theory has been critiqued as a White discipline, and one which falls short of being able to achieve full scale inclusion (Sullivan, 2003). The notion of 'queer' simultaneously strives for radical inclusion and admits to never being able to accomplish such an ideal.

provided a perspective which challenges the very foundation upon which equality legislation throughout Europe is founded[210]:

> [P27/1, Civil Servant, Sweden] ...it took awhile before I started to think like actually it's not a person, the person is not discriminated against *because* of his or her ethnicity... you have to make visible the *people* who discriminate... the reason for discrimination is their *prejudices against*, like, what they think are the persons' ethnicity or gender or...

This point is key. One is not discriminated against *because* of the identity they have, one is discriminated against because they are perceived to fit outside of some identity norm. When equality legislation names grounds of discrimination, this point is conspicuously missing from the equation. Furthermore, the discourse of discrimination tends to focus disproportionately on the victims of discrimination, rather than those who victimise. We have a ready profile of a victim of identity-based discrimination but not one of those who discriminate.

7.7 Class Influences and Teenage Pregnancy Discourses

Some participants in Ireland reflected on the notion of class as it arises in the sex education context, mostly addressing it as an area of potential dissonance between teachers and their pupils, in that the teaching profession in Ireland is predominantly middle-class:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...teachers are predominantly middle class, and I think the programme is conceptualised in a very middle-class kind of way in terms of the way it's constructed and, you know, the kind of messages and all of that.

This participant also points out what they describe as a middle-class conceptualisation of messages within the sex education curriculum. One participant in Sweden similarly asserted their perception that schools are a 'middle-class institution':

> [P28, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] Class is such a huge, an important power relation dividing people in school, it's such a middle class institution.

[210] See also Kantola and Nousiainen, 2009

Plummer (2000) discusses the hierarchies within education systems which privilege middle-class knowledge and 'ethos' when these are upheld by students, arguing that a classed set of values permeates schools and curricula. Classist practices are, according to Skeggs, 'enacted on a daily basis by many of those who do not think class is an issue' (1997: 134). Class and socio-economic disadvantage were discussed more frequently in Ireland than in Sweden, though participants in neither country spoke to the issues at great length. Participants in both countries pointed out that 'class' or socio-economic status is not listed as a protected ground within either country's equality legislation. In Sweden, some participants described that any limitations or exclusions within the equality legislation often manifest in the classroom through pedagogies which allow for comprehensive deconstruction of notions such as sexual orientation and gender, but do not leave space for a class analysis. When class was discussed at any length in Ireland, several participants spoke to the classist undertones present within teenage pregnancy discourses within sex education political and social dialogues. One researcher, for example, observed a blaming discourse on the part of teachers related to teenage pregnancies:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... the class issue is very big in that... there's a huge blame thing going on ... one of the female teachers [in my research] was implicitly constantly saying, 'Well these girls, they don't know what they're doing, they go out there and get pregnant, some of them want to get pregnant.' You know, this whole myth of planned pregnancies, these pregnancy cults and all these kinds of stuff and they're doing it for welfare. Well, you know, being career mothers, all that kind of stuff. Like, to some degree there is a truth in that, but... there is a class issue.

This participant simultaneously critiques the 'class issue' within the discursive 'myth of planned pregnancies... pregnancy cults... and they're doing it for welfare' while asserting that 'to some degree there is a truth in that'. This dilemma is reminiscent of the earlier discussions whereby participants attempted to reconcile discourses on religious practices and beliefs with the need to provide sex education which confronts any 'truth' contained within stereotypes of these practices. Similar to many of the discourses on religion, this participant's narrative concurrently challenges class-bias within sex education perspectives while offering commentary which contributes to the very stereotype the participant purports to deconstruct.

Another participant extended arguments about a blame discourse to position it within a wider context whereby, according to this participant, adults working with young people have not taken an appropriate level of responsibility in putting forth a health promotion perspective which informs young people about contraception, pregnancy and the concept of choice. This participant felt that blame discourses around teenage pregnancies fail to understand the ways in which choices are proscribed by social worlds, and pregnancy can sometimes be a positive option for a young person, rather than a 'crisis'[211]:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] ...coming from a health promotion perspective... and not just teachers... all the people who would work with young people... you'll constantly get professionals who blame the young person... individual blaming, without the understanding that people act in the context they find themselves. So becoming a young mother might not be the worst thing in their life... their perception of what's out there for them makes that a reasonable thing for them to do... I remember this young woman standing up at a conference saying, 'And it changed my life for the better'... She gave up drugs, she changed her peer group, she did all these things – for her it was not a crisis pregnancy. It was the thing that actually made her life work.

Another participant in Ireland asserted that a blaming discourse is underpinned by middle-class norms. According to this participant, 'teachers would need to be a lot more imaginative' in order to make relevant the current curricular materials for a more socio-economically diverse group of young people:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] You know, it's very much like the middle class way of life is a very good way and, you know, students should defer mothering until they're ready and they have a career and a husband and an income and a good income, and then that's the right time to parent, to become, and that's very much a middle class way of engaging in the world I think.

To this participant, there is a particular set of middle-class values in relation to parenting that are put forth within the Irish sex education curriculum. This uncovering of the norms underpinning the sex education curricular discourses is reminiscent of the Swedish normcritical perspective, though none of the participants in Sweden reflected on socio-economic norms to any significant extent.

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[211] The discourse of 'crisis' pregnancy is strong in Ireland. The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme is the governmental body tasked with provision of contraceptive services, medical supports for crisis pregnancies and reduction in numbers of women who opt for abortion.

7.8 Dis/ability

In both countries, there was little extensive dialogue on sex education inclusion for people with disabilities, with the exception of narratives from those participants who had specific expertise in this area. One participant in Ireland asserted that dominant societal and curricular discourses do not afford 'entitlement' to sexuality for young people with disabilities:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... young people with disabilities, you know with learning disabilities or physical disabilities, it's like they don't have that sense of entitlement to a sexuality.

Shildrick (2007) argues that the sexual lives of people with disabilities receive little attention, within both societal discourses and political dialogues. Another participant in Ireland explained that resource limitations prevent their organisation from working with people with disabilities:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] We used to do work with people with physical disabilities, but we just haven't got the resources.

For another participant in Ireland, lack of disability inclusion is a structural issue, in that the Irish government has not initiated any specific programmes or supports for the sexual needs of individuals with disabilities:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] Yep. Em, in terms of disability, eh, there's no Irish programme that I know of, you know, like Department of Education programme or HSE programme that is specifically designed or adapted for people with an intellectual disability.

This same participant made a link between the lack of disability inclusion within the sex education curriculum and the prohibition of sexual expression for people with disabilities as it is written in Irish law:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] The law in relation to people with, eh, intellectual disabilities still says that it's illegal to actually have sexual relationships with somebody unless you're married to them... some agencies and organisations would have concerns that if they do

> work around sexual health that they may be perceived as being promoting it. Promoting sexual activity, which is specifically against the law... you know, people [with intellectual disabilities] *are* [having sexual relationships]. And the law has by and large been ignored. But it could be used. So, you know, which of us would be happy to live our lives hoping that the law won't be used against us?

People with intellectual disabilities in Ireland have to break the law in order to have sex outside of the context of marriage[212]. This in and of itself unquestioningly has practical as well as legal implications for people with intellectual disabilities trying to access sexual health information and services[213]. In this instance, the law compounds and upholds existing societal stigma and exclusive norms around who sex and reproduction is for, and who is not expected to have sexual and reproductive needs or experiences. This legislative rationale for exclusions within sex education and sexual health service provision is reminiscent of the discourses on Irish Age of Consent laws discussed in Chapter 4. In both cases, it appears as if the law are perhaps being used not to guard the individuals they proport to protect, but rather to limit services to these already-vulnerable individuals[214]. According to Shildrick (2007), any movement which aims to boost recognition of sexuality for people with disabilities inherently risks increasing governmental interference within these sexual lives.

Participant narratives from Sweden also focused on disability experiences primarily through dialogues which highlighted lack of inclusion within curricular materials and classroom practices. As one participant explained:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] First of all, disabled youth are not included at all in any way in teaching in the schools. We had this report from the governmental organisation... The Department of Education... researchers have gone through different texts in books about history, social studies, science – I mean everything... as far as they could see the disabled people were not included in any way!

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[212] The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 makes it an offence to have or attempt to have sexual intercourse with a mentally impaired person unless they are married.

[213] Allen and Seery's (2007) survey of 244 professionals in Ireland working with people with intellectual disabilties found provision of sexual health information to people with intellectual disabilities to be unstructured and piecemeal at best. The authors critique the language of Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 as equating a 'mentally impaired' status to 'incapable of leading independent lives', and note there is no national guidance in place to support the sexual rights of people with disabilities.

[214] Including, in these examples, people with intellectual disabilities and young people under age 17.

Another participant described their experiences conducting research within sex education classrooms, explaining how they saw disability exclusion play out in practice:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] Able-bodiness is a big issue. They never talk about disabled people in sex education. If, there's not someone there *being disabled.* So I think you kind of forget. So it's, still an intersectional perspective is still needed.

It is this intersectional perspective that necessitates further exploration. In Sweden, most young people with disabilities are segregated into special schools[215], whereas in Ireland one participant explained that the experiences of young people with disabilities are becoming increasingly integrated:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] We're coming across schools that have more and more students with intellectual disability like Downs Syndrome, something like that, who are now in mainstream education.

Vislie's (2003) research traces the recent trend among European nations to move towards a system of integration of special education within mainstream schooling. According to Vislie (2003), trends indicate that segregated provisions for students with disabilities will continue to decrease through advocacy work which promotes 'inclusion', but argues that the actual status of 'inclusion' will remain unchanged as integration efforts rely heavily upon the expansion of special education practices into mainstream education[216].

Experiences of disability are diverse and exist on a variety of trajectories including intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities and hidden or invisible disabilities (Crow, 1996). Even where segregation is the norm, as it is in Sweden, both 'disabled' and 'mainstream' classrooms will all contain a level of diversity and, Vislie (2003) would argue, a level of 'Othering' when it comes to intellectual and physical abilities. One participant in Sweden worked as a specialist for sex education for young people with disabilities, primarily within these special schools. This participant argued a rationale for

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[215] Throughout Sweden there are special schools (*Särskola* in Swedish) for students with disabilities. Pepper (2007) outlines that this system has received criticism in the media and wider society for its placement of young people with dyslexia, for example, within these special schools.

[216] Vislie argues that, 'From the point of view of inclusive education, it is probably not so much the special schools that are the challenge any longer. The real challenge is the reproduction of special education paradigms and rituals in regular education' (Vislie, 2003; 30). In other words, according to Vislie, the 'Othering' of young people with disabilities takes place irrespective of whether the education system is 'integrated' or 'segregated'.

the segregated system, and illustrated that issues pertaining to sex education are unique for young people with disabilities:

> [P29, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ... it's very, very hard for young people with disabilities to find other people to fall in love with or to have a sexual experience with because – in a mixed school it's maybe even harder – because there are not a lot of people that's like you... to have a chance to find somebody to get a partner ... to mix people it becomes normal to be un-normal and to differ in any way at all, at the same time it's different, I think, to have intellectual disability than having a physical disability...

A concern that young people with intellectual disabilities will find 'people to fall in love with or have a sexual experience with' sits in stark contrast to the situation in Ireland, where those same individuals are legally forbidden from having such relationships. The above narrative points out that the sex education needs of young people with intellectual disabilities differ from the needs of young people with physical disabilities. This same participant recommends an approach which begins with an exploration of identity, and an acknowledgement of the ways in which identities overlap with one another and are not mutually exclusive:

> [P29, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] I think it's important to *know* that there's different ways and it's not just the heterosexual, normal way, and a lot of these young people want to be so normal, all the time. And they have to have the possibility to know that there could be a different way of living, too. That's why I think it's very important to start with identity.

This narrative illustrates well how traditional tensions and normative discourses might serve to construct aspects of privilege and oppression as in opposition to one another. This participant offers a pedagogy which opens up a space for intersectional experiences of identity within the sex education classroom. Kafer's (2013) research highlights the parallels between the 'queer' and 'crip' activist movements, arguing for increased feminist alliance building and social policy advocacy which builds upon these shared circumstances to work towards common political goals of meaningful inclusion through a critique of norms.

It is striking that, perhaps due to legislative constraints, participants in Ireland were unable to illustrate examples of inclusion for experiences of disability within mainstream sex

education pedagogies. Participants in Sweden were only able to speak to the topic to a limited degree unless it was their specific role or area of expertise. Despite participant narratives detailing that research has been conducted in Sweden that found experiences of disability to be absent from the curriculum, none of the participants reported that this finding has yet had an impact on sex education materials. It is noteworthy that research which deconstructs aspects of inclusion within the curriculum seems to be an emergent practice in Sweden, whereas there was no data from Ireland to indicate that exploration into this type of research has been considered.

7.9 Flexible Curriculum and Whole-School Approach

In both countries, sex education is taught from a flexible curriculum that intentionally leaves space for teachers to cater their lessons to the specific needs of the pupils in the classroom, aiming for a holistic approach which involves the entire school at all levels. In theory, this mandate requires an intersectional approach to sex education, involving the 'whole-school' and opens space for the unique needs of 'all learners' to be catered for specifically. In both countries, participants widely reported that this philosophy and approach is more ideal on paper than in reality. As one participant in Sweden described:

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Every school is responsible. But then they can decide themselves a lot... And that is the problem. It's definitely a problem... it's so – *vague*... it's not *specified.*

According to this participant and others the 'vague' and 'unspecified' nature of the curriculum provides flexibility, but is also problematic. Participants in Sweden explained that lessons are mandated every year from an early age and certain topics, such as gender, homosexuality and reproduction are required. The downfall of this model, as far as many were concerned, lies in the differences between teachers – both the standards to which they teach, and the level of specialised training they receive on the topics. Many participants asserted that good implementation requires a concerted effort to work on sex education throughout the entire school. Several participants in Sweden highlighted one element of consistency in that pupils can be guaranteed to learn something within their biology classes:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Although sex education is supposed and said to be a cross-disciplinary topic, I would say that it is mostly stressed in Biology.

For many in Sweden, the difficulty was the disproportionate emphasis within Biology classes when compared to the wider curriculum and school environment as a whole.

One of the chief barriers cited to full implementation of the sex education curriculum in Ireland, according to participants, was a lack of sufficient time given not only in the timetable, but also for teachers to prepare and research the topics:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] It needs time. It needs time during the week, it needs to be given time, teachers need time to plan, teachers need time to talk to each other, teachers need time to research the issue. Em, they're not given that time at all... it's really badly placed in the timetable usually, so timetabling would be one thing.

Guidelines in Ireland aim to provide 'structured opportunities' for students to learn about 'human relationships and sexuality' in order to 'form values' within 'a moral, spiritual and social framework' through a 'whole school approach' (Government of Ireland, 1997). In both Sweden and Ireland, many participants felt that the lack of definition in the curriculum had more benefits than drawbacks, in that it prioritises a 'whole-school approach' which theoretically leaves space for teachers and school staff members to maximise its potential:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] ...I mean the strength as I see it is the programme itself, is the nature of the programme, is the, sort of, the kind of humane and holistic context of the programme. I do think that is the biggest strength of it.

Other participants in Ireland, however, felt that the wider culture around the official sex education curriculum and the provisions for (primarily religious) 'ethos' amount to an 'opt out' which made a 'whole-school approach' impractical and, in many cases, allowed sex education to not be delivered at all in Ireland. On a whole, however, the curricular 'menu approach' was seen as positive:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...it's a curriculum without an actual, em, what's the word, imperative to implement it... while I would agree that curricula should be more of a menu approach... for schools that have particular ethos' like the Catholic Church... it's an

> opt out clause, for people who don't want to talk about sexuality, homosexuality in particular, or about sexuality in general. Things like contraception, all that... teachers are given responsibility to be active decision makers based on the needs of their students... but with sexuality it's a disaster! Em, because the culture isn't there in school. Institutionally it's a disaster.

For this participant, it is not the curriculum or its flexibility that is problematic, but rather the use of this flexibility within a Catholic 'ethos' and wider Irish cultural milieu that results in 'disaster'. Irish sex education guidelines outline the areas and topics to be addressed, but within this, the details of lesson plans are left open to the individual teacher's estimation of the needs of the particular young people in question (Inglis, 1998; Mayock et al., 2007). While in theory this approach gives autonomy to teachers in identifying the most relevant educational materials for their students, the reality is more likely that students 'may not have equal opportunities for learning, discussion and debate on at least some aspects of sexuality' (Mayock et al., 2007: 27). Some participants in Ireland envisaged how a whole-school approach, inclusive of a comprehensive set of curricular material as well as a diversity of experiences through a 'spiral curriculum', could be implemented:

> [P18, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] I'd say they should have a spiral curriculum in place where they do move on from Science to Geography to History to everything and it [sex education] should be incorporated in every part of their year at school.

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] My dream would be that teachers and principals would be engaged and informed and positive about LGBT identities and inclusion... not just in RSE and not just in SPHE, but in all aspects of the curriculum.

These dialogues are reminiscent of the discussions in the previous chapter where participants debated the usefulness of one-off education sessions, widely asserting 'one-off' lessons as limiting, despite bringing value in a context where a 'whole-school approach' remains an unachieved ideal.

Even civil servants in Ireland seemed confused about why responsibility for programme delivery is not allocated in a more systematic way, arguing that there are no 'cost implications' to good sex education delivery:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... there's no cost implications to having it more consistently delivered by the same teachers... There's no cost implications of that because it's on the timetable anyway, they have to teach it, someone has to teach it. It's changing the way they look at it... if I could get every principal in the country to kind of, to simply, for two or three months, focus on getting their SPHE/RSE right, it would run itself after that.

It was surprising to see this as well as a number of other narratives from civil servants in Ireland which placed responsibility for good sex education implementation onto the school, rather than taking responsibility for the government's – and indeed their own position's – role in ensuring good curriculum implementation.

7.10 The School Context: Principals, Champions and Teachers

7.10.1 Principals

For many participants in both countries, but particularly in Sweden, implementation of an inclusive and whole-school approach to sex education comes down to the leadership within the schools[217]. Several participants spoke to the requirement within the Swedish curriculum for the principal to decide how sex education should be implemented and to put a sex education strategy into practice:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...the principal has to make sure that the students get sex education. That's the only thing it [the curriculum] says, it doesn't say anything within any kind of, em, subject or when or where... but the principal is in charge of that, to make sure that everyone gets it. So that's a bit of a problem.

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think the principal has to start working with it... We can have specialists in gender or someone who is like a key person who is like taking charge of this, but the principal has to be there all of the time.

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I think that what is important is the role of the principal. If you have a leader at the school who thinks this is important, then it's much easier. It's also, you know, more ambitious.

[217] The reliance upon specifically motivated individuals to ensure proper implementation of the Irish RSE programme was also a key finding in Mayock et al.'s (2007) review.

In Ireland as well, several participants asserted that it 'boils down to the leader':

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] We need huge leadership. We need it to be legitimated by the institution. And the institution, essentially, boils down to the leader, unfortunately.

Mayock et al.'s (2007) study echoed the sentiments of participants in Ireland, finding the role of the principal to be one of the key factors in schools with high implementation of the RSE programme.

