

**Bodies, Cultures and Health: Young People Constructing and Contesting Gender and
Sexuality through Design and Digital Technology**

Thesis by
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Abstract

Digital technology holds a pivotal role in the construction of young people's gender identities and sexualities. Concern revolves around adult fears associated with risk and danger, yet digital technology can also radically reconstitute how young people construct and contest gendered and sexual identities. In this thesis, I use a method pioneered in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and design, Design Workshops, to explore empirically young people's talk around gender, sexuality and digital technology, analysing this workshop data in a thematic discourse analysis informed by Discursive Psychology. First, I analyse a body-mapping activity, where I examine how young people collectively constitute the sexual body with socio-cultural scripts, arguing that young people rehearse traditionalistic scripts of sex, sexuality and appearance, yet navigate mature (visual) gendered and sexual identities through notions of self-authentication, individuality and rebellion. Second, I examine how young people navigate gendered and sexual cultures through their talk about digital technology, finding that young people use this talk to assert positions of a mature sexual self, make judgements about correct/incorrect sexual conduct, and make inquiries of sexuality, particularly in relation to marginalised sexual practices. Finally, I look at strategies of designing for sexual health with young people through two prototype interventions, where I illustrate the importance of acknowledging young people's positionality. This thesis expands on the method of Design Workshops, and of research around young people's sexual identities, arguing that the interactional analysis of collaborative sense-making activities in this context provides a lens to analyse for, and design around, young people's positionality as sexual agents. My conclusions discuss the value of analysing workshop data from a discursive standpoint and, using this, indicate culturally relevant ways of introducing a 'discourse of desire' around young people's sexualities for UK sexual health contexts.

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Publications

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Chapter 1 Introduction

From September 2020, it will become a statutory requirement for schools to teach Relationships and Sex Education at all secondary schools in the UK (Long, 2019). This indicates an important shift. Previously, schools followed the Sex Relationship Education Guidance (2000), which guaranteed teaching of only human growth, reproduction and sexually transmitted infections to local-authority-run secondary schools only. The new statutory guidance will make it mandatory for all secondary schools to teach about families, relationships, online and media, being safe, and intimate and sexual relationships. It also expects “all pupils to have been taught LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender] content at a timely point” (Department for Education, 2019a).

Simultaneously, resistance to this has been significant. The lobby group ‘Stop RSE’ [Relationships and Sex Education] (<http://stopsre.com/>) holding aims to “protect childhood innocence”, and an online petition citing “grave concerns about the physical, psychological and spiritual implications of teaching children about certain sexual and relational concepts”, successfully campaigned for parents to retain the right to withdraw their children from sex education classes. Much of these concerns are underpinned by an unease about LGBT issues. Psychologist Dr Kate Godfrey-Fausset¹, the originator of the abovementioned petition, lectures on how the government position on sex education is an indoctrination of highly dangerous ideologies that redefine traditional families (Godfrey-Fausset, 2019).

This legislation, but also the surrounding debate, presents important questions about the provision of sex education for young people. While these new legislative moves are considered by many to be an important step, the way relationships and sex education are delivered, and the materials used, is still at the school’s discretion. There is significant pressure from conservative interest groups, which campaign groups have warned may have undue influence over what sex education is provided at schools (Krys, 2018). Specifically, the End Violence Against Women coalition has raised concern around references to ‘moral standards’ in government guidance which, they argue, could lead to perpetuating inequalities.

¹ Dr Kate Godfrey-Fausset is currently being investigated by the British Psychological Society (BPS) who are “extremely concerned” around the views she has expressed (<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-statement-comments-dr-kate-godfrey-faussett-rse-schools>)

Throughout this debate, young people's perspectives have not been put at the fore. A government White Paper 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education In England' (2019b) consulted over 11,000 people on the provision of relationships and sex education, yet only 2% were from respondents identifying as young people (in comparison to 31% parents). These consultations prioritise the perspectives of adults and are not tailored or targeted for young people.

This recent debate highlights the need for ongoing work examining young people's sexuality and, in particular, work that prioritises the perspectives of young people. Whilst critical health research has given considerable effort to voicing young people's perspectives on sex and sexuality (e.g. Vance; 1984; Tolman; 1994; Irvine, 2004; Ingham, 2005; Allen, 2007; Beasley, 2008; Schalet, 2011; Hirst, 2013), I suggest that this new guidance gives a specific role to the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). Central to the calls for renewed guidance has been a focus on the role of digital technology. Justine Greening, the Education Secretary announcing the abovementioned statutory amendments, stated the previous guidance "fails to address risks to children that have grown in prevalence over the last 17 years, including cyber bullying, 'sexting' and staying safe online" (Greening, 2017). Since the developments of digital technology underpin much of the justification for this renewed guidance, an examination of technological discourse in relation to young people's sexuality is timely. Moreover, HCI has a rich tradition in participatory methods, in particular expanding the role of children in design (Irvensen, Smith and Dindler, 2017). Therefore, examining young people's perspectives on sex and sexuality from this HCI perspective has potential to contribute meaningfully to this debate.

Within the context of these debates, my thesis uses a method pioneered in HCI, Design Workshops, to examine how young people constructed and contested sex, sexuality and sexual health. I draw particularly on young people's talk around technology use, and how this talk positioned young people as sexual agents. Through an iterative process of designing interventions alongside young people, I make recommendations on how to design for relationships and sex education, which take into account