7.10.2 Champions

In addition to expressing the important role of the principal, participants in both countries, but especially in Ireland, pointed to the need for a 'champion' within the school to push forth implementation of a comprehensive and inclusive programme within a flexible curriculum:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] ...because the Department of Education is not saying you have to teach it in a designated slot, it is easy... you need a very dedicated person on the staff to say that RSE is a priority.

> [P16, Civil Servant, Ireland] ...what I think has been done is more patchy than comprehensive, and it's happened to come from, maybe the interest of individuals or champions who have been there. Champions who have been there for sex education.

> [P22, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... you always need a champion. You know that champion thing?

Several participants situated their arguments about the need for champions within a broader context which does not ensure implementation of a comprehensive programme in Ireland. It is within this context that such individuals must go 'against all odds' and 'make themselves vulnerable':

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] ...even in schools that aren't too keen on it there are individuals who are passionate about it and put themselves out... make themselves vulnerable... there are champions who do really good work, but it's not an entitlement, which is the big issue.

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I think the success stories are, em, educators –from rural Ireland - who against all odds have forced other teachers or forced parents to grasp this nettle. I think they are the pioneers.

For the last participant, the work of championing sex education presents an increased challenge for teachers in rural areas. In Sweden as well, there was a sentiment that good delivery depends upon individual teachers:

> [P24, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ...regarding sex education and stuff, I would like it to be more, have higher standards than it is today and not so dependent on individual teachers.

Several participants in both countries were quick to assert that good sex education should not have to depend on 'champions', and argued for structural changes which could support curriculum implementation that does not rely so heavily on the work of individuals.

7.10.3 Teachers

It is worth reiterating that this research did not interview teachers, principals or people employed full-time in schools. This was a deliberate intent of the project, in order to facilitate the voices of those who work full-time in areas of sex education. Within the discourses in both countries, many participants spoke about their experiences and perceptions of teachers, in some cases amounting to what could be seen as a discourse of blame of teachers in relation to inadequate programme delivery. It is important to explore these discourses, but also to contextualise them:

> [P28, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] ... the sex education done by the schools themselves is always so bad that I think it's better, the students would be better off without it... for so many teachers it's so difficult to talk about these issues.

For some participants, who conduct outside facilitation of sex education, their work depends upon teachers' inability to deliver the curriculum. For other outside facilitators, their organisations aim to put themselves out of work, preferring sex education delivery by teachers. As one outside facilitator in Sweden explained, it is ultimately not 'their task':

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] So it's better maybe that they [outside facilitators] come instead of the shy teacher or something like that... we don't want to be, eh, the 'responsible ones' for the sex education in school... we want the school to take the responsibility. We want to end our sex education in school! (laughs) We're not, I mean, this is not *our* task, it's the task of the school.

Several participants in both countries felt strongly that sex education should, as one researcher from Sweden put it, 'happen there and then with the teacher':

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I want it to happen there and then with the teacher, ordinary teachers. Because it's just another, it's a thing that school is supposed to teach about.

While many expressed this as the ideal, several simultaneously articulated how far away that ideal seems to be. One NGO sex educator in Ireland illustrated an example of a time when teachers actually created difficulty during their outside facilitation lesson

> [P18, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] We were talking about HIV and AIDS and stuff and the gasps and the giggling was coming from the three teachers in the room and the young people knew more about what we were talking about than the teachers themselves.

Teacher discomfort with the curriculum content in Irish sex education was also a major finding of the Mayock et al. study (2007). In both countries, participants widely reported that existing curriculum leaves space for learner-centred nuances in delivery:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... there were students who would be the good students, who would be very critical of what was going on... Either it wasn't happening, or it wasn't meaningfully happening... School doesn't do anything for them as far as I can see... in some schools nothing. As in, literally nothing... parts of the curriculum will be covered: alcohol, drugs, well-being, hygiene, stuff that's safe. Not sensational but safe. So that can be totally neglected. Em, others, in other classrooms, it is read through as a text. If they have the resource, they'll read through it. And the teacher can feel a bit uncomfortable...

Especially in Ireland, participants widely asserted that the flexibility in the curriculum is used to facilitate a less-direct tackling of sexuality related topics.

7.10.4 Teacher Training

Teacher discomfort in Ireland was alluded to at times as being linked to insufficient teacher training, as well as broader cultural constraints. In Sweden, several participants complained of lack of teacher training on sex education at University level for teacher trainees:

> [P3, Sweden, Independent Sexuality Educator] ...The weakness is that hardly no (sic) teacher knows how to do it, as it is in the curriculum but during the teachers' education at University, it's not in the curriculum. So they don't know how...

> [P4, Sweden, Researcher] Because it is sort of, since they aren't taught about this in the teacher's school at the University, when they are trained as a teacher, you haven't really been reflecting on the methods.

One participant illustrated how improved and comprehensive teacher training would need to be supported by a wider context that values sex education within the timetable and within the school milieu, concluding that 'there's no point' in concentrating on teacher training alone:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] There's no point. Teachers get very frustrated when you try to do professional development with them, because they're saying, 'I know I have to go back and crack the whip on certain things. I don't have time to do those things.' So it's a joint issue, it's developing teachers professionally, and changing our system, changing the hidden values that are, basically driving the system.

In keeping with the wider cultural discourses in Ireland, there was a marked despondency where implementation of teacher training was contemplated.

For one participant in Sweden, their preferred method of working to make a school more inclusive begins with an exploration of the type of language used informally amongst teachers:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] The teachers want to know, 'Oh it's terrible with the students, they call each other 'faggot' in the hallway all the time, what do we do about it?' And we say, 'You know, that is a really good question and we're going to get to that, but first we're going to talk about what is the jargon like in the teacher's lounge.'

In classic normcritical fashion, this participant turns the 'pedagogy of discomfort' towards the teachers, pushing them to explore their own belief systems and oppressive tendencies. It is this kind of training that was frequently lamented as not yet happening meaningfully or in a widespread way in either country. One participant in Sweden asserted that existing training is not in line with the current curriculum, and many discussed the lack of teacher training:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... in a way we need another kind of training... and a good supportive system... also in the teacher training college. I mean different kind of things that support sex education.

Participants in both countries widely expressed the need for greater support for sex education throughout the wider school and governmental systems. While many in Ireland had similar complaints to those in Sweden, in keeping with the wider cultural discourses in Ireland, there was a marked despondency where implementation of teacher training was contemplated. Kumashiro asserts that 'the role of the school in working against oppression must involve not only a critique of structural and ideological forces, but also a movement against its own contributions to oppression' (2002: 45). Participant narratives indicate that sex education implementation in both countries faces a complex web of challenges within both the school milieu and wider structural systems impacting the programmes.

7.11 Intersectional Pedagogies

Rather than focusing on one specific and fixed vantage point of privilege or oppression in its investigation of power, intersectionality takes a multiple and simultaneous approach, concentrating on micro and macro level power relations and seeing identity categories as never existing in isolation, but rather continuously influenced and informed by one another (Collins, 1999; Nyberg and Gustavsson, 2011).

Several participants in both countries suggested that good practices must be grounded in intersectional school-wide pedagogies. In Sweden, several researchers recommended a queer and intersectional approach to implementing inclusive sex education school-wide:

> [P28, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] [My research recommends] of course a good structure in the organisation in the school for interacting and to follow up... gender equality, equal treatment, gender and sexuality... in general we're suggesting that you should have a queer and an intersectional understanding as a basis for your work.

For most participants in Sweden, an intersectional approach is what is strived for by normcritical pedagogies, though several participants deliberated over normcritical's inherent imperfection and articulated some of the elements that could be pushed further in order to achieve improved intersectionality. For one participant, a normcritical perspective is the best 'point of departure', even if it does not guarantee perfect inclusion:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] So I guess if you apply a normcritical perspective on the sex education I think the result would be an inclusive sex education, but I don't think it would be, I can't really imagine how the (perfectly) normcritical sex education would look as such but I think that it would be improved by applying the normcritical perspective... I think there's a difference.

For another participant, using a normcritical perspective intersectionally, rather than focusing on one norm at a time, allows the educator to 'simplify reality':

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...people define normcritical work very differently I think. But we defined it as always being intersectional, as *always* being intersectional... something that we met often [was the argument that], 'You can only work with one category, it's too complicated'... But for us, we just said that, 'Then [with a normcritical perspective] you really simplify reality.'

Another participant justified this intersectional approach by explaining their viewpoint that when a person lives outside of many societal norms, the oppression multiplies exponentially:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] You know, a person is made up of many different things, and being a woman and a non-ethnic Swede and a homosexual does not mean you're three times outside the norm it probably means you're ten times outside the norm!

Many participants in both countries asserted that implementation of a 'whole-school approach' and an intersectional perspective on sex education would require increased attention to be paid to intersectionality within teacher training efforts:

> [P27/1, Civil Servant, Sweden] ... [my vision is] that schools would work, like, in an intersectional way and with normcritique and in all education, not only in sex education... people who are studying to be teachers, they have like gender mainstreaming, maybe they could have, as well, like intersectionality mainstreaming.

For those participants in Ireland who spelled out the intersecting issues that a holistic approach might work with, narratives repeatedly focused on the situation for teachers who, as this participant put it, are 'just not sure about all those issues':

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... you have issues around ethnicity and race and religion... talking about race, sexuality and gender all in the one go. Deconstructing those intersecting issues, I think, is massively important. Having a teacher feel literate enough... They're just not sure about all those issues... Like gender, like race, like class... I think we need to do those things in conjunction with each other, you know?

As one participant concluded, 'the all inclusive kind of discourse' is 'difficult' but it remains the aim:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I think it's very difficult to make the all inclusive kind of a discourse, and I know that's probably what we all aim for!

Participants in both countries widely expressed desires for inclusive and intersectional perspectives and approaches, though individual narratives indicated a diverse set of opinions about what implementation of these pedagogies might look like. In Sweden, most participants asserted normcritical pedagogies as the gateway to intersectional inclusion. While normcritical pedagogies were frequently advocated, most participants in Sweden simultaneously illustrated that these approaches have not yet experienced widespread success with regards to intersectionally inclusive sex education. In Ireland, most participants expressed a general desire for intersectional inclusion, but were unable to offer a road map for how to get there.

7.12 Discussion

Perhaps if the above narratives are viewed in tandem, alongside one another, one can begin to piece together what an inclusive intersectional pedagogy for sex education might look like as a 'whole-school' practice. For Kumashiro, 'pedagogies and resources that target a particular group or identity often fail to address students who are marginalized on the basis of more than one identity, such as multicultural curricula and resource centres that challenge racism but silence queer sexualities' (2002: 38). Intersectionality sees power relations and oppressions as multiple, tandem and co-constitutive (Collins, 2000). In both countries, participants widely expressed that the reality looks quite different from their shared idealised visions of an intersectional and whole-school approach to sex education.

Narratives of efforts towards sex education which is inclusive of diverse experiences of religions, race, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status and differing abilities were more characteristic for their discourses of having met challenges and difficulty, than for offering a body of good practice examples. While an intersectional and multiple approach was idealised, several participants mentioned that, in practice, a pedagogical critique of norms is often limited to preoccupation with grounds of discrimination listed in Sweden's equality legislation. Indeed, equality legislation has provided Swedish and Irish societies with a discursive equality roadmap (Kantola and Nousiainen, 2009). While, as the researcher, I endeavoured to utilise poststructuralist and queer vantage points throughout, narratives necessarily mentioned specific areas of difference, often relating directly to equality legislation in both countries. With this dilemma, I have re-produced within this chapter the very 'identity box' approach that my queer theoretical lens seeks to deconstruct.

Dialogues which simultaneously deconstructed and upheld stereotypes were common among discourses on inclusion in both countries. These dilemmas were particularly prevalent where participants spoke to inclusion of aspects of diversity besides sexual orientation and gender. Narratives indicate participants have met significant difficulties within attempts to provide or think through intersectionally inclusive sex education. Discussions on inclusion of sexual orientation and gender flowed more easily in both countries than dialogues on religion, race, ethnicity, class and disability inclusion. This scenario perhaps reflects the aspects of privilege and identity present within the demographic of participants to this research, or indeed within the sex education and

research professions more broadly. Participants in Sweden widely assert normcritical pedagogies, or an approach which examines sexuality norms intersectionally, as an admittedly imperfect start to working with these issues more meaningfully.

Chapter 8

Inclusive Embodiment: *Towards a Pleasure Pedagogy*

Inclusive sex education aims to recognise and respond to the needs of all of the possible learners within a classroom or educational context and also considers inclusion in the areas of curriculum content. The use of language holds a particular power dynamic, and is often chosen deliberately by sex educators who adhere to differing rationales for using clinical terminology or more sexual language. The inclusion of topics such as sexual violence, consent and pleasure remain missing from much sex education curricula globally (Irvine, 2004; Kiely, 2005; Fine, 1988; Rasumssen, 2006). Discourses on the body within sex education have been traditionally gender stereotyped (Dorio and Munro, 2000) and desexualised (Fine 1988), but some sex educators in Sweden are beginning to use normcritical pedagogies to delink taken-for-granted associations between genders, genitals and sex acts, in an effort for inclusion. This chapter explores discourses on the body and pleasure found within participant narratives. The differing rationales behind the use of terminology, the inclusion of topics such as violence and the variety of perspectives on the role of pleasure within sex education are explored through the interview dialogues.

8.1 Terminology

The deliberate use of language was an important topic to several participants in both countries. These participants offered narratives which discussed the importance of words more generally as well as their use of specific terminology, particularly the terminology used when referring to genitals and conceptualisations of sex acts. Foucault argues that, '... power's hold on sex is maintained through language' (1978: 83). According to Foucault, language contains the power to influence or create discourse, and thereby discursive subjects, so it could follow that choices about the different language used in sex education can serve to produce different types of sexual subjectivities.

8.1.1 A 'Terminology' Pedagogy: Discourses of Sex, Relationships and Consent

Some participants who work as outside facilitators spoke to the use of a 'brainstorm' pedagogy at the start of their sessions, to get language out in the open and to assess the group in terms of comfort and sexual literacy:

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] I throw up a few flip charts and say, 'Tell me all the words you know.' All the words you know about men's bits and all the words you know about women's bits and all the words you know about sex acts... 'How does this word feel?' 'How does that word feel?'... we look at all of the words that they've got up there that are actually used as offensive language... you get a sense from what they're saying to you where they're actually at... the majority of the room might not know what a clit was, for example... if they use the word 'mickey', then I occasionally say 'cock.' Or 'dick' or 'penis' and mix them all together so that their vocabulary increases, and they have a greater understanding of the world around them and how it interacts with sex... I also change the idea of non-consensual sex. I don't think it exists. Right, as far as I'm concerned if it's non-consensual then it's rape or sexual assault, it's not sex.

So for this participant in Ireland, the brainstorm session provides an opportunity to unpack perceptions and connotations linked to a variety of terms, and facilitates incorporation of diverse language throughout the session. It is worth noting that this is the only participant in Ireland who spoke of using this method, or indeed such a variety of terminology. This type of 'language opening' activity was far more common within narratives from Sweden:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I think almost every educator [in my organisation] starts out writing the word 'sex' on the whiteboard and then ask the group to associate and come up with different words associated with 'sex'... you get the best analysis of the group. Cause some are just able to say 'boyfriend,' 'intercourse,' 'the pill,' ah 'condoms,' – and then they stop. And then you can, like, stimulate them to say a bit more... And if they say something that they consider dirty then you just repeat it and you write it... it has an effect of really, like, loosening up... showing an interest in the words that they use... it's a way of connecting with them... you can also get them to say lots of different things about sex, like you can get as different words as 'rape' or 'love' – and you say, 'Yeah, this is sex isn't it, it's very, very – it's diverse and it's different... But it can also be 'rape.' This is how complex this is.

The above narratives describe strikingly similar pedagogies and both assert the usefulness that facilitating an expression of 'all the words you know' can have on 'loosening up' a group and building rapport with the educator. In the Irish narrative, rape is asserted from the outset as not being part of sex, and therefore not part of the session discussion, whereas in the Swedish narrative rape is discussed as a dynamic of sexual experiences. Another

participant from Sweden asserted that an overt discussion of rape as an 'aspect of love' is an essential piece of their feminist pedagogy:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] I think the problem is that when they [teachers] discuss love, for example, it's first of all very heteronormative. But secondly it's not (hesitates) issues regarding power relationships, power for example. Violence. It's not included in discussions about love... I have a feminist view, I think that if you should discuss love you should discuss all the positive aspects about love but you should also discuss all the negative aspects about love. I mean that people can really hurt each other and say it's due to love, for example.

Discussions about rape and consent were far more common in Sweden than in Ireland. None of the participants in Ireland discussed consent or articulated a pedagogy which explores the realities of rape or sexual assault. The language of 'negotiation' was more common in Ireland, but specific pedagogies for educating about 'negotiation' were not offered. As one researcher explained, these concepts are 'not recognised' within the curriculum:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] But I mean they [sex education curricular materials] don't kind of recognise they ways, I think, young people have unsafe sex, or the complexities around the negotiation or the fact that... you know, it's something that's much more complicated and complex than that.

Sexual consent is not expressly addressed within the Irish curriculum (Kiely, 2004). The language around the official 'Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)' programme was discussed by many, with some feeling the focus needs to be firstly or even solely on relationships. One participant passionately argued for a shift away from a 'sex' or 'sexuality' focus, advocating a focus on 'relationships' with a (obviously heterosexual) marital preparation foundation:

> [P17, Relationships Education NGO, Ireland] Well, it's really relationships! ... [our programme] was very much with marriage preparation in mind. Because as I said there is so much sex education out there, it's everywhere... I firmly believe that marriage preparation starts in childhood, really.

Participants in Ireland explained that this marital preparation 'relationships' approach is widely implemented in Irish schools through the delivery of outside facilitation by Catholic marital counsellors. This practice is not only explicitly Catholic religious, but also heteronormative[218]. The popularity of these educators could lie, to some extent, in their assurance to a school that the programme fits within a Catholic religious ethos. From a feminist and queer perspective, these programmes fall short for their absence of educational provision on topics such as contraception, pleasure and diverse sexual and gender identities. One participant specifically argued that a focus on the 'relationships' aspect of the programme takes away from 'sexuality,' and lamented the lack of structures in place for ensuring that education related to sexual activity is included for students:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] ... if schools focus a huge amount on relationships and whatever and completely ignore sexual activity, which is difficult, you know, there's no problem with that, there's no comeback on that... there's no entitlement of students...

Narratives which distinguished a morally-situated 'relationships' approach from a 'sexual health promotion[219]' approach emerged strongly in Ireland, possibly elucidating some of the overarching national dilemmas which might complicate programme implementation. Distinction between 'sexual health promotion' and 'relationships' approaches of 'outside facilitators' has not been previously explored in Irish research, but the discursive division emergent in participant narratives illuminates some of the moral dilemmas which complicate programme delivery, particularly in Catholic schools[220]. Despite a 'relationship' focus asserted by some participants in Ireland, one participant argued that 'relationships' pedagogies frequently omit a dialogue about the role of desire within relationships:

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ... nobody has ever said that to them, 'What do you want? You're a sexual being, you're going to enter a sexual relationship – or not – with somebody. When do you want that to happen? What do you want that to look like?... Those questions are not being asked, by anybody in the schools, as far as I'm aware.

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[218] Same-sex marriage was neither legal in Ireland nor recognised by the Catholic Church at the time of writing.

[219] A health promotion approach is seen to aim to reduce STIs and unplanned pregnancies.

[220] Previous research found reliance upon religious education teachers as sex education instructors exacerbates potential concerns about the prevalence of Catholic teachings on sexuality (Mayock et al., 2007; Drury Research, 2010).

Kiely's (2005) research found the discourse within the Irish RSE curriculum to obscure sexual pleasure and desire for students through a narrow, Catholic moral, health promotion discourse.

8.1.2 Language of Sexuality or 'Proper Terminology'

When specifically discussing sex and sexuality, several participants in Ireland introduced the possibility for 'bad words' to emerge within the classroom setting, sometimes juxtaposing these with 'the correct words':

> [P17, Relationships Education NGO, Ireland] [My response] depends on what the bad word or slang term is... they are encouraged to use the correct words.

One participant critiqued that the Irish curriculum uses the 'official' language of sexuality in order to not be 'offensive'[221] and argued that these choices can serve to discourage students from talking in more 'common ways', while simultaneously producing a particular discourse:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] I think that's part of the problem of the programme is that it recommends to teachers, right from the very beginning, that they use proper language for, you know, when talking about sexuality, the official kind of language of sexuality. And, that they discourage students from talking about sexuality in more, I suppose, common ways... I can see their reasoning for that at one level, but at another level there's a problem there because there are certain students who will only have a certain discourse around sexuality and the ways they talk about it.

While this participant 'sees their reasoning', they make an assertion about the importance of accessibility of language for certain pupils. For another participant in Ireland, their research found that students were learning language but without 'much meaning', translating to an absence of discourse about personal sexuality. Discussions of personal sexuality were also prohibited from this participant's own research:

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[221] In Chapter 5, we saw a narrative from a participant in Ireland which explained that early resistance to the introduction of sex education in schools in Ireland had rallied against the concept of teaching young people terminology for (sexualised) body parts.

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] One of the things I think they [students] did learn [in sex education] was the language around it, and being sexually literate, without it having much meaning. Do you know what I mean? So there's not much meaning to it. It's not - they're not talking about personal sexuality... Of course we didn't ask them about personal sexuality. We would have been rubbed over the coals for that, you know.

According to this participant, curricular aims towards sexual literacy are positive, but these are not facilitated in a way which is useful to young people personally. This participant also admits feeling, as a researcher, that facilitation of dialogues on personal sexuality within their study would have been reprimanded, or 'rubbed over the coals', perhaps referring to the power of funding bodies, school officials, parents or wider society.

A deconstructive approach to language within sexual contexts was characteristic of narratives from Sweden. Several participants in Sweden working as outside facilitators on behalf of NGOs asserted their use of the words '*kuk*' and '*fitta*' for the genitals, which have English translations as 'cock' and 'cunt' respectively (Milles, 2011), asserting the rationale that these words are sexual rather than clinical:

> [P25, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] We, in Swedish, we use the words 'kuk och fitta'. And I think you can translate them to 'cock and cunt'. And I know that cock and cunt are not acceptable in English, it's not. But in Swedish you, it's possible to say kuk and fitta, it's not that negative... If you use, like, the word vagina, it's like more, it's... like when you go to the hospital, that kind of word... we want to use words to include the sexuality... But we do it, like, in a very sort of cute way... 'What can you do with different kinds of bodies?'... we say, like, 'Ok, when you talk about sex and you talk about genitals, you can say kuk and fitta' and then it's like (giggles) 'Oh, exciting, they used those words!' And then we talk *about* the words, 'Is this word ok? What do you think about this word, is it ok to say fitta?' And they say, 'Yeah, it's ok. It sounds kind of gross, but it doesn't have to be'... that's the strategy, to talk *about* the words.

While this participant admits that 'cock and cunt are not acceptable in English', several participants in Sweden spoke of a progression in the use of language, and traced the reclamation of the word '*fitta*' or 'cunt', in particular. Narratives from Sweden detailed linguistic developments over recent years which have facilitated '*fitta*' to move from being a pejorative to now be conceptualised as 'not that negative'. Participants asserted that the deliberate pedagogical usage of '*fitta*' by outside facilitators has contributed directly to this

linguistic reclamation. Many were quick to qualify the use of '*fitta*' by pointing out that teachers are unlikely to use this terminology.

Muscio explains how the word 'cunt' is the only word in the English language for the entire female genitalia, arguing that 'vagina' only refers to the vaginal canal and 'vulva' refers to only the outer genitalia, the clitoris and labia but not the vagina (2002: 11). Participants in Sweden made the same arguments about the Swedish linguistic counterparts. Muscio (2002) traces the history of the word 'cunt' to origins in India, China, Rome, Egypt and Ireland where, at one time, the term held connotations of respect and was linked to Goddesses and Celtic fertility symbols. She demonstrates that 'cunt' has been re-appropriated as a term of degradation in recent decades and makes a feminist case, arguing the need to retrieve the word from patriarchal oppression (Muscio, 2002)[222]. The 'cunt' linguistic revival efforts are not unlike the movement to reclaim the term 'queer' (Cameron and Kulick, 2003; Milles, 2011).

Not all participants in Sweden were comfortable with the more 'sexual' terminology, however, and some asserted that the most important factor in language is the comfort of the educator:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Some educators will use the word 'pussy[223]' and feel completely free about that with the groups, where it works, and some wouldn't. I use 'vagina' because then I feel safe and then the whole session comes out better. Like – so you choose the words you like.

Another participant in Sweden contemplated that, for those in the sex education field, sexual language is used with ease, and admitted to sometimes forgetting that 'for some people it's hard to talk about':

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I think it's hard because when you have been working with sexuality, both politically and in research, you get used to talking about sex. It's like you can talk about it and you can use a lot of words and... if you say pussy

[222] Muscio and others identify themselves as part of a movement to reclaim 'cunt' in an effort to revive positive connotations to a word which they assert is the most functional and relevant term for female genitalia (see also Walker, 1983; Young, 1999).

[223] The word '*fitta*' was translated by participants in Sweden as both 'cunt' and 'pussy' in English. Through the course of my research interviews, an increasing number of participants asserted that the correct translation for 'fitta' is 'cunt', and Milles (2011) linguistic research also uses this translation.

someone else get's like 'ahh' (shocked expression) 'What did you say?' and you're just used to it... you kind of forget that, for some people it's hard to talk about.

Milles (2011) traces Swedish linguistic developments over recent decades, including the introduction by sex education movements in Sweden of the new word, '*snippa*', which emerged as a term for young girls to use in talking about their genitals. Some participants referred to the term '*snippa*', asserting that the Swedish language has had '*snopp*', the equivalent to the English word 'willy' since the 1960s, but that sex educators were finding the need to introduce a neutral, colloquial, comparable, accessible word for girls. The Language Council in Sweden has promoted '*snippa*[224]' as having a positive connotation, and participants in Sweden discussed that the term is now widely used pedagogically in pre-schools and schools in order to provide useful language to young people (see also Milles, 2011).

One participant in Sweden spoke at length about the gendered nature of genital linguistics and the challenges this brings with regards to inclusion for trans* and gender diverse learners:

[P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] ... I always use kuk and fitta... I speak about the sex organs or cock and pussy and the anus. I think it's really important when I speak about the pussy not to speak about women, I just speak about the pussy. Because, I don't know how you define yourself and it doesn't matter. I mean this kind of organ on your body looks like this and I refer to it as a pussy, and that's really important for me to be able to talk about it. But then I try to also explain that you don't have to, if you have a sex organ looking like this, I don't say that your sex organ has to be named a pussy. And if I speak about the clitoris you maybe want to speak about your body part that looks like that as a cock. I don't know. But this, I think, it's really important for me to show that I can speak about these bodily parts and but I don't define another's organ... When I speak to queer youth, I speak about... when you have a pussy you were born with or a pussy you have got. Because there are some similarities and some differences if you got it later in life. But if I should start speaking about this with people not even have thought about that you can fall in love with someone of the same sex it would be really, really strange and too much at the same time. So then I have to adjust my language to the crowd in some way... I hope other people say it

[224] Milles questions whether '*snippa*' works for or against gender equality by pointing out that, despite its emergence from feminist sex education groups, the word itself reiterates traditional feminine indicators within Swedish linguistic norms, resulting in an affirmation of the gender binary through genital language, something that both feminists and queer advocates in Sweden are purportedly working against.

> like this, but I mean I work quite on a National level and I know that you don't have very many people giving sex education that think this is important... this is my way and I think it's a good way... no matter what your sexual orientation or gender identity is, people say that they can relate to it and that they think it's inclusive.

For this participant, particularly when working with groups with queer youth, equating certain genital language with specific gender identities and sex acts can be limiting. This participant discusses using language in a way which they assert can help give (particularly queer and trans*) young people a way to speak about sexuality that does not deny their experience. The de-linking of particular genitals to a specific gender identity helps facilitate space for trans* bodies in the sex education classroom. This participant's pedagogy opens up space for a body part that 'looks like' a 'clitoris' to be spoken about as a 'cock', for example, and introduces the possibility that a person might have a 'pussy you were born with or a pussy you have got', thereby including relevant information for individuals who have undergone gender reassignment surgery.

8.2 Embodiment in Sex Education

8.2.1 Embodiment of Outside Facilitators

Most of the narratives from Sweden contained what could be seen as a particular discourse on the embodiment of sex educators themselves, in that many participants argued the necessity that outside facilitators should be young people, generally under age 30, in order to facilitate a pseudo-peer dynamic:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Well, young-ish yeah, but then if you're over 30 you're not welcome to apply. And we have made exceptions, but the profile is young adults speaking to teenagers.

The rationale for this is based on a peer model of relate-ability. The body of research evidence on differences in behavioural outcomes for peer- versus teacher-led sex education programmes remains inconclusive, with some studies having found programmes led by peers to be more effective, others demonstrating similar or identical results for those led by peers and teachers and others still concluding that neither method demonstrated a

behavioural impact (Harden et al., 2001; Kim and Free, 2008). Many participants in Sweden were insistent upon the age restrictions:

> [P7, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] We really try to keep it as close to it as possible. I mean I'm almost 40 so I can't go out and talk to these kids... we try to get people who are, you know, close to the age of the students because they can relate so much better.

One participant justified the age restriction using a discourse that, within a research context, might be seen as 'least adult' (Mandell, 1988). In this scenario, the educator is positioned as older and more knowledgeable than the students, but is seen as less of an authority figure than the teachers. This dynamic was also used to justify a preference for outside facilitators over teachers. As one participant put it:

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] I've been quite much older than most of the youth that I speak to and work with but I know that they don't see me as an adult as they see a teacher as an adult... I don't think I'll be able to work like this until I'm 65 years old. I mean I have advantages when I'm looking, in any case, quite young and stuff.

One participant in Ireland also asserted a preference for younger educators going into schools, with this participant reflecting on their own positioning using a discourse of relate-ability:

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... I'm not representative of young people... I'm afraid those days of being able to really engage with 18, 19, 20 year olds, they're gone! ...there's a new generation coming up and they deserve ownership...

While this participant asserted the need for 'ownership' of younger age groups in relation to topics of sexuality, they simultaneously asserted that some of the younger teachers might not be adequately prepared to deliver sex education, due in part to their age:

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... if you're a 22 year old teacher fresh out of St Patricks[225] or wherever, and you get a job in (a rural school), and there's a free period and the principal says, 'Em, Mary, go in there and just do SPHE with them, Ms. Muffy isn't after showing up today.' That's a guarantee that's how it works, we're absolutely are sure if it. And so you're sending a 22 year old young lassie in to talk to a group of 16 year or 15 year

[225] A teacher training college located in Dublin.

> old boys – and, 'Ok, we're going to talk about SPHE.' 'Well we don't fucking want to talk about this. Riding women, is it, are we going to talk about riding women?' All this kind of stuff... it's hard to hold a line on that kind of stuff. Whereas if you drop in strangers into that room, who are absolutely hardened to that kind of conversation, you will make, you know, I think much more of an impact.

In this narrative, the age dynamic along with the lack of preparedness on the part of some teachers is used as a rationale for implementing outside facilitation. This narrative also introduces a 'guarantee' and 'absolutely certainty' from this participant that sex education lessons are often delegated to young, untrained and unprepared teachers within schools. For another participant in Ireland, the important demographic element within their group of outside facilitators was that they are all mothers:

> [P17, Relationships Education NGO, Ireland] We are very realistic, we understand young people - we would all be mothers.

A 'motherhood' prerequisite to become an educator on an outside facilitation team could be seen as a manifestation of a discourse which privileges or focuses exclusively on reproductive (presumably hetero-) sexuality. Some participants in Sweden reflected on the queer identities of educators giving rise to dilemmas and, for one participant who described themselves as being widely read as queer, discrimination:

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] When I'm working in queer groups it's good that many people read me as queer in some way. And it also has disadvantages of course... I don't know anyone that has had as many problems with homophobia and really bad boy groups as I have.

For this participant, being 'read as queer' is useful for rapport-building in queer groups, but also likely plays a role in this facilitator's experiencing of homophobia from students. The above narratives widely assert the importance of the embodiment of the facilitator, according to participants in both countries. Only one participant in the entire study reflected critically on the notion of age requirements for facilitators, interpreting this imperative through a normcritical perspective:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] I don't understand it, really... I've been working with age also as an issue of norms, normativity. And who is sexual? Can a woman be 60 and sexual? Or is it only young people?

For this participant, a limitation on the age of sex educators sends a clear message about embodiment. It speaks volumes in relation to whom sex is seen to be for, who has a right to speak about it, and who is seen as sexual.

8.2.2 Programme Content

From an inclusion perspective, an exploration of the content of sex education lessons could provide insight into which experiences are addressed, and which sets of needs are met for young people. Narratives regarding programme content varied widely between individual participants as well as national contexts. In many cases, narratives from outside facilitators situated the content their organisation provides in contrast to the topics covered by teachers. Participants in Sweden discussed the body and sex itself with greater frequency than those in Ireland.

Some participants in Ireland critiqued the Irish curriculum as focusing too heavily on risk:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ...[the curriculum centres] around managing risk, you know... sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy and students need to be aware of how they manage themselves and their lives to ward off those problems... the kind of the preoccupation with pregnancy prevention and disease prevention would further, you know, have that effect, you know what I mean?

According to this participant, an over-emphasis on 'risks' and 'problems' might result in 'having that effect' or, in other words, serve to increase the prevalence of the very 'problems' it seeks to 'manage'. Another researcher in Ireland articulated the curriculum as purporting to educate on 'safety', but ultimately promoting moralisation in the name of 'values':

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] ... if [teachers are] going to teach anything you're going to teach values... *safe* sex, *safe* this, *safe* that, which is ultimately moralising, dressed up as good advice.

One civil servant in Ireland asserted that the curriculum does not 'really talk about sex', and argued that it is possible to discuss sex with young people without 'encouraging young people to be sexually active':

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] [The] curriculum doesn't really, apart from talking about reproduction, doesn't really talk about sex. Em, that I can see... I'm sure some schools do, but kind of the formal curriculum doesn't actually talk about sex, it doesn't talk about contraception and it doesn't talk about STIs... it's perfectly capable of dealing with that without, you know, encouraging young people to be sexually active... I think it's well possible to talk about sexual intercourse and what it means... these are the things that young people are being faced with all the time.

Although the earlier narratives from researchers in Ireland critiqued a moralising over-emphasis on 'safety', 'risk' and 'prevention' of pregnancy or disease, it was clear from the narratives of outside facilitators and the above civil servant that even those topics are not widely addressed within the curriculum or by teachers in Ireland. Mayock et al.'s study on the Irish curriculum found youth respondents to state emphatically, 'that it was important for young people to learn about contraception and safe sex, condom use, STIs and sexual orientation' and recommended formal incorporation of these topics (2007: 40). Based on participant narratives, it seems that topics of condoms and contraception are primarily being introduced by outside facilitators, if at all. One researcher cautioned, however, that there is a risk in that outside groups might focus disproportionately or exclusively on condom use:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] A lot of [outside facilitator] programmes are kind of simplistic as well in the sense that if they get the message across around safe sex and using condoms, they think young people will know how to do it!

Similarly, another researcher critiqued that discussions that are taking place are not 'real world sex talk':

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] There's no real world sex talk going on.. 'What's really cool about it?' 'What's really nice about it?'... 'Let's talk about that.' 'Should you feel ashamed because of that?'... People can talk openly about even hypothetical situations.

For these researchers, 'simplistic' programmes which primarily emphasise condom use make an assumption that young people will know how to 'do it' and fall short of incorporating 'real world sex talk' in a way which facilitates young people to 'talk openly' or discuss desires. These narratives from Ireland sit in stark contrast to the list of topics one participant in Sweden offered as priorities for outside facilitators to address:

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Because it's also LGBT rights, it's the right to abortion, you know it's a lot of issues... we also talk about *other* stuff. Like pornography or violence, or pleasure, or or...

Discussions in Sweden covered a wider range of sex education topics than those in Ireland, where dialogues concentrated more on which topics are not covered, and the structural conditions which serve to limit an implementation of comprehensive programmes in the Irish context.

8.2.3 Teaching About Bodies

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the narratives in Sweden was the inclusive and non-traditional ways in which some participants conceptualised the body for young people in sex education. A few of the participants in Sweden spoke about a pedagogy rooted in similarities between young growing bodies, rather than differences between genders:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... it's actually fair to say that *everyone* gets more hair. Boys get more than girls but girls also get more hair... Everyone's voices change. Boys more than girls, but it happens to girls as well... So just make puberty more, not the old classical separation, what happens to – and 'men get more muscles' and 'women get more fat'... 'women get their period' and 'men get their first ejaculation' – but... the ovaries *and* the testicles. They mature. It's the same process behind it.

Several participants in Sweden inferred that certain aspects of anatomy, especially those linked to pleasure, are often left out of biology. From a perspective of discursively produced subjectivities, if young people are not taught that their genitals are comprised of a collection of parts each having specific functions, then the ways in which one comes to know themselves sexually may be conceived in a limited way. When embodied pedagogies

are viewed for their potential to discursively produced embodied subjectivities (see also Foucault, 1978), sex education can be seen as a form of somatechnics – the technologies and techniques which produce particular embodiments (Stryker and Sullivan, 2009). This same participant in Sweden illustrated a pedagogy about genital anatomy from a pleasure perspective:

> [P5, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] [I would educate about] that the vagina gets wet and how does that happen and that women as well as men get erections cause we all have these response tissues and how the clitoris works, that it's not just the, eh, the glands but it's the whole body of the clitoris... a lot of information about sexual arousal. And if they have questions we talk about anal sex as well... only if they ask... we make sketches on the whiteboard. So we draw. I'm really used to drawing a vagina, kind of, and the anal opening... we draw it up and we draw lots of hair. And we say that this is a woman who is not shaving and she's not been circumcised or anything, you know the way she would be if no one had changed her in any way. And then we draw like the outer and the inner labia. And we draw them in different sizes, like inner labia should be in different sizes always, cause there are lots of questions about that. And we also say that the inner labia is a stupid word because they are often on the outside. Like bigger than the outer labia... when we've drawn the genitals on the whiteboard, then we talk about masturbation as well.

This description is of a flexible pedagogy whereby drawings are used to facilitate a discussion on pleasure, bodies and, if young people ask about it, sex acts. Feminism has become increasingly concerned with the relationship between bodies and images within the media (see Duke, 2000; Frost, 2005; Bordo 2003), but little attention has been paid to the ways in which other images may influence embodiment. Coleman employs Deluzian concepts of 'becoming' through relationality to argue that feminist research should examine more than simply how 'pre-existent bodies are effected by pre-existent images' but also 'how bodies are experienced through images and on how these experiences limit or extend the becoming of bodies' (Colemean, 2008: 2-3). Using this rationale and a somatechnics perspective, it becomes possible to conceive that bodily empowerment could be facilitated pedagogically *through* images. A flexible pedagogy, such as that described by the above participant, demonstrates bodily and sexual diversity, as well as openness to the possibilities of sex and pleasure. Several participants in Sweden implemented a normcritical perspective to support young people to feel good about their bodies and not be so concerned with 'normal':

> [P24, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] ... those questions about 'are my genitals normal?' and stuff, it's like 'well, there is a variety of genitals, but you can feel a lot of stress because of society and norms regarding what is considered normal, but when you look at the reality there's a lot of variation.'

Few participants in Ireland made any mention of specific body parts or bodily functions, as such, during the dialogues. One researcher critiqued the way female bodies and breasts in particular are conceptualised in Irish sex education within a discourse of responsibility:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] The whole responsibility aspect of it is definitely enforced... the way women's bodies are conceptualised is, you know, why women have breasts is because they feed babies... that they're going to be, em, the mothers, they're also going to be bearing children and, you know.

Another participant in Ireland made sure to use language that includes a diversity of gendered bodies when discussing condom usage. It is important to note that this is the only narrative of its type from Ireland:

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] When I do a condom demonstration, I'm not just talking about the penis, I also talk about sex toys, you know... actually it's quite surprising when I do, most of them say, 'Oh, my mum's got one of them!' Or, do you know what I mean?

One participant in Ireland reiterated points about governmental resistance to trans* inclusion, which were explored in Chapter 6. This narrative illustrates a wider discourse on the body within Irish sex education, and explains this participant's experience of civil servants having argued against trans* inclusion by explaining that content on menstruation evokes fear:

> [P33-2, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ...especially around the trans* issue, because that's been one of the biggest areas of resistance among some [government] people, like the more senior people [civil servants] saying that, you know, it's not an issue, it's not coming up, it's too *out there*, it's too *way out there*, it's going to shock everyone, you know, we can't do it and... one of the people started to minimise it and say, 'Oh, I've often had people trembling when I talk about menstruation.' You know, it's very annoying. That's just awful.

Government level discourses articulating resistance to content on menstruation, let alone trans* experiences, reinforces narratives from previous chapters and an existing body of research[226] which indicates a fear factor spanning across all levels of the Irish programme. It is also perhaps significant that menstruation was not discussed at any length within the narratives from either country. Menstruation was listed by several participants as a sex education topic, or an area necessitating gender-divided classes, but no participants went into any detail about how best to present or work with menstruation. The closest exception was one participant in Ireland who asserted the need for young women to be taught about their menstrual cycles:

> [P11, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] I think this is the biggest problem in Ireland in relation to sexual health is that young females don't know about their cycles... they don't know when they're ovulating and when they can get pregnant... it's something that I've come across again and again.

Diorio and Munro (2000) assert that sex education teaches girls about menstruation in a scientific manner using a discourse of protection, which results in disempowerment, stress and negative self-image. Their research situates these discourses in stark contrast to sex education content for boys which often uses a language of 'exciting and powerful' bodily changes at puberty (Diorio and Munro, 2000: 347).

8.3 'It's not much about sex'

Participants were asked to discuss the best topics to include for 'good practice' in sex education, and, in particular, about the inclusion of discussions about sex, as such. In addition to an absence of pleasure, particularly in Ireland, narratives on course content were striking for their discourses of hesitancy to actually discuss sex acts, including masturbation. Even in notoriously 'sex liberal' Sweden, participants reported tentativeness amongst educators, particularly when reflecting on lessons led by teachers:

> [P3, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] ...because teachers have, I mean, difficulties. Of course to really talk about sex, to talk about masturbation, or answer the

[226] See also Mayock et al., 2007, Kiely, 2004; Hyde and Howlett, 2004.

> students question about different sex acts or discuss what's going on in pornography or whatever... We say we have sex education in schools but it's not much about sex.

Another participant in Sweden discussed 'safe sex' discourses promoted by teachers as focusing on 'just heterosexual sex', despite many same sex practices perhaps being 'safer':

> [P23, Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden] There was just heterosexual sex. And of course it was mentioning condoms, but not specific that it could be used in different kinds of relations, not only heterosexual relations... but if the school is very sort of concerned about teaching about safe sex, they should really say, 'Become gay or lesbian.'... Don't have sex, heterosexual sex, that's really a big risk! (laughs)

Another researcher in Sweden articulated having found that pleasure was spoken openly about in classrooms, but not in the context of masturbation:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] The Swedish sexual education that I attended *is* very lust oriented, or pleasure oriented... they were talking very openly about sexual matters, except when it came to masturbation.

In Ireland, most mentions of masturbation were in the context of a rationale as to why it cannot be discussed at any length in Irish classrooms. One civil servant clearly articulates that the absence of education about masturbation is due to 'ethos issues', referring to the Catholic 'ethos' of most Irish schools:

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] You can't necessarily be endorsing [masturbation], and say it's great, go out and do it, because there are ethos issues in schools and it's not your job as a teacher to be telling kids what to do in any aspect of their sexuality... I would encourage teachers to acknowledge the reality of it without necessarily going into a big rant about how it's wonderful.

For the above civil servant, the interpretation of Catholic 'ethos' is clear in relation to the topic of masturbation. This civil servant discussed actively advising teachers to simply 'acknowledge the reality' of masturbation, but cautioned teachers against introducing a pleasure perspective in relation to masturbation. What's more, this narrative seems to imply that by introducing a pleasure perspective regarding masturbation, a teacher might be seen to be 'telling kids what to do'; it does not acknowledge the possibility that a

discourse which merely 'acknowledges the reality of it' could contribute to wide held societal conceptualisations of shame. Another participant in Ireland, a researcher, spoke of the fears of parental reactions if masturbation is to be mentioned, but simultaneously pointed out how this is the 'safest' expression of sexuality:

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] To learn about their sexuality and to explore it, you know, there wasn't that kind of a notion there [within the curriculum], that they were entitled almost to a sexuality and the pleasure that it brings... there's no mention of masturbation in there. Which, it's the safest! Like ok, if they go into the classroom and talk about, em, masturbation and you know, whatever, you probably will have a number of parents coming in... maybe the principal or some students, I don't know, causing havoc about it or whatever, but I think there are certain things they could look at and materials or ways, you know.

This participant acknowledges that discussions about masturbation might evoke some reactions, meanwhile asserting that there are 'ways' of covering the topic and arguing that it is not an impossibility. Another researcher in Ireland posited that the absence of a masturbation discourse is linked with its perceived 'purpose', in that it is not reproductive, but simply pleasure:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] With masturbation, I think people are a bit able, culturally we're a bit more likely to admit we all do it... it's way more likely to be talked about than anal sex but it's still, it's, you see it doesn't serve a 'purpose' in inverted commas, it doesn't lead to marriage, it doesn't lead to, that's the thing, it's not, again, you know, reproductive. It's pleasure.

This participant extended the argument about the 'purpose' of certain acts to introduce the topic of anal sex, which they assert as less likely to be discussed in Irish classrooms than masturbation. In contrast, one participant from an outside facilitator organisation in Sweden simply asserted that 'it's of course evident that you must talk about masturbation', as well as abortion:

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] I mean, for me it's, it's of course evident that you must talk about masturbation, you must talk about abortion. I don't think masturbation is a very sensitive issue in Sweden. I think that maybe it's not that talked about [by teachers] because it's a little, maybe a little embarrassing in a way, maybe. It's very private.

Despite having a viewpoint that inclusion of certain topics is 'evident', this participant acknowledges that discussions about masturbation are perhaps less frequent because the topic can be seen as 'embarrassing' and 'private' (particularly for teachers). According to participant narratives, abortion is never mentioned even by outside facilitators in Ireland[227].

8.3.1 Constraints and Assumptions about Sexual Activity

As discussed in Chapter 4, for participants working with young people under the age of 18 in Ireland, legal imperatives or perceived limitations impacted upon the ability to allow personal sexual narratives from pupils:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]...we wouldn't ask, we wouldn't want to know – we don't want to know if they're sexually active if they're underage. Because then we would have to tell...

> [P14, Civil Servant, Ireland] If they disclose their sexual activity, teachers do have an obligation because they are sort of in loco parentis[228]... they would have to [report to the authorities]... teachers don't want to do that... they like the fact that they feel kids can confide in them ... teachers have to just be careful and they have to abide by these guidelines... as long as the students know that... a child can always say, 'My friend thinks she's pregnant' or 'My cousin thinks she's pregnant', they can always still get help from a teacher without necessarily disclosing themselves.

According to this civil servant, Age of Consent laws in Ireland combine with the teacher's role as 'in loco parentis[229]' to create a situation whereby if a student thinks she is pregnant, she becomes at risk for being reported to authorities for engaging in underage sexual activity and is not entitled to receive help from her teacher without evoking this

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[227] The lack of discourse on abortion in Ireland is undoubtedly due to the Regulation of Information (Services Outside the State For Termination of Pregnancies) Act 1995 which strictly regulates the provision of information about abortion services in other countries. Abortion is illegal in Ireland under most circumstances, and in practice is not provided in situations where it has been made legal.

[228] *In loco parentis* is Latin for 'in the place of a parent' and refers to the legal responsibility of a person or institution to take on some of the legal functions and responsibilities of a parent.

[229] 'Children First' guidelines produced by the Irish Department of Education articulate that in the case of 'normal sexual exploration' which does not indicate 'coercive or dominating aspects' that there 'is no need for child protection intervention of any kind' (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). Participant narratives indicate that teachers, outside facilitators and even civil servants in Ireland are interpreting these guidelines in a way which prevents or silences any possibility of open dialogue between young people and professional adults in relation to 'normal sexual exploration'.

complication. This civil servant suggests that young people must learn ways to navigate legal constraints by falsifying stories in order to obtain basic sexual health information. This approach to Child Protection seems an interesting twist on the foundational rationale for Age of Consent laws in the first place, and contradicts Irish legislative guidelines (see footnote). When used in this way, the law not only does not protect young people, but it actively exposes them to harm. Challenges with Age of Consent legislation did not arise within the narratives from Sweden, and in fact it was widely emphasised in Sweden that the health and wellbeing of the young person was paramount, and that laws were in place to protect from sexual abuse, not to catch anyone out or prevent access to information.

In response to questions about discourses or good practice examples of pedagogies around sex, several participants in Ireland focused their responses on an argument that many young people are not in fact sexually active:

> [P17, Relationships Education NGO, Ireland] People make vast assumptions, you know. And the amount of boys that have come forward to me and said, 'I haven't actually had sex.' Even though they've been talking like that's all they ever do, you know.

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] We always ask them, 'How many people your age do you think are sexually active?'... we get them to realise that actually far less people are sexually active [than they think].

> [P34, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] We don't assume that every young person is having sex.

While these participants articulate factual information, that not all young people are having sex, the focus on sexual inactivity was strikingly disproportionate to narratives on pedagogies for teaching about or discussing sex in the classroom. The narratives indicate that the 'sexual inactivity' argument might constitute a rationale or excuse for leaving out more explicit content in Ireland. Some participants argued the need for sex education content on STIs and condom use, but narratives from Ireland were striking for how few examples were given to illustrate pedagogies of embodiment and sex, even within the narratives from those working within NGO settings. Few participants offered any kind of specific narrative about the body or sex from a pedagogical perspective. In one of these few dialogues, a participant articulated a pedagogy about sex which could be seen to contain moral undertones:

> [P21, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] We get them to think of why they have oral sex, like some people have oral sex because they think – girls might think that they have to do it to keep a bloke.... they mightn't regard it as sex, or they might be doing it in group situations or whatever, so we just get them to look at, em, why they're doing it, whether they're enjoying it, whether it's what they really want to do...

While this participant attempts to deconstruct conceptualisations of what is considered sex and to open up a space for consideration of desires and consent, it seems as though this educator may have already decided that girls are engaging in oral sex without 'free will', rather than perhaps doing so for their own pleasure or fulfilment of desire. This is not to say that certain acts are always engaged with freely, and there is a growing body of research to demonstrate youth societal pressure around certain sex practices[230]. An approach which makes assumptions from the onset, however - even in the name of empowerment - can be ultimately moralising. One participant in Sweden deconstructed a similar type of narrative which can also be found in the Swedish context:

> [P27/2, Civil Servant, Sweden] And coming back to the sex education as such, I think there was debate a couple of years ago and I think it's still ongoing... you know 'anal sex'... what's being taught in schools is more like young girls 'have the right to say no to anal sex'. And it's like, yeah this is not an inclusive practise... it's all about being safe and having a choice, so I think it is important to teach the pupils how to have anal sex... but you should not have these moral concerns about it. Just, 'this is how it works, and for some people it's nice and for some people it's not nice'. I think that goes for every kind of sex... just so people are informed... able to make their own choices.

This narrative from Sweden could be used to reflect upon the previous narrative from Ireland, in its assertion that a pedagogy which advocates 'the right to say no' is 'not an inclusive practise'. While this participant does not negate the reality that 'saying no' is undoubtedly a difficulty young people face, an approach which constructs certain sex acts only within this 'saying no' frame could serve to inadvertently 'moralise' over specific sexual practices and simultaneously reinforce the discourses about certain sex practices which are produced within societal debates.

[230] See also: Remez, 2000; Albert et al., 2003; Prinstein, 2003; Marston and Lewis, 2014.

8.3.2 Non-heterosexuality and Sex for Pleasure

When participants were asked about teaching on sex acts in Ireland, exclusively heterosexual sex acts were mentioned as acceptable for the classroom, even by those individuals working for LGBT organisations or who have expertise in LGBT topics:

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] It's all about 'You put this there and that creates a baby. You don't put this there and that doesn't create a baby.' And there's no mention of, em, lesbian or gay sex at all.

> [P33, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] ... we don't have *any* content that is about sexual acts. We have nothing. We don't answer the question, like, 'What do gay men do and what do lesbians do in bed?' Like we don't answer those questions... that just doesn't feel like it's possible.

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland]... So, I mean, anal sex is totally stigmatised because of HIV and the gay disease... anal sex is like *no way*, I just can't imagine that ever being on the agenda. In the next, in the next 20 years that's for sure, I just can't, I'm sorry.

A few of those with expertise in LGBT topics justified the exclusion of a discourse on same-sex sexual practices by asserting having met difficulty in that 'people's minds automatically go to the act':

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] Because when you start to talk about lesbian and gay people, people's minds *automatically* go to the act. They miss out *everything* else about the person, and that's why you have 'poo-pusher' and 'plate-licker' and 'carpet-muncher' and 'muff-diver' – all these names *only* identify the *act*... it's always about the sex. And that's also a very damaging thing.

Participant narratives indicate that the challenges faced around negative connotations coupled with any fears or hesitancy due to religious ethos translate to a complete avoidance of education about non-heterosexual sex acts in Ireland. The fears and constraints faced by educators give way to sex education which does not address non-heterosexual sexual realities in any way for young people. Several participants justified the exclusion of non-heterosexual sex from the curriculum and classroom practices in Ireland as understandable.

This participant illustrated the perceived scenario for teachers who are uncomfortable with the topics:

> [P30, Sexuality NGO, Ireland] I absolutely respect that a teacher should not have to try and talk about gay sex, let's call it gay male sex for now, to a classroom of young guys, of 16 year old fellas, if she is not fully cool and ok with the language around it... because she has to go back the next morning and try to deliver geography to that group. And that is not easy when you've got young lads shouting, 'Miss, Miss, do they suck each other's dick or do they stick it up each other's ass or?' all this kind of, and you know that's what you'd get in a lot of that kind of stuff, it's that really raw talk, that kind of talk.

What this participant considers to be 'raw talk' could also be seen as homophobia. If it is the case that teachers and outside facilitators avoid addressing diverse sexual realities for fear of a homophobic backlash, it could be argued that the wider context of sex education in Ireland has surrendered to a dominance of homophobic discourses. Kiely's (2005) research found the Irish curriculum to promote a narrow sexual subjectivity, one which does not include discourses of pleasure or desire, whereby any mention of sex is exclusively heterosexual and reproductive. One participant in Ireland reflected on Kiely's research, arguing an insinuation that content on anal sex should be included was perhaps 'a step too far' in the context of 'our history':

> [P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] She [Kiely (2004)] was saying that, you know, the kind of sex that was promoted seemed to be just heterosexual vaginal penetration. And that there was nothing on anal sex and, I think others probably felt that was a step too far. I mean that, given our history.

This assertion brings us back to the early chapters of this thesis which set the cultural, historical and political scene for sex education in Ireland, and reinforces the reasons why a focus on the contextual issues remains relevant today.

In Ireland, participants were quick to put a label on what they perceived to be 'gay sex' or 'lesbian sex', equating an identity with a specific act or set of acts. In Sweden, one participant expressed that young people want to talk about 'gay men and anal sex', but explained that their organisation instead turns the focus on to power structures, through use of normcritical pedagogies:

> [P8, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] Young people, mostly want to talk about gay men and anal sex and find that so interesting... They want to focus on the Other and on sex and we're not so interested in that, we're more interested in looking at power structures. And we don't need that much space to talk about the Other.

Many participants in Sweden demonstrated having thought through societal assumptions which link certain sex acts to certain identities, and illustrated efforts to provide information which challenges these conflations and strives for inclusion. One participant turned the questions from young people about identities and sex around and put it back to the young people, using a mantra about choice – 'you decide':

> [P25, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] Eh, we bring it up when they ask about it, and there is still two kinds of questions, guess which ones! (laughs) How do girls [in same-sex sexual encounters] do it and also questions about how do guys do it and anal sex and so on... we try not to talk about boys and girls, we try always to talk about what body you have and what you can do with different bodies...We talk about 'How can you have sex?' And 'Ok, you can have sex with yourself. What is an orgasm?'... the conclusion is like, 'Ok, *you decide*.'... 'It's your decision.' Who do you want to have sex with and how much and it's also a decision not to have sex if you don't want to have sex, you don't have to have it, and 'you decide.' And that's the conclusion of everything!

Here again we see a delinking of gender identities from body types in addition to the decoupling of particular identities with sex acts as an emergent practice in Sweden. Not all participants in Sweden advocated a normcritical approach when it came to sex acts, though, and one participant discussed having coming in contact with other organisations of outside facilitators who promoted seeing 'groups as homogeneous as possible' as far as sex acts are concerned:

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] And when I speak to people communicating about this in other ways, and also [our affiliate organisations], they say that, 'Oh you have to have really try to make the groups as homogeneous as possible and give different information to different of those homogeneous groups.' And of course I think you have to have different information if you... like other ways of having sex but I think that the thought that you always can make a group really homogeneous is dangerous... nothing says that they have the same, like to do the same thing or their analysis of the world.

This same participant articulated in detail how their pedagogy looks like in practice, speaking in a way which manages to delink bodies from identities from acts, and to primarily focus on the experience of the individual learner, rather than focusing disproportionately on the body or gender of 'the other person':

> [P9, Sexuality NGO, Sweden] When I speak about sex and how people have sex I always speak about, 'Ok, if there's a person with a cock and a pussy you do it like this, when there's two pussies – or even if you have a pussy you can be stimulated like this and if you have a cock you can be stimulated like this.' And it's not very important even what genitals the person having sex with you has... of course I say that, 'Ok if you have a cock and if you have intercourse it can be anal and then it's like this, and if it's vaginal it's like this.' But it's not very much about the other person's genitals, it's mostly focused on the person [in question]... But I think that on an identity level it's really important to speak about same-sex sexual practices. And same sex attraction. So I do that as well. But not - when it comes to you having sex it has to be about you.

As Warner puts it, 'individuals do not go shopping for sexual identity, but they do have a stake in a culture that enables sexual variance and circulates knowledge about it, because they have no other way of knowing what they might or might not want, or what they might become, or with whom they might find a common lot' (2000: 7). If sex education can more directly address the diverse realities of bodies, identities and sex acts in a way which does not reinforce existing norms, stereotypes, power structures or assumptions, freedom and choice might be opened up for young people to obtain greater understanding of 'what they might or might not want'.

8.4 Pleasure = Personal?

8.4.1 Pleasure

Many participants in both countries expressed a desire to see discourses of pleasure included within sexuality education. A body of previous research has found pleasure discourses to be widely missing from sex education programmes (Kiely, 2005; Irvine, 2004; Fine, 1988). Research in the Irish context has found pleasure to be specifically silenced (Kiely, 2004; Mayock et al., 2007). Some participants in Ireland, though, felt emphasis needs to be less on sex and pleasure, because these discourses are so prevalent elsewhere:

> [P15, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] Pleasure. Em, the impression that I got from [my study] was that they have enough pleasure from magazines and everything else… And that there's too much, that it has shifted, without the emphasis on responsibility. And, to be honest, [pauses] I actually think that there's a huge emphasis on pleasure even when I was a teenager – when I was reading magazines and reading grown up books about sex, it all seemed to deal with the fact that sex was very pleasurable…

It seems plausible that when discussing 'pleasure', they are quite possibly – either in addition to, or instead - describing 'sexualisation' or, what Levy calls 'raunch culture' (2006). If their perception is that information on sex and pleasure is widely available, then perhaps the logic is that because young people are increasingly overly-sexualised, avoiding talk of sex acts and pleasure will help redress the balance. It is a dilemma which seems to mirror the 'feminist sex wars', leading to the emergence in the 1980's of 'sex positive feminism' (see also Glick, 2000).

According to Foucault, 'there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie discourses' (1978: 27). Based on participant narratives, pleasure was one of the most striking silences within sex education in Ireland, particularly when compared to Sweden. While the previous participant in Ireland asserted that 'they have enough pleasure', other narratives in Ireland address the lack of a pleasure through the discourses on Irish culture and Catholicism which were introduced early on in this thesis:

> [P20, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] …with things like pleasure NO WAY is that going to be talked about in this country! For a long time. No way! Sex is pro-functional, it's to serve a purpose. To have babies. Which means its heteronormative, immediately… There's *no way* people are going to talk about sex as a way of exploring yourself, exploring someone else, exploring a situation… the stigma around non-reproductive sex is still huge…

> [P19, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland] …I suppose the Catholic influence has been one about more kind of sexuality is something to be restrained and controlled… nobody kind of saying, 'Look, young people deserve to be, em, to have a space to explore issues related to sexuality… young people have an entitlement to a sexuality because it brings pleasure.'

Other participants in Ireland acknowledged the existence of widespread media discourses on sex, and argued that it is problematic if discussions about these portrayals are not facilitated with young people:

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland]…I mean they are seeing it everywhere... like Glee deals with it, but doesn't actually provide a forum to actually process stuff that comes out of it… And I think it's really important that they have a safe place to actually discuss this.

> [P11, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] Well I guess the obvious opportunity is that, you know, these dialogues are becoming more explicit and young people are becoming more open so, 'Ok, let's embrace that' and 'Let's all chat about it' kind of a thing.

Instead of assuming that sex in the media is dealing with sexuality in a way which educates young people sufficiently, these participants argue that an increased societal discourse on sexuality must be 'embraced' and worked through in a 'safe space' where discussions can take place and questions can be facilitated. One participant in Sweden suggested going perhaps a few steps further by facilitating discussions on pornography[231] and feminism, and argued that, in doing so, one may simultaneously avoid dilemmas around getting 'personal':

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] It's easier to, sort of, start a discussion about pornography or women's situation... it doesn't have anything to do with you as a person, it isn't that private…

These last three narratives suggests that, rather than assuming that young people already have enough exposure to concepts of sex and pleasure, educators should embrace media sexualisation of youth as a platform from which reflexive facilitated education could emerge.

8.4.2 Fears

Previous research has widely demonstrated hesitancy and fear on the part of educators addressing topics of pleasure within sexuality education generally (Epstein et al., 2003;

[231] Some of the narratives from Sweden articulated a pedagogy whereby a teacher or outside facilitator might show a pornography clip, or introduce a more general dialogue about pornography within a deconstruction exercise which facilitates students to critique societal norms about sexuality as communicated through pornography.

Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Mayock et al., 2007; Kiely, 2005; Fine, 1988). Many have further found education on queer sex and embodiment to be completely missing, so it must be noted that when there is a pleasure discourse it is almost automatically hetero and cisnormative (Epstein et al., 2003; Kiely, 2004). Participants in Ireland directly linked teachers' trepidation to the topics of sex acts and pleasure:

> [P13, Sexuality Researcher, Ireland]... the awkwardness and embarrassment of most of the teachers... because of their own personal inadequacies and awkward embarrassment... unless there is some incentive, that they are not willing to ... we insist on telling children that sex is a minefield, and we cannot say to them that it's a pleasure.

> [P31, Civil Servant, Ireland] ...it was really understandable discomfort. The vast majority of teachers have not had, as young people going through school they didn't get sex education... there's been a whole culture of secrecy and not talking about it in Ireland...

This last narrative illuminates that one of the side-effects of Ireland's late 1994 introduction of a curriculum might be the reality that many teachers today never received any sex education themselves. This participant argues that, due to cultural constraints, the 'vast majority' of teachers have not been facilitated to reflect upon or become comfortable with their own sexuality to a point that they are comfortable teaching sex education to their students.

Repression narratives found only in Ireland does not mean that it is easy for educators to address topics of pleasure in 'sexually progressive' Sweden. Participants in Sweden, in particular, were more likely to discuss pleasure, but their narratives frequently suggested that pleasure is 'risky' as it can touch upon aspects of personal sexuality:

> [P2, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden] Yeah, I think pleasure is a very difficult topic... I don't think, em, it is like, 'Ok, now we're going to talk about pleasure!' It's also about integrating it, or - Well, if you, if you talk about the female anatomy and then you talk about the clitoris and say, well this is a part where, em most women get most satisfaction, well then you've talked about pleasure even if it's in a very scientific way. Because I think that is 'Ok, pleasure, ooh, that feels a little bit like you talk about the very intimate things.'

The inclusion of a 'pleasure' discourse frequently went hand-in-hand with concerns about getting 'personal' for participants in Sweden. If a lack of personal sexual development of

educators in Ireland can be linked to their experiences of difficulties and fears, then it is interesting – and perplexing – that there seems to be such an imperative in both countries to avoid personal reflexivity amongst educators and within the classroom. It could follow, then, that the repressions experienced by educators through lack of personal sexual development might be passed along to young people who are also not being facilitated in this way.

8.4.3 Personal and Private

A significant theme arising across narratives from participants in both countries was assertions made about the challenges to implementing 'good' sexuality education stemming from the 'personal' nature of the subject matter, and the real or perceived barriers in place preventing many of those delivering lessons from getting 'personal'.

> [P27/1, Civil Servant, Sweden]… sex education is like, I think maybe there is loads of problems there because it's like, very private, it's regarding your private life.

Especially in Sweden, many participants argued that bringing 'private' issues into the classroom – be they those of the educators or the young people themselves - was not only difficult, but also unacceptable:

> [P4, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden]... you can be personal but you can't really be private… It's very difficult to talk about *me and my* personal... Pleasure is something that is very, inside yourself.

Some participants in Sweden argued that increased 'professionalism' and a 'knowledge'-basis, would make it easier to educate because content would seem less 'personal' and 'private':

> [P1, Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]… I would say that sex education still is not, eh, a topic where you value having knowledge. It's more like, you know, something *personal* or *private...* if it's something more *professional*, and it's something that has to do with *knowledge* about sex, but also *gender*, then it would be also much easier for teachers to teach about it. Because it's not about *themselves.* It's not about them, it's about something that is, that you have knowledge about. So, I think that is a problem.

One researcher in Sweden, however, also used the 'knowledge' argument but in this case asserted that sex is not really private, but instead it is about knowledge:

> [P10, Sexuality Researcher, Sweden] Maybe sometimes, if you have a teacher who has a lot of competence and is, and can talk about sex without blushing or without believing that it's private. Because it's not private, it's about knowledge. And the view they have on the students, it's more a matter of the mind I think! It's not always about what you are saying, it's also a matter of how you say it and which way you say it... there's still a lot of problems in school with teachers because they don't have enough knowledge. And still there's a view that, as I said, it's a private matter. And really, really it's not. It's not a private matter.

Participants in Ireland were more likely to speak of personal disclosure as a useful pedagogical strategy on the part of the educator. One participant in Ireland spoke at length about positioning their own experience, but clarified that this is only possible in scenarios where they are working with young people over 18[232]:

> [P32, Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland] ...I would have to be extremely open about who I am, because I think the main thing for breaking down barriers is the personal connection. And without it you really have nothing. You can talk theoretically about whatever, but unless you've got somebody standing in front of you saying, 'Actually as a trans* person, I hate my body.' Yeah?

This participant asserted that personal narratives are critical for 'breaking down barriers', and reported receiving positive feedback specifically around their facilitation of a pleasure exploration. For this participant, sexuality education is all about personal engagement in dialogue and reflective processes around sexuality. Another participant in Ireland spoke of 'appropriate disclosure', asserting that the ability to bring in personal narratives is an advantage outside facilitators hold over teachers:

> [P17, Relationships Education NGO, Ireland] Appropriate disclosure is very important... always ask yourself before you share anything, 'Why do I want to tell you this? ... maybe teachers just aren't really trained in that... it works so well for us because we can share personal experiences, to a point. A teacher can't do that! The job of a facilitator is to break

[232] For some working in NGO spaces or Universities (with people over age 18), positioning personal experience was perhaps more realistic than for those working with young people under age 18.

> down barriers and boundaries, a teacher very definitely needs barriers and boundaries... We don't need them because we're going away, so I can tell them about my life, I can tell them about my opinions. A teacher can't... It is a private part of our lives.

Berlant sees the fears around (what she describes as) an affective 'intimate pedagogy' to be in part, 'a professional/queer/feminist complaint about the pressures of managing privilege' (1998: 143). In educational contexts where teachers are under scrutiny and pressures (Weiner et al., 2008), maintaining professionalism, and perhaps indeed privilege, in the classroom might be an understandable concern. In some ways, this could also be seen as a feminist dilemma about affect within pedagogy, and inclusion of, as Boler describes, the 'social control of emotions, and emotions as a site of resistance to oppression' (1999, xv). What is striking, when considering feminist strategies, is that feminists have long asserted that 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970). It was feminist theorists who introduced standpoint theory, postulating Haraway's (1988) 'notion of situated knowledge' and asserting that if we favour personal experiences, solutions to struggles can be formulated from our stories. Despite Sweden's long and strong feminist and sexuality education histories, I found more discourses there than in Ireland of 'the personal' being a detriment to 'good' sexuality education, rather than an asset.

8.5 Discussion

Discussions on sex acts, as such, were underemphasised in both countries, but for differing reasons. In Sweden, educators focused a significant amount on pleasure anatomy from a biological perspective, preferring to educate young people on the parts of their own body which can produce pleasure, rather than spending time focusing on listing sex positions. In Ireland, topics such as masturbation and non-procreative sex acts are widely interpreted as violating the religious 'ethos' of some schools, and many sex educators in Ireland were keen to point out that not all young people are sexually active, and pedagogies should not make this assumption.

It could seem that educators in Ireland are avoiding discussions on the body, sex acts and personal sexuality due to fears based in repression and perceived legal constraints, while educators in Sweden have their own fears about the risks involved in positioning themselves personally within pedagogy. Either way, the result is that, in both countries, on a whole young people are not being facilitated to learn about their bodies in a relevant way

that directly and comprehensively addresses pleasure meanwhile acknowledging personal sexual issues. It is interesting that, for very different epistemological reasons, absence of reflexive facilitation of personal sexuality might exist in both contexts.

Despite the overwhelming assertions to the contrary by participants in Sweden, the rationale behind their assertions that sexuality education necessarily cannot or should not enter 'personal' territory remains out of line not only with feminist ideologies, but with their own use of a normcritical perspective which, one might argue, could be invoked to critique the norm that a personal perspective on sexuality does not belong in the classroom. This is not to say that the concerns, barriers and limitations articulated in participant narratives are not real or valid. There is potential within the unpacking of what is behind a perceived need to avoid the affective 'personal', and explore whether or not 'personal' is simply a euphemism for emotion, for pleasure or indeed sexualisation. By exposing perceived constraints as varying amongst individuals as well as nations, sex education pedagogical necessities can be unpacked, opening a space for the embodiments produced to be thought through in new ways.

Chapter 9

Concluding Discussion

This research compiles narratives from diverse professionals working in the field of sex education towards an understanding of 'good' and 'inclusive' practice against ingrained ideologies of shame and blame. The cross-national comparison underscores that respective colonial histories continue to shape the politics, policies and practices of sexual pedagogy. Intersectional queer and feminist methods, methodologies and analysis informed the processes and procedures of conducting and analysing semi-structured, qualitative narrative interviews with 17 sex education professionals in Ireland and 18 in Sweden[233]. This research has been particularly meaningful in that it has exposed taken-for-granted elements of sex education in both contexts by situating national narratives alongside those from another context. Data garnered has brought new revelations about national policy contexts, cultural discourses, societal and interpersonal power relations and conceptualisations of identities and the body. The results raise problematic implications and potential remedies for public health and sex education programmes for these two countries as well as further afield.

Foucault (1978) argues that one of the most prominent mechanisms of knowledge and power concerning sex has been the pedagogisation of young people's sexuality, in other words sex education in schools. Within Europe, Sweden and Ireland sit on opposite ends of a proverbial sex education spectrum in terms of the timing of curriculum introduction and national reputations regarding sex and sexuality[234]. Sweden's social democratic welfare state, human rights discourses and colonial role within the Nordic region (Sejersted, 2011) juxtaposes Ireland's post-colonial nationalism and ongoing economic recession (Bacik, 2013). This study has examined 'good' and 'inclusive' practice narratives through a queer and feminist analytical lens. It has explored socio-political and cultural factors as well as discourses on inclusion and the body and opened up new possibilities for thinking about and educating on sexuality for young people.

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[233] It is noteworthy that many participants in Sweden stated that they would be content to be personally identified, while several participants in Ireland went to lengths to assure that their contributions would be anonymised and confidential. I believe the differences directly reflect the differing degrees of professionalism afforded to individuals working within sex education, as well as broader level cultural support for the field in both countries, both issues arose strongly within the narratives.

[234] Ireland's 1994 introduction of an official sex education curriculum and ongoing influence of the Catholic Church within health and education sectors contrasts sharply with Sweden's 1933 introduction of a school-based model and perceived status as a sex liberal gender equality leader (Inglis, 1998).

Research within social work and social policy seeks to improve the quality of life and subjective experience of individuals and communities through research into policy, education and advocacy (Barker, 2003). International sex education research has often taken a quantitative, 'risk' reduction, health-promotion perspectives, not from a qualitative analysis of discourses viewed from a queer and feminist theoretical lens. Queer as a theory employs Foucault's (1978) argument that sexuality and identities are socially constructed to form a mutable and temporal perspective which deconstructs notions of normativity and fixivity (McLaughlin, 2003). Through 'radically questioning social and cultural norms, notions of gender, [and] reproductive sexuality' (Smith, 1996: 280), a queer perspective on sex education in these two countries has revealed new ways of thinking about sex education. This study illustrates and exposes elements of governmentality which Foucault (1978) sees as 'biopower', the functioning of public health and risk regulation systems as regulatory regimes which have less to do with health in the literal sense, and more to do with power and control. Feminist theories prioritise sex education ideals of empowerment, body confidence, pleasure, consent and communication above 'risk' like STIs and pregnancy (Frost, 2001).

9.1 Culture of Activism, Discourse of Blame

While some narratives were qualified with acknowledgement of the intricate webs of responsibility required for sex education 'good practice', it was striking that, among sex education professions in both countries, 'blame' characterised the narratives much more strongly than does responsibility. Within these narratives a sense of caution, uncertainty, mistrust and hopelessness in relation to government initiatives was palpable.

Lack of faith in the government, and a discourse of blame regarding, in particular, the Department of Education, was a strong theme arising from the narratives in Ireland. Participants in both countries widely articulated what could be seen as a 'teacher blaming' discourse, frequently critiquing teacher-led sex education. It is within these discourses of blame and responsibility that the absence of teacher narratives in this study is perhaps most notable. Most of the 'blame' attributed to teachers, however, was qualified with a recognition from participants to this study that teacher training is insufficient in both countries, and that wider structural supports for sex education do not make it easy for teachers (see also Irvine, 2004; Alldred and David, 2007). Teacher blaming discourses

serve to distract educational dialogues away from the true sources of power abuse in the sex education context, the power wielded by oppositional cultural ideologies and neoliberal/neoconservative governmentality in the form of biopower. Kumashiro (2012) argues that teachers do not hold enough power to singlehandedly dismantle these wider structural challenges, and asserts that a multi-method advocacy strategy is necessary to bring about educational change.

Participants in Sweden were widely critical of government level supports for sex education, frequently arguing that 'good' policies are in place, but that their mandates have not been fulfilled. It could be speculated that the 'critical hopefulness' expressed by participants in Sweden perhaps characterised the work of their processors. This spirit of activism and advocacy within the profession could possibly be credited for the feminist historical influences on Swedish sex education (Kulick, 2005) and for the achievements which have characterised Sweden's international 'sex liberal' reputation (Parker et al., 2009). Swedish narratives help shed light on how, despite the valiant efforts of NGO and grassroots movements, an insidious postcolonial residue may be the force maintaining a sense of despondency for many professionals in Ireland. While in many locales the teaching profession has activist potential (Jeffery, 2005), the remaining religious affiliations within health and education sectors (Bacik, 2013) likely contribute to a lack of activist culture amongst teachers, civil servants and mainstream NGOs in Ireland.

9.2 Enduring Reputations

The historical, cultural and political legacies of the Catholic Church in Ireland were widely referenced as reasons and, in some cases, employed as techniques to provide explanation for sex education practices which are not as 'good' or 'inclusive' as would be ideal. Participants in Ireland broadly argued that, due to religious 'ethos' constraints, school-based programmes frequently exclude information on topics such as contraception, abortion, masturbation, sex acts, pleasure, LGBT experiences and other aspects of diversity. An argument that not all young people are sexually active constituted a rationale for leaving out more explicit content about the body in Ireland. Participants, including a civil servant, implied that educational information about, for example, pleasure and masturbation could be constructed as 'promoting' sexual activity through sexual health information provision. In what could result in a traumatic and crisis situation, teachers are

being advised by a government official in Ireland to encourage students to misrepresent their situations in order to obtain assistance with sexual health matters.

Responsibility for education and health sectors of the government was designated to the Catholic Church post-independence, and these ongoing relationships between Church and State remain strong (Bacik, 2013). Although Ireland has seen increasing societal, activist and government discourse challenging the Catholic Church's involvement in both health and education spheres, there has yet to be a widespread societal outcry demanding a de-linking of Church and State biopower in this way. I see this internalised repression as one of Ireland's most profound postcolonial legacies – the Republic of Ireland clung to the Church in order to distinguish from colonising Britain, contributing to a distinct Irish system of beliefs, values and attributes (Bacik, 2013). Despite increased secularisation (Kissane, 2003), and a drastic decrease in the number of active-church-goers in recent decades (Hirschle, 2010), this study's participants continuously insisted that a cultural Catholicism is an enormous force of power and control within sex education in Ireland.

Participants in Sweden were largely critical of their national 'sex liberal' reputation, and many expressed doubts that Sweden's international image is valid or deserved. International research literature continues to perpetuate an image of Sweden as 'sex education leaders' (Inglis, 1998; Boethius, 1985; Lottes and Weinberg, 1997, Parker et al., 2009). While many participants in Sweden acknowledged the longevity of sex education, and to some extent took pride in the activist nature of the field, several were quick to critique Sweden's reputation by arguing that governmental rhetoric is not a reflection of classroom realities. Sweden was a former colonising force within Scandinavia, and ongoing Swedish international sexual health efforts could be read as colonising (Hagy, 2013). In both countries, the national reputations and historical legacies associated with sex education seem to precede current practices and discourses.

Attempts to reverse the effects of colonisation, in other words acts of decolonisation, have long been a central tenant of feminist projects (Mohanty, 2003). The concerns, barriers and limitations of those working in sex education in Ireland are real, and one cannot pretend that new pedagogies or perspectives will serve to wholly dismantle religious influences, postcolonial legacies, neoliberal and austerity-influenced educational environments or fearful interpretations of outdated or non-existent legislative structures in Ireland.

9.3 Discourse of 'Desire' For Improvement

Participants in both countries overwhelmingly expressed a desire for improvement to sex education training, curricular discourses, programme implementation and support structures; though individual narratives indicated a diverse set of viewpoints about what implementation of these pedagogies might look like. In Ireland, participants overwhelmingly expressed that a baseline level of sex education implementation would be a first step towards good and inclusive practice, emphasising inconsistent programme delivery and supports. Many professionals in Sweden argued for normcritical pedagogies[235], but emphasised that this is only an emerging practice used by some outside facilitators; it is not widely incorporated into teacher training and has not yet been comprehensively evaluated. While the argument for normcritical pedagogies is strong, participant narratives demonstrated that it has, as of yet, fallen short of achieving the aims of including transgender experiences and intersectional elements of diversity. Normcritical practitioners particularly struggled to reconcile scenarios in which religious ideologies conflict with a sex positive approach.

Irvine (2002) argues that stereotypes about queer people makes queer inclusion within sex education curriculum seem particularly dangerous to the mainstream. As Epstein et al. (2003) argues, when sex education curricula mention gay (or – less frequently – LGBT) experiences, they often labour points about the non-sexual aspects of queer identities (Epstein et al., 2003). Irvine calls this '(t)he unspoken consensus to avoid sexuality and stress safely, health promotion and tolerance' (2002: 181). Queer activism, queer politics and queer theory actively challenge educational approaches which seek to 'normalise' queer experiences. Queer theory is implemented as a deconstructive practice, one which perpetually interrogates the silencing and erasure of sexual identities and sex acts within normative societal discourses (Butler, 1990).

Silences prevailed in Ireland[236] when participants considered the inclusion of LGBT experiences[237], and many overtly or implicitly argued that LGBT experiences should be

[235] Many participants in Sweden argued for a normcritical model, a pedagogy with queer and feminist underpinnings which emerged from an activist context (Bromseth, 2009).

[236] While LGBT inclusion narratives from Sweden were more comprehensive and extensive than those in Ireland, most participants in Ireland expressed strong desires for an LGBT inclusive curriculum and practice. Notably, however, many narratives from Ireland also readily lent themselves to a queer and feminist analysis which could interpret concepts of 'good practice' from Ireland as aligning with the 'tolerance' and 'Othering' discourses critiqued by participants in Sweden.

taught about through anti-bullying pedagogies outside of the sex education classroom[238]. Anti-homophobic bullying pedagogies are relatively new in Ireland when compared with Sweden, and participants in Sweden offered a strong critique of the anti-bullying pedagogies which have been in place for some time in this context. Participants in Sweden offered overt critiques of heteronormativity, 'tolerance' based pedagogies, the 'adding on' of LGBT lessons, suggesting that inclusion of LGBT experiences in sex education is often attempted through a discursive 'Othering' of these realities (Kumashiro, 2002) in a way which upholds a Swedish national version of Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism. For many participants, particularly in Ireland, the concept of gender inclusion is a notion that does not yet consider the experiences of trans* young people. A wider, more intersectional and explicit focus on norms, however, was not present within narratives from Ireland, indicating that these norms prevail as norms; invisible, insidious, taken-for-granted societal rules.

Rooted in postmodernism and poststructuralism, queer as a method of inquiry opens up conceptualisations of sexuality and gender, meanwhile acknowledging their inseparability from other identities such as ethnicity, class, age, religion, dis/ability and more (Rosenblum, 1994; Collins, 2000). It is aspects such as our race, class and gender which can make the experiences of others invisible to us, unless we do the work to 'unlearn' this perspective and to see norms and how they function more clearly (Spivak, 1995). Both implicitly and explicitly, norms of Christianity and Whiteness were common undertones in both countries. A concern that in Sweden that young people with intellectual disabilities will be able to find sexual or romantic partners sits in stark contrast to the situation in Ireland, where those same individuals are legally forbidden from having sexual relationships outside of the context of marriage. Class was only discussed at any length in Ireland and several participants spoke to the classist undertones present within teenage pregnancy discourses within sex education political and social dialogues. Many of the participant discourses on aspects of diversity such as religion, class-bias and immigrant experiences made contributions which ironically served to reinforce the very stereotypes the participants purported to deconstruct. There were shades of despondency and hopelessness from those in Sweden regarding the meaningful inclusion of diverse ethnic and immigrant experiences by way of normcritical pedagogies.

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[237] It must also be acknowledged that participants more readily spoke to LGBT inclusion than any other aspect of an intersectional notion of inclusive sex education.

[238] Heteronormativity was, at times, critiqued by participants in Ireland, particularly within dialogues about curriculum documents.

This queer and feminist piece of research has privileged and prioritised approaches to sex education which are sex positive and intersectionally inclusive through a focus on revealing and dismantling norms as sites of oppression and empowering young people with the necessary tools for bodily empowerment and societal change. Those participants in Ireland who did speak at length about inclusion frequently offered reasons why inclusion has not been addressed. These reasons could, in some cases, be seen as circumnavigation of responsibility. The silences and avoidance techniques evoked by participants in Ireland are indicative of a complex structural scenario whereby sex education in any sense has been a challenge to implement and, within that, inclusion has been an after-thought. Some suggested that the inclusion of diversity is on the radar but that it is enough of a challenge at present to 'reach the majority' through what might be characterised as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. While normcritical pedagogies were frequently advocated, narratives from Sweden illustrated that these approaches have not yet experienced widespread success for education which recognises and works meaningfully with intersectional concepts of diversity. In Ireland, most participants expressed a general desire for intersectional inclusion, but as a whole could not suggest a road map for how to achieve this. Participant narratives indicate that balancing existing efforts and practices within a broad perspective on norms and inclusion is a complex project in both countries.

9.4 Somatechnics of Sex Education

The emergent theory of somatechnics, rooted in Foucault's (1978) concept of biopower, can help to conceptualise and make meaning out of participant narratives on sex education. Somatechnics refers to the inextricable intertwining of the body with the techniques intended to develop, inform and construct it (Murray and Sullivan, 2012). It sees bodies as inherently connected to (and by products of) power, disciplines and processes – one of which, it could be argued, is sex education. Sex education is one of many somatechnics of the sexual body for young people, and must be placed within the wider context of cultural sexualisation (Gill, 2012). Some participants in Sweden suggested that discussions could be opened up about media portrayals of sex. They argued that images of genitals and body parts could be deconstructed, critiqued and re-built to reflect a more ambitious pleasure potential and explained that biology lessons can incorporate pleasure anatomy alongside reproductive anatomy. Participants in both countries argued that educators should be facilitated to explore their own sexualities first and foremost, so that discussions of sex and

pleasure do not necessarily inherently invoke fears, thereby preventing the use of more fluid and open pedagogical models.

Participant narratives in this study help illuminate how concepts of biopower and somatechnics can aid in contemplation of a pleasure pedagogy as an answer to shame-based postcolonial sexuality discourses which remain in Ireland. Some participants in Ireland argued the need for sex education content on STIs and condom use, but narratives from Ireland were striking for their lack of discourses and pedagogies of embodiment and pleasure, even within the narratives from those working within NGO settings. Few offered any kind of specific narrative about the body or sex from a pedagogical perspective, and many justified the absence of material that engages meaningfully with embodied and sexual realties by arguing that most young people are not sexually active. Participants in both Ireland and Sweden attempt to counter 'slut shaming' pedagogically. Government level discourses articulating resistance to content on menstruation, let alone trans* experiences, indicates a fear factor spanning across all levels of the Irish programme.

Participant narratives on cultural, historical and political situations reinforce the relevance that macro-level contextual issues has on micro-level sex education classroom discourses. Discourses from Ireland indicate that fears or hesitancy in relation to religious 'ethos' frequently gives rise to complete avoidance of education about non-heterosexual sex acts (see also Mayock et al., 2007; Roe, 2010). Rather than assuming that young people already have enough exposure to concepts of sex and pleasure, educators could embrace media sexualisation of youth as a platform from which reflexive facilitated educational dialogues could emerge. Somatechnics helps understand the ways in which images such as biological diagrams constitute discursive educational modalities which can be reclaimed to facilitate critical engagement with topics historically seen as shameful, medicalised, non-sexual and/or heteronormative. A somatechnics perspective reveals that an absence of a pleasure discourse, might readily translate to unrealistic sex and relationship models and body illiteracy for young people.

I propose a *pleasure pedagogy* which can engage a toolbox of critical methods for facilitating sexual reflexivity that privileges the pleasurable yet maintains healthy educator/student boundaries and negotiates the constraints of the specific contexts within which we work. Tapping into and embracing personal sexual potentials might help aid in the dismantling of ongoing shame and stigma hurdled at those who break gender and

sexuality norms. As 'practicing Catholics' become fewer in Ireland (Hirschle, 2010), the educational system requires a map for moving forward. This 'map' must include realistic and meaningful confrontation of sexual violence, harassment, issues of consent and hate crime beyond an 'anti-bullying' discourse. Given the sexual trauma Ireland has experienced by way of the ongoing culturally oppressive forces of the Catholic Church, the time is ripe for directly addressing these histories and building a road upon which Ireland may move forward in reclaiming sexuality from both the Church and the State.

The concerns, barriers and limitations of those working in sex education in Ireland are real, and I cannot pretend that daring to speak about topics such as masturbation and, pleasure will serve to wholly dismantle culturally Catholic influences, postcolonial legacies, neoliberal and austerity-influenced educational environments or fearful interpretations of outdated or non-existent legislative structures. But I would like to propose a system whereby teachers and educators begin by working through a personal exploration of their own sexual ideologies. Teacher training systems require overhaul in both countries. An increase and standardisation in teacher training is crucial and it must incorporate critical engagement with gender and sexuality norms.

In order to achieve a *pleasure pedagogy*, training must facilitate teachers' personal engagement with topics of pleasure in order to lessen the continued effects of sexual discomfort and shame on the part of teachers. Individual-level sexual exploration could unpack what is behind what participants widely perceived to be the need to avoid the affective 'personal' within societal, political and educational discussions of sexuality. Exploration of this dilemma could illuminate whether or not 'personal' is simply a euphemism for emotion, for pleasure or indeed sexual freedom. Contemplating a pleasure pedagogy introduces more nuances than it might seem (Berlant, 1998), as doing so would confront embedded power dynamics for teachers (Kumashiro, 2012), the neoliberal classroom and, especially in Ireland, a long-standing legislative and cultural context which relies upon religious-based notions of sexual morality (Kissane, 2003). By interrogating the perceived constraints within sex education, embodied realities can be influenced and imagined in new and more empowered ways.

9.5 Governmentality and Biopower

Hanisch argues that there are no real problems for which one cannot find a personal solution, except for those which stem from a capitalist system (2000: 213). Neoliberal and capitalist aspirations for education, which participants noted are becoming increasingly prevalent in both countries, may be precisely what makes inclusion of personal narrative challenging to conceive. With education systems increasingly focused on capitalist goals of productivity, business and hard sciences (Ball, 2012), personal development or 'soft' topics are already sidelined – despite curricular and policy mandates – and my research echoes previous studies (Mayock, et al. 2007) with these findings. Financial motivations, business orientation and hard sciences go hand-in-hand with funding priorities, professionalism and 'knowledge', as well as didactic learning models and neoliberal government and policy agendas. The tenets of capitalist productivity see leisure, and thereby pleasure, as superfluous and indulgent. It is perhaps not a surprise that educators see little or no space for the 'personal' or indeed overt mentions of 'pleasure' within this context.

The social democratic health promotion ideologies underpinning sex education, and their underlying discourses of social control, emerged strongly within this study. Government legacies and reputations appear to continue holding influence over the ways that sex education develops in both countries. Most participants personally adhered to and prioritised health promotion discourses, but this was broadly supplemented by a Catholic-approved discourse in Ireland, and an emerging 'norm-critical' discourse in Sweden. Sweden's social democratic history has ensured that a health promotion perspective of sex education is a largely-unchallenged norm (Edgardh, 2002), whereas in Ireland the religious 'ethos' of most schools has upheld a Catholic view of sexuality within sex education classrooms (Neary, 2014; Bacik, 2013). A Foucauldian analysis lends itself readily to the dialogues regarding what I came to understand as national struggles of biopower, governmentality and social control by way of sex education.

Foucault (1978) argues that through prohibition and regulation, sexuality, desire and pleasure appear to be repressed, when in fact epistemologies of religious and social scientific institutions and discourses have produced, organised and proliferated these narratives through knowledge, ethics and culture. He asserts that, through mechanisms of prohibition, Western societies have become overly focused on discussing sexuality, often through religious and medical establishments. These establishments have exerted their

force through biopower, the control of the population through national health promotion apparatuses. The narratives from Sweden and Ireland reflect the medical and religious mechanisms of power respectively, though we also see some supplemental religious discourses in Sweden and medicalised discourses in Ireland. Discourses from Ireland increasingly indicated a desire to move towards a more embedded and 'secular' notion of health promotion, but rarely problematised the Christian undertones or governmentality and biopower within these ideals. Those in Sweden, on the other hand, struggled to reconcile the seemingly contradictory ideals of religious freedom and an equality perspective on medical information and service provision (see also Rasmussen, 2010).

Narratives from Ireland indicate lack of confidence and an underlying mistrust in government agendas and priorities for sex education. These dialogues were markedly characterised by a sense of despondency, with participants expressing serious dejection, doubt and hopelessness when discussing the possibilities for socio-political changes (Duggan and Muñoz, 2009). It was significant that a number of narratives from civil servants in Ireland placed responsibility for 'good' sex education implementation on to the school, rather than taking responsibility for the government's role in ensuring 'good' curriculum implementation. In Sweden, participants rode a fine line between coming across as sympathetic to the plight of the teachers and seeming to blame teachers for inaction within their obligations regarding the curriculum and the law. Many participants in both countries empathetically argued that laws are implemented without proper follow-through, leaving teachers under-prepared[239].

9.6 Legislative and Policy Recommendations

The impact of legislation as articulated within participant narratives strongly separated the narratives along national lines. The milieus of governmental level supports for sex education in each country differ drastically. Ireland's lack of sexual health policies and rigid implementation of Age of Consent laws contrasts sharply with Sweden's extensive equality policies and cultural support for youth sexual freedom[240]. Despite a recent update

[239] Though often these narratives became critical of teachers through what could be seen as a blame discourse.

[240] Sweden's comprehensive network of Youth Sexual Health Clinics provide an array of confidential services, including abortion, to young people aged thirteen and older (Edgardh, 2002).

of the abortion legislation[241], abortion remains practically inaccessible and in most cases illegal in Ireland (Bloomer and O'Dowd, 2014). Within equality legislation, Ireland's nine anti-discrimination grounds have been hailed for outnumbering those of many other countries, but only cover access to education, do not impact the educational curriculum and are not accessible to people under age 18 (Equality Authority, 2005). In contrast, Sweden's seven grounds have had a direct influence on the way that sex education is taught and conceptualised, and these grounds have also been recently extended to further provide protection from 'other discriminating treatment' within schools and preschools (Sherlock, 2012). The majority of the dialogues from Sweden contained narratives about the equality legislation, widely citing it as a supportive force for sex education work, and commonly offering thoughts and suggestions about how Sweden's equality legislation can be conceived of through a normcritial lens.

Professionals in Ireland extensively argued that narrow interpretation of Age of Sexual Consent[242] (see also IFPA, 2011) combines with the lack of a National Sexual Health Strategy and the religious 'ethos' of most schools to create a situation whereby holistic and inclusive sex education is not supported from a policy perspective. These legal and policy issues were widely interpreted from what could be read as a place of fear on the part of participants, in that many articulated their inability, as sex educators, to support a young person with issues such as pregnancy[243], contraception or personal sexual dilemmas. Hunt (1989) argues for a postmodern approach to the law and asserts that fear-driven legal interpretations are invested in a false dichotomy of legal/illegal, characterised by 'slippery slope' arguments[244]. In order for sex education professionals in Ireland to be facilitated and supported in their health promotion and education remits, these professions must be afforded clarity and flexibility, particularly in relation to Age of Consent and school

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[241] The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 was enacted in January 2014 to allow for abortion where there is a real and substantial risk to a woman's life and when all procedures mandated by the act have been carried out. In 2014 Ms Y, a migrant woman who was suicidal and requested an abortion, was forced to undergo a caesarean section at 26 weeks. This case has raised questions about Ireland's abortion provision (see also http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/timeline-of-ms-y-case-1.1951699)

[242] Age of Sexual Consent is 15 in Sweden and 17 in Ireland. Participants in Ireland widely reported that Age of Consent legislation has been implemented in a way which prevents access to contraception and sexual health services for young people. In Sweden, participants emphasised that Age of Consent laws are not enforced in a way which prohibits young people from exploring consensual sexual activity.

[243] Participants reported narratives of the impact of legislative constraints to include a practical unavailability of contraception and sexual health supports for young people, with one civil servant explaining that teachers are advised to encourage pupils to misrepresent their situations in order to circumnavigate perceived obligations of mandatory reporting in the case, for example, a young person is pregnant.

[244] In this case, arguments supporting a rigid interpretation of Age of Consent laws might facilitate societal discourses which polarise rigid/flexible enforcement of the legislation into a binary whereby any flexibility can be constructed as embarking on a 'slippery slope'.

'ethos' (see also Neary, 2014). It is the responsibility of the State to ensure that these laws protect the young people of Ireland, rather than serving to limit sexual health information and support.

In Sweden, policy language and societal structures were reported as sufficient to support high quality and inclusive sex education, but participants widely argued that, in reality, practice differs drastically from policy mandates. Narratives in Sweden indicate a need for a closer adherence to sex education policy and legislative ideals, and for Sweden's sex education reputation to be rooted in a system which better supports and prepares teachers for this duty. One participant in Sweden asserted that a person is not discriminated against *because* of the identity they have, one is discriminated against because they are perceived to fit outside of some identity norm.

When equality legislation names grounds of discrimination, a focus on norms as oppressive forces is conspicuously missing from the equation (see also Kantola and Nousiainen, 2009). The discourse of discrimination tends to focus disproportionately on the victims of discrimination, rather than those who victimise. Borchorst et al. (2012) considers it a recent 'trend' within the Nordic countries to begin addressing multiple inequalities simultaneously through anti-discrimination law. Viewing equality law through a queer and postmodern feminist lens reveals that, perhaps, equality laws could be reconceptualised to shift their focus away from those individuals who are already oppressed, and focus, rather, on acts of oppression. While, as the researcher, I endeavoured to utilise poststructuralist and queer vantage points throughout, narratives necessarily mentioned specific areas of difference, often relating directly to equality legislation in both countries. With this dilemma, I have re-produced within this thesis the very 'identity box' approach that my queer theoretical lens seeks to deconstruct.

9.7 More Similar Than They Seem

This comparative study of two seemingly very different sex education contexts revealed some surprising similarities. Participants in both countries reported that, practically, if the curriculum and related legislation were to be implemented adequately and consistently, both by government departments and on the ground in schools, that existing sex education curricula would fundamentally be sufficient. Expressions of a *qualified satisfaction* argued that the content of the curriculum was sufficient and adequate to meet the needs of students

if and when it is implemented comprehensively and properly. However, in both Sweden and Ireland, there were complex reasons expressed as to why full and adequate implementation of the curriculum was a rare occurrence. Based on participant narratives and previous research (Mayock et al., 2007; Morgan, 2004; Nilsson and Sandström, 2001), however, the curriculum in Sweden is implemented to a far greater extent than in Ireland. Within that, however, was a strong critique in both countries related to a lack of inclusion within curricular materials.

Participants in both countries articulated deficiencies within teacher training[245], curricular updates and programme reviews; these deficiencies were often referenced in justifying a need for 'outside facilitators' and supplementary programmes. Although equality legislation aims to protect individuals in the two states, their application differs wildly in relation to protecting people, health services and education. Participants widely expressed simultaneous desires for consistent quality but through a pedagogy that is not formulaic. According to participants, heteronormativity pervades classroom practice and curricular content in both countries. Participants in both countries were critical of teachers, but readily acknowledged a much larger system seeped in inadequacies with regards to support structures such as teacher training and principal involvement. The need for 'champions' to ensure proper implementation of sex education was a key thread throughout narratives from Ireland and Sweden. Sweden and Ireland's curricular mandates imply a necessity for sex education implementation to be a 'whole school approach', and participants in both countries widely expressed an intersectional and 'whole school' model as a yet-to-be achieved ideal. Participant narratives indicate that sex education implementation in both countries faces a complex web of challenges at both micro and macro levels.

While both nations share a founding Christian ethic (Kalyvas, 1996), this notion necessitates comprehensive re-examination in light of increasing cultural, ethnic and religious diversities thriving in each country. The numerous similarities between the two countries were surprising, given their vastly different sex education histories and trajectories. These similarities shed light on what is most likely a larger scale educational situation throughout Europe. Education contexts have simultaneously suffered increased

[245] In Ireland, a lack of adequate teacher training was frequently highlighted, and some again linked this back to systemic governmental issues, indicating a disconnect between funding priorities and sex education practice whereby the curriculum is developed but teachers and schools are not supported to achieve full implementation. Participants in Sweden also overwhelmingly emphasised inadequacies in teacher training. Participants in Sweden frequently asserted that, as the sex education curriculum is mandatory, the training should be included as a fundamental piece of the curriculum within all teacher training courses.

demands alongside lower governmental prioritisation in recent years (Kumashiro, 2012). When civil servants and government bodies lay 'blame' on teachers and schools, it distracts from their own need to take responsibility for ensuring the supports are in place to fulfil curricular and policy mandates.

9.8 Limitations and Reflexivity

Examination of 'good' and 'inclusive' practice narratives from Ireland and Sweden alongside one another has exposed many taken-for-granted elements within practices, policies and discourses in both countries. Narratives and discourses in both countries drew heavily on conceptions of modernity (Delanty, 2013) and notions of time (Halberstam, 2005), and I endeavour within my analysis and conclusions to avoid constructing a linear notion of modernity within sex education and, particularly, to avoid positioning Sweden as 'more modern' than Ireland. Narratives are subjective experiences which also reflect my own positionality as the researcher who facilitated the interview dialogues. Participants in 'sexually liberated' Sweden were conscious that they would be situated alongside 'culturally Catholic' Ireland, and vice versa, which sometimes resulted in participants asserting their own comparisons and, perhaps, polarising their narratives. I believe that some elements of the narratives perhaps inflated or exaggerated stories and details, whereas other elements were perhaps undermined or brushed over within participant narratives. Feminist research remains consistently aware of the embodied subjectivities of both research participants and the researcher. Discourses of good and inclusive practice in sex education are changing and evolving in both countries, and the narratives from this project simply constitute a snapshot in time.

Many in Sweden wanted to ensure that my research would make clear that Sweden perhaps does not live up to its high 'sex education leader' reputation and that there are flaws in the Swedish political, educational and cultural systems which inhibit sex education. Many in Ireland, on the other hand, expressed desires for my research to communicate that sex education is not terrible in Ireland, and that there are instances of good practice and aims for inclusion. In both countries, it was clear that most participants did not want their situations to come across as wholly negative within the context of a research project that was seeking to identify examples of good practice and to explore the conditions that facilitate it to emerge.

It is noteworthy that many participants in Sweden stated that they would be content to be personally identified, and made it explicit when their personal viewpoints differed from those of their employer. Conversely, several participants in Ireland went to lengths to assure that their contributions would be anonymised and confidential, in some cases asking me to exclude portions of their narratives or to email them any quotations I would be using for their approval. I believe the difference is indicative of the particularly low-status afforded to individuals working within sex education in Ireland. While participants in both countries argued for an increased professionalism within their area of work, participants' fears particularly reveal insufficient cultural support for the sexual health field in Ireland.

In both countries, implementation of an intersectional, inclusive and whole-school approach to sex education is an ideal met with challenges that span from those met by individual teachers, school leadership and curricular limitations, as well as the wider political and social barriers which were explored in earlier chapters. It is fair to say that these challenges are much more pronounced in Ireland, due to a culture of fear, shame and secrecy around sex and sexuality and a school system which remains heavily connected to the Catholic Church. It is interesting to note how similar the discourses are in both countries, despite existing on very different ends of a spectrum or as two complete disparate trajectories. Although the feminist foundations and an activist-fuelled emergence of a queer-inspired normcritical perspective have transformed the way sex education is viewed in Sweden, participant narratives demonstrate that implementation of this ideal is still far from perfect.

As this research project did not include interviews with teachers or young people, or classroom observations, the addition of those perspectives would undoubtedly provide a more comprehensive picture of the sex education milieu in both countries. Furthermore, although this project strove to include a cross-section of relevant and comparable professionals in each context, it is likely that key individuals in each country might have been missed. Several individuals contacted in Ireland did not respond to my invitation to contribute to this research, and my contacts in Sweden were limited to those individuals who had been referred to me by others. The term 'queer research' appears oxymoronic, but such paradoxes are the intent of queer theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009). Perhaps the most challenging limitation has been the necessity to fit a poststructuralist project within the structuralist confines of the academic context and the requirements for a PhD thesis, in particular. The circuitous nature of a queer analysis resisted being pinned down, and a

queer perspective would argue that research and academic structures are antithical to queer ideologies (Browne and Nash, 2010).

9.9 Current and Future Research and Advocacy

Analysis of risk factors and 'at risk' people or experiences characterise mainstream discourses on adolescent sexuality and sexual health within the arenas of human services as well as academia, public policy, media sources and public health. Research may categorise young people as having certain sets of 'risk factors' which may statistically lead to sexual health outcomes which are deemed 'negative', namely STIs and pregnancy (Glanz et al., 2008). The idea of 'risk' as it relates to sexual health often holds an unquestioned status, though sexual health professionals and researchers consistently disagree about which sexual activities are most 'risky' and which sexual health precautions are most effective (Rudolph, 2009). Curricula have been influenced by health promotion discourses within a Christian centric frame (see also Kiely, 2004), and most curricular evaluations have not questioned some of the more taken-for-granted elements of these paradigms.

The queer basis for this study sees a 'risk' perspective on sexuality and sexual health as contributing to a discourse which awards advantage to privileged positionalities, thereby furthering the oppression of those who are already disadvantaged (see also Pidduck, 2001). Much of the research literature on LGBT inclusion in education contexts focuses on anti-bullying approaches and the use of, what could be seen as, a 'tolerance' discourse (Epstein et al., 2003; Rasmussen, 2006). Poststructuralism makes visible the societal constructs underlying risk based analysis (Howarth et al., 2000), and feminism is sceptical of any theoretical practice which creates cultural 'Others', rather than empowering (Collins, 2012). Queer theory and feminism are underutilised theoretical perspectives within sexual health and sex education research in Ireland. These theories are more widely used in Sweden, but sex education pedagogies which examine a broader set of norms intersectionally have not been researched comprehensively in either country. While the perspectives of sex education professionals have been sought to a limited degree within advisory groups and participant cohorts of previous studies (see also Mayock et al., 2007), this in-depth exploration of 'good' and 'inclusive' practice with professionals provides a new, important and necessary perspective within sex education research.

This study paves the way for a broad array of future research initiatives. It would be useful to conduct a similar study of good and inclusive practice narratives with young people, with teachers, or both. This type of study might implement a focus group approach with young people. Youth focus groups could also be utilised to study the use of normcritical pedagogies, and to assess the learning outcomes from these approaches. The current implementation of normcritical pedagogies in Sweden requires evaluation. Obtaining an 'evidence base' for the use of normcritical pedagogies would facilitate expansion for these approaches. Future research could 'test' a normcritical model in Ireland though youth focus groups. Theoretical and curricular development research could work to expand normcritical models and approaches so that they include a broader spectrum of diverse experiences.

In Ireland, further research is necessary to investigate ambiguity in relation to Age of Consent laws as they play out in relation to young people's access to sexual health information and supports. Advocacy work in Ireland is required to improve sexual health policy and service provision, including the current lack of access to abortion and the criminalisation of sexual activity with people with intellectual disabilities. Equality legislation in Ireland needs to be extended to become accessible for young people under age 18 and to protect against discrimination within the school setting. The impact of religious 'ethos' on curricular and classroom practice necessitates comprehensive exploration and re-evaluation. In Sweden, work is required on government level to ensure fulfilment of their mandate for young people in schools to be protected from 'other degrading treatment' along with the protections afforded under the equality grounds of discrimination. Teacher training provisions require research, examination and standardisation in both countries.

9.10 Final Remarks

This project is unique for the comparative dialogue it facilitates between discourses from sex education professionals in Ireland and Sweden. The viewpoints of these professionals have rarely been sought in a concerted way within the research literature. Discourses in one country serve to illuminate taken-for-granted aspects in another, resulting in findings which are useful for contemplating the future of good and inclusive sex education in those countries and further afield. Despite the very different contextual scenarios, articulations of an ideal for good and inclusive sex education were strikingly similar between the two

countries. Participants in both Ireland and Sweden spoke of a strong desire to include all learners in the classroom, to provide relevant and useful information to young people in a meaningful and engaging way through a whole-school approach. Professionals in both countries widely argued for improved and increased teacher training, a higher level of professionalism, time and prioritisation within the curriculum and integrated, rather than 'stand alone' modules.

I was only able to see sex education in Ireland as so clearly postcolonial when I contrasted narratives to those coming from an arguably-colonising Swedish context. Furthermore, I was only able to provide a solid and rigorous critical lens of Sweden's political context and sex education system by drawing parallels between Ireland with the passionate critiques articulated by participants in Sweden. It was only when situated alongside the more despondent and hopeless narratives on Ireland's socio-political supports for sex education that Sweden's strong political critiques were seen to be hopeful. It was only through the unique and creative pedagogies on the body that participants in Sweden used to articulate pleasure anatomy and inclusion that the curriculum content and delivery narratives from Ireland seemed so lacking in terms of diversity inclusion and a pleasure perspective. While the timing was obviously ripe for the norm-critical movement in Sweden, its emergence begs the question of whether those exact circumstances would be *required* for a similar movement to gain prominence elsewhere. As education on queer identities begins to formally seep into sexuality education in Ireland, I contemplate whether there is scope to consider norm-questioning principles, or even a small grassroots network of queer-feminist educators and activists, as part of that process.

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Figure 1: Affiliation, location and dates of participant interviews

	description	location/remit	date	duration	location
P1	[Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]	National	Jun-09	01:18	office
P2	[Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]	National	Jun-09	01:48	office
P3	[Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden]	Urban - capital	Jun-09	01:42	home
P4	[Sexuality Researcher, Sweden]	Urban - capital	Jun-09	01:41	cafe
P5	[Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]	Local - Urban/capital	Jun-09	01:34	office
P6	[Sexuality NGO, Sweden]	National	Jun-09	00:28	office
P7	[Sexuality NGO, Sweden]	National	Jun-09	01:01	office
P8	[Sexuality NGO, Sweden]	National	Jun-09	01:14	office
P9	[Sexuality NGO, Sweden]	National	Jun-09	01:15	office
P10	[Sexuality Researcher, Sweden]	Urban - capital	Jun-09	01:34	office
P11	[Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]	National	Sep-09	00:56	office
P12	[Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]	National	Sep-09	00:51	office
P13	[Sexuality Researcher, Ireland]	Urban - capital	Sep-09	00:50	office
P14	[Civil Servant, Ireland]	National	Oct-09	01:03	office
P15	[Sexuality Researcher, Ireland]	Urban - capital	Oct-09	01:22	office
P16	[Civil Servant, Ireland]	Rural	Oct-09	01:20	phone
P17	[Relationships Education NGO, Ireland]	National	Oct-09	01:11	office
P18	[Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]	National	Oct-09	00:52	office
P19	[Sexuality Researcher, Ireland]	Urban - non-capital	Oct-09	01:10	office
P20	[Sexuality Researcher, Ireland]	Urban - non-capital	Oct-09	01:27	office
P21	[Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]	Urban - non-capital	Oct-09	01:23	office
P22	[Sexuality NGO, Ireland]	National	Oct-09	00:48	office
P23	[Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden]	Urban - capital	Nov-09	02:56	cafe
P24	[Sexuality Education NGO, Sweden]	National	Nov-09	01:00	office
P25	[Sexuality NGO, Sweden]	Local - Urban/capital	Nov-09	00:58	office
P26	[Sexuality Researcher, Sweden]	Rural	Dec-09	00:32	cafe
P27/1	[Civil Servant, Sweden]	National	Dec-09	01:08	office
P27/2	[Civil Servant, Sweden]	National	Dec-09	01:08	office
P28	[Sexuality Researcher, Sweden]	Urban - capital	Dec-09	01:21	office
P29	[Independent Sexuality Educator, Sweden]	Rural	Oct-10	00:48	home
P30	[Sexuality NGO, Ireland]	Rural	Jun-11	02:12	office
P31	[Civil Servant, Ireland]	Rural	Jul-11	01:41	office
P32	[Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]	Rural	Jul-11	01:20	cafe
P33	[Sexuality NGO, Ireland]	National	Jul-11	00:53	CRC office
P33-2	[Sexuality NGO, Ireland]	National	Nov-11	00:42	CRC office
P34	[Sexuality Education NGO, Ireland]	Rural	Nov-11	01:04	phone

Figure 2: Project Background Sheet for Participants

Project Background Sheet for Interview Participants, Ireland

Leslie Sherlock – PhD Candidate: Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Funded by Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS)
Doctoral fellowship recipient to: GEXcel Theme 5,
GEXcel Centre for Gender Excellence, Linköping, Sweden

International good practice in sex education:

Exploring successes and gaps through dialogue between cultures, approaches and theories

Introduction to the project

This project compiles research on Irish and Swedish good practice in sex education and sexual health services, specifically concentrating on success stories and examining conceptual and cultural frameworks in approaches and methods through a facilitated dialogue interview process. My work will compare and contrast Swedish and Irish sex education through practitioners' narratives and policy documents, concentrating on areas of achievement and uniqueness. I aim to identify practical strategies to fill unmet needs through international productive synergies, dialogues and alliances, and use the data to inform a participatory focus group project with adolescent girls in Ireland.

Notes before we begin:

- Thank you for your time and generous participation in this project! Your responses are highly valuable as contributions to a Sweden/Ireland dialogue on sex education, resulting to inform participatory focus group research with adolescent girls in Ireland.
- I am interviewing you in a personal capacity rather than as a representative from your organisation. As such, please prepare to respond to questions based upon your own work experiences, but give me your own personal sense of the answers. I assure you upmost anonymity and confidentiality.
- I am focusing my research on adolescent sex education, including traditional, non-traditional, in-school and out-of-school models; and wherever possible would you please focus your responses on sex education related to young people aged 12-15. I have a particular interest in work done specifically with girls and that is inclusive of marginalised youth.

Aims and objectives

- Obtain a sense of good practice in sex education and sexual health services in Ireland and Sweden, including application of creative and innovative methods.
    - Glean international similarities in findings for good practice.
    - Examine gender, sex, sexuality, difference, empowerment and pleasure.
- Relate findings back to epistemological theories and groundings.
- Investigate sex education milieus, cultural influences and practicalities.
- Contribute productively to international dialogue on sex education.

Why a Sweden and Ireland dialogue?

My work sees any research which looks to contribute to the future of sex education in Ireland as benefiting from a discussion with the actual practitioners who are 'on the ground' – implementing, coordinating and researching such programmes – as a crucial starting point. However, in order to learn about and introduce ideas for innovative progress which are realistic and successful in other locales, a look outside of Ireland is beneficial if not critical. Sweden is a European model for comparison which sits, some would say, at an opposing end of the political and social spectrum from Ireland. Sweden is the world forerunner in sex education, having introduced it in 1933, and furthermore boasts one of the smallest rates of unwanted births in the world. This sits in paradox with Ireland's international 'late bloomer' status, having introduced sex education curriculum much more recently in the 1990s. I would like to investigate: Is sex education in Sweden as great as it seems to be? How does the situation in Ireland compare internationally? What makes the success stories in either locale successful? Where are there differences in the two contexts and where are there similarities? Where is there room in either context to discuss possibilities of introducing good practice models from the other locale? Can certain approaches and methods be 'translated' to another cultural context? What are the outside cultural influences and how to they play out on sex education and sexual health services? What does 'filling the gaps' look like for both countries, and how might this two-country dialogue facilitate knowledge sharing? My intention is for some thoughts on answers to these questions to emerge naturally and organically from the project data, gleaned through semi-structured, narrative interviews of practitioners in both locations. The findings are then discussed with young people, through a participatory focus group project including adolescent girls in Ireland.

Investigative and analytic methods

My project involves reflexive qualitative interviews, as well as literature and policy reviews in Sweden and Ireland. The data will be used to identify strengths and gaps in theoretical frameworks and current models. This research preferences qualitative insights while recognising and respecting the influence of quantifiably measured findings.

Resulting Work from Project

Findings from this project will be written up as articles or book chapters for the purpose of the GEXcel research project, and also condensed and adapted as a contribution to inform my larger PhD work.

*****Topics for consideration in preparation for our discussion-*****

- Your role in sex education/sexual health services for adolescent girls in Ireland.
- What is unique, special, successful or exciting about sex education in Ireland? Specific stories are most useful.
- What, do you believe, are the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in sex education in Ireland?
- What are your thoughts on the formal curriculum for sex education in Ireland, including evaluations of implementation and how teachers are trained?
- Who teaches sex education and how do they teach it? Tell me about your knowledge on the use of 'outside facilitators' as well.
- What are the aims and messages conveyed in the programmes? Who sets the agenda? How exactly is it taught?
- Discuss the legal situation for adolescents around sex in Ireland, including your views on any barriers the law poses, such as consent laws and access to medical.
- Your knowledge of non-school sexual health services and sex education.
- Experiences of creative and/or innovative methods in sex education.
- How is sex education in Ireland made to be inclusive of all experiences? Specifically think about inclusion of 'difference' in gender, race, class, religion, dis/ability and sexual orientation, among others.
- What effective cross-disciplinary dialogues and synergies have taken place? Include any information on international collaborative efforts and how differences in ideologies have been communicated through and reconciled.

- What are the primary cultural, political and social influences affecting sex education in Ireland today, and how does this operate? Include influences of religion, various social movements and the media.
- What is the role of pleasure, body confidence, sexual safety and empowerment in sex education?
- How are non-traditional sex acts and sexualities taught about in sex education in Ireland, and what does this look like in sex education lessons?
- What do you think sex education in Ireland looks like for marginalised youth?
- What do you dream of for the future of Ireland's sex education?

Figure 3: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Written Informed Consent

Researcher – Leslie Sherlock
Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Project Funded by:
Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences and GEXcel Centre for Gender Excellence, Linköping, Sweden

Who is the researcher?

My name is Leslie Sherlock and I am conducting research as part of my IRCHSS funded PhD project at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland as well as in collaboration with a fellowship through GEXcel in Linköping, Sweden. A portion of my wider PhD project aims has been facilitated by my GEXcel fellowship in Sweden. Through this fellowship, I will contribute to the wider GEXcel project as well as my own PhD research. I am a PhD student originally from the United States, and have been living and studying in Ireland since 2005. I hold an MA degree in Women's Studies and BA degrees in Business and Accounting. I have previously worked in rape crisis, homelessness, research and non-profit organisation administration.

What is this research about?

I am interested in interviewing experts and practitioners in Ireland and in Sweden about experiences and good practice in sex education and sexual health services for adolescent girls aged 12-15. I have a particular interest in the theories which inform curriculum, creative learning methods and innovative policy approaches. I aim to identify strengths, weaknesses and gaps in such work - focusing on positive experiences and success stories. The findings from this first phase of my PhD research will be utilised to inform a participatory focus group project with adolescent girls in Ireland.

Who is participating?

Participants include researchers, experts and practitioners in sex education and sexual health services working in Ireland and Sweden.

How long will are interviews and where will they take place?

The interviews will be held in a location and at a time that suits you. Our discussion will take place in a comfortable setting and will last around an hour.

Does participation require advance preparation?

A 'Project Background Sheet' has been sent to you so that you may prepare if you wish. Advance preparation is not required, however.

Is participation voluntary? Do I have to participate?

Your input into this study is voluntary; you do not have to participate if you do not want to. You are free to terminate your participation at any time, without reason, and remove any contributions you have made if you wish. You are free to refuse to answer any questions asked. Please take plenty of time to consider whether or not you would like to take part. If you consent to participate, please sign the attached form and keep a copy of this information for your reference. You will not receive any form of payment for your participation in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

With your written and verbal permission, interviews will be recorded via digital device and subsequently transcribed into written text. This will help me to remember as much information as possible from the interviews, so I may use your positive experiences to inform my work. At any time during the discussion, you may ask for the recording device to be turned off, if you wish some of your data not to be digitally recorded. What you say in the interview is confidential and will not be communicated to outside people except in the extremely rare case that there is immediate risk of harm to you or another person. In this circumstance I will discuss this with you before taking any action.

Anonymity

Your interview will be anonomised so that you will not be identifiable in the written study. This is done in an effort to allow you to speak freely and so that all participant contributions are reflected equally. Please bear in mind I wish to interview you as an individual – with your own unique individual experiences, not as a representative of your place of employment. Digital files of your interview will be stored on my computer, requiring password access which only I will have. Any hard copy files or data emerging from the research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, which only I hold the key to. Any correspondence between us will be anonymised.

What is the researchers' commitment?

I am committed to the highest level of ethics and integrity in my research. I will take every effort to ensure that discussions are comfortable and that you have consented to every aspect of my research. I would like my aims to be transparent, and I invite you to ask any question you may have. It is most important to me that your rights and respect are not violated in any way.

What are the benefits and/or risks of participating?

As with any research, possibilities exist for benefits as well as risks. There is little risk involved in this study, however the questions raised in the interview may encourage you to think critically about the work you do. I am not collecting sensitive personal data from participants, though the subject matter of this research can be a sensitive topic. The benefits include that your positive experiences and lessons you have learned will contribute to an international body of research which looks at sexual health and sex education with an aim to facilitate wider discussion and improve practice on a large scale. It is an opportunity to share what you have learned, as well as to learn from others.

What happens to the information I provide?

Work resulting from this project will be written up for my PhD dissertation and as part of the GEXcel project publications. The information may also be presented at conferences or in other publications. Names or identifying information about you or any other person will not be used in any presentations or publications.

How do I contact the researcher?

Please feel free to contact me - before or after our discussion takes place - to ask any question that might arise for you or to discuss any aspect of this study.

You may contact Leslie Sherlock at:

Email: sherlol@tcd.ie Irish mobile: 353 (0)85 720-9026

Children's Research Centre office (Dublin): 353 (0)1 896-2965

Researcher Commitment

I agree to uphold the highest standard of ethics and integrity to participants of this study. I have made my aims transparent and encourage participants to contact me with questions, should they arise. I have explained my research to the best of my abilities. It is most important to me that your rights and respect are not violated in any way.

Name of Researcher _____**(block capitals)**

Signature _____

Date _____

Informed Consent Form (Participants over 18 years old)

DECLARATION

I have read this Participant Written Informed Consent form and have had time to consider my participation in this research. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and I am free to withdraw participation at any time without consequence.

I agree to participate in this research.

I understand that my contributions to this research will be digitally recorded; however I can ask that the recording be stopped if I wish. I understand that my contributions will be made anonymous and I will not be identified in any records.

I agree to have my discussions with Leslie Sherlock recorded and used in her research project and resulting publications.

Name of Participant _____**(block capitals)**

Signature _____

Date _____

Figure 4: Outline of Codes

Literature Review
- Good practice/ 'successful'
- Dreams
-Sweden/Ireland comparison

Socio-Political – Setting the scene

Cultural
- Media
- Geographies - country demographic and land
- Careers in sex ed
- Religion
- Research
  - Statistics/findings
  - Lit review backdrop
  - Participant references to
  - Participant experiences conducting
- Young People, practical situation, youth culture
- Global influences
- Discourses on sexuality
- Related cultural discourses
- National 'we'

Historical
- Colonialism/post-colonialism
- Construction/reputation of sex and related history
- Structural legacies – schools/policy/governments
- Historical sex ed efforts, backdrops, messages

Political/Governmental/Legal
- Government in power
  - Discourses/shifts/climate
  - Departments
- role of policy
  - consent laws
  - sexual assault/rape laws
  - contraception
  - abortion
  - anti-discrimination/equality
  - sexual health strategy
  - laws concerning schools
  - child protection
  - law enforcement
- NGOs
  - Sexual health
  - Sex ed
  - LGBT
  - Anti-discrimination
  - Teacher training/training
  - Youth federations
- Curriculum
  - Introduction of
  - Evaluations of
  - Implementation
  - Training
  - Content /resources
  - Opt out clause
- Relationship to activism
- Culture of charity
- Funding for sex/uality education

Intersectinalit(ies) and multiplicit(ies)
- Schools
  - Whole school approach
  - Subjects where taught/curriculum
  - School policy/morality/ethos/values
  - Resources available
  - Non-teacher school staff
  - Teachers
  - Champions
  - Parents/guardians
  - Use of OFs
- Non-schools/OFs
  - Sexual health services/clinics
  - Youth groups/councils
  - Peers
- Collaborations

Who is best to teach? (inc age/demo)

Power

Discourses
- Health promotion/risk
- Choice
- Human rights
- Relationships
- Anti-discrimination
- Critical/normcritical
- Empowerment

Inclusivity

the Other – constructed as separate from cultural 'we'
- Class
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Dis/ability

- Dis/eases
- Geographical
- Intersectional, multiple, other
- How to teach inclusively
    - Tolerance based/identity category
    - Critical pedagogies

Feminism/Gender

- Splitting by gender
- Methods for teaching gender
- Gender identity/trans

Queer/Norms

- 'teaching queer'
- Stereotyping
- Normcritical pedagogies
- Norms as questioned or reified

<u>(Dis)embodiment of sex/uality education</u>

Terminology and language
Choice
Getting 'personal'
Age
Sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, anti-discrimination links
'sex' in sex/uality education
Discourses on embodiment
Pleasure

- Methods for teaching/pedagogies
    - Values exercises
    - Atmosphere / approach
    - methods by age
    - Interactive methods
    - methods with parents
    - methods with teachers
- Topics
    - sex
    - bodies
    - empowerment
    - STI/contraception/HIV/AIDS
    - Pregnancy/parenthood
    - Relationships/ Consent
    - Biology
    - Morality
    - Emotions/feelings
    - Assault/harassment/ Bullying/ anti-discrimination
    - Social change
    - Media/internet

Figure 5: Glossary of Terms

AIDS - Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

CDA - Communicable Disease Act

Cisgender (or cis) – A term which names those whose gender identity does match with the sex they were assigned at birth, in other words, non-trans* individuals. Like heterosexuality, the term cisgender serves to make visible the norm and exposes the reality that everyone has a gender identity. *Cissexism* is the holding of trans* people to more intense scrutiny than cis people.

Class – The social stratification of people within socio-economically conceived hierarchies. Social class and socio-economic status are concepts which are sometimes conflated and other times differentiated. As this thesis concentrates on the inclusion of class-based diversity, it is not concerned with promoting a specific definition of class, but rather sees a concept of class norms as a source of oppression. The terms class and socio-economic status as used within this thesis do not promote a specific definition, but rather reflect the language of participants and research literature

Dis/ability – In this thesis, dis/ability is written in a way which disrupts normative conceptualisations of disability, and ensures that the reader maintains an awareness of the 'able-bodied' norm that exists in society (Goodley, 2014). Crip theory offers an extension of queer theoretical concepts for application within dis/ability discourses, challenging societal drives to eradicate diverse experiences of abilities, revealing notions such as accessibility as constructed, and exposing norms of able-bodiedness as forms of structural oppression (Slater, 2014).

Discourse - Fraser and Robinson believe that 'no knowledge exists outside of socially constructed discourses. Discourses define what can be described as a 'fact', what is worth knowing about and how it can be known' (2004; 74-75).

'Ethos' - A religious 'ethos' exemption, applicable in the majority of Irish schools, was widely argued as having a significant impact on Ireland's curriculum, policies and practices. Neary (2014) explains that the majority of Irish schools are under religious

patronage: 96% of primary schools (91% Catholic) and 52% of second-level schools (48% Catholic). The 'religious ethos' of these schools provides protection whereby curricular content, classroom practices and employment procedures are exempt from anti-discrimination mandates within Irish equality legislation (Neary, 2014).

Feminism – 'A movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression' (hooks, 2000; vii).

Gay and lesbian – Individuals who identify with these categories and who, usually, demonstrate romantic and/or sexual attraction to people of their same gender. This research is based in a queer inclusive view of sexuality which sees identity labels as sometimes-constrictive and always limited. As such, the terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' are only used in isolation when referring to a specific participant or research narrative which utilises these labels. Otherwise, this research prefers the more inclusive terminology of LGBT or queer.

Gender – Gender is used in this thesis to refer to gender identity - a person's individual, self-proclaimed internal sense of being male, female or another gender. This thesis sees gender as something which is influenced by cultural and societal norms and conceptualisations, rather than a quality which is essential or biological. It acknowledges Butler's (1990) thesis that gender is performative, a notion which troubles the definition of gender in order to challenge the status quo and fight for rights and visibility of anyone whose experience sits outside of societal norms.

GP – General Practitioner

Heteronormativity – The widely held societal assumption that everyone identifies as straight (Butler, 1990). Heteronormativity dictates that there are fundamental differences between men and women, that a person must fit neatly into one of these two binary gender categories, and that people are 'naturally' attracted to the 'opposite' sex. It works in tandem with other norms that award advantages based on skin colour, ability and social class, among others.

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

Homonormativity – A norm which homogenises LGBT experiences within a set of identity and behaviour rules.

Homotolerance - The concept of homotolerance constructs the highest aim for LGBT inclusion as one of 'tolerance', rather than acceptance or celebration, for example (see also Røthing and Svendsen, 2010). A queer understanding of tolerance reveals that it is not necessarily a positive sentiment when one is on the receiving end, or 'being tolerated' (RFSL Ungdom, 2009).

HSE – Health Service Executive (Irish governmental body).

IDU - Intravenous Drug User

IFPA – Irish Family Planning Association

Immigrant – A person who migrates to another country. This term is not unproblematic. According to Bredström (2008), the terms 'immigrant' and 'Swedish' have been constructed as a problematic binary within Swedish literature on sexual health, evoking a racialised discourse which she argues amounts to 'cultural racism'. Svendsen's (2013) PhD research asserts that, within Nordic strategies to address cultural diversity, a wide range of ethnic groups have become conflated under the broad categories of 'immigrant' and 'Muslim'.

Intersectionality – 'Particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation... intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice' (Collins, 2000; 18). Intersectionality has roots in black feminism, critical race studies, queer theory, postcolonialism and postmodernism.

Intersex – Includes people whose biological gender markers are ambiguous or do not fit within the norm. These biological elements can present at birth, in adolescence, in adulthood or sometimes do not ever become known. Not all intersex people identify under the trans* umbrella, and some prefer to see their experience as a medical condition rather than an identity.

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Within this thesis, the LGBT acronym is used to include an array of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, including but not limited to these four. My use of 'LGBT' also seeks to include, for example, queer, asexual, intersex and questioning identities, to name but a few of the lesser-acknowledged letters in the acronym.

MSM – Men who have sex with men

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

Normcritical – Normcritical approaches to pedagogies and the law are an emergent trend in Sweden. Rooted in queer theory, these approaches seek to challenge identity norms as a tactic for inclusion. Normcritical approaches focus on norms such as heterosexuality, cisgenderism and Whiteness, rather than 'adding on' diverse experiences. It exposes oppressions by displaying how societal norms work and why they are unstable, engaging critical thinking and consideration of one's own oppressive actions.

Othering – A rhetorical device or process whereby one group is constructed or perceived as 'us' and situated in relation to another group which is positioned as 'them' or 'Other'. 'Other', in this context, can be used as a noun, verb or adjective.

Outside facilitation – Any individual or group coming in to a school from the outside to deliver part or all of the sex education curriculum. In addition to teacher-facilitated sex education, both Sweden and Ireland widely use outside facilitators to implement sex and sexuality education, despite the fact that both countries' formal sex education structure specifies that it is best taught in the classroom by the teacher.

Pronoun Preference - Pronoun preference refers to, for example, 'she', 'he' or the gender neutral 'they'. In Swedish, 'hon', 'han' or the increasingly used 'hen'. My research recognises that pronoun preference is personal and, in many cases, fluid. I endeavour to be inclusive by refusing to pin down participants under linguistic or other societal markers of gender.

Race and Ethnicity – Encompasses racism, racial segregation, ethnic discrimination and the complex societal processes affiliated with racial and ethnic relations. Within Europe,

the concept of 'race' is constructed within postcolonial knowledge formation, and has developed and been critiqued over time (Svendsen, 2013). I understand the concept of race as the 'performative effect' of racism, racialisation and racialised practices (Johnson, 2003). The legislative context in Ireland has a preference for the term 'race', whereas legislation in Sweden prefers 'ethnicity'. These terms are used throughout the thesis in accordance with the language of the participant, policy document or piece of research being referenced.

RFSL - The Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights

RFSU - The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education

RSE – Relationships and Sexuality Education, the name for the official sex education curriculum in Ireland, which is intended to take place within the wider SPHE module.

Sex – In this thesis, I use the term 'sex' as Bornstein (1995) does, to describe sex acts, rather than a biological determination of gender. When discussing anatomy, I make my intentions explicit, and I rely upon the personal notion of gender identity when discussing concepts such as male and female. This language choice is a deliberate move towards trans* inclusion and away from biological essentialism. Svendsen (2013) argues that 'sex' is still commonly referred to and is defined as heterosexual copulation within biological literature.

Sexuality – Sexuality is used in this thesis to describe both sexual orientation and sexual attractions, impulses and desires - a sexual 'being-ness'. I endeavour to make explicit the meaning of the term within context.

Sex Education – Pedagogies and modalities, both formal and informal, intentional and accidental, which serve to educate young people about sex, sexuality, sexual diversity and sexual expression. This term is used within this thesis to refer to the Irish 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' (RSE) programme, as well as the Swedish official curriculum, in addition to more informal modes such as NGO programmes and popular media.

Sex Positive – A view on sexuality which celebrates diversity, desires and sexual choices based on consent. My view of sex positivity acknowledges that not all people experience

sexual attraction, and that not all consensual sexual activity is inherently positive or pleasurable. My sex positive approach prioritises sexual celebration over repression.

Sexual Health – '…a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled' (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010).

Sexual Orientation – A term used to discuss the gender of one's sexual attractions in relation to one's own gender, for example: straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual. Terms such as polysexual, pansexual and queer serve to disrupt the norm that sexual orientation is inherently limited to the confines of societal conceptualisations of gender.

SPHE – Social, Personal and Heath Education (a module within Irish school curriculum within which sex education is intended to take place).

STI – Sexually Transmitted Infection

Trans* **or transgender** - Seeks to includes anyone whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. The asterisk indicates an inclusion of the full array of trans* identities, for example transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, FTM, MTF, agender, intergender, transvestite, cross-dresser, drag king, drag queen and intersex. My use of trans* acknowledges that not all individuals whose experience might fit within the trans* umbrella will identify as such.

Queer – Can be used to describe a way of being (an identity, a sexual orientation), a doing ('to queer') or a theoretical perspective (as in, queer theory). Queer is resistant to categorisations, striving for complete inclusion meanwhile recognising its inevitable failure at wholly achieving this. It is anything that is outside of the norm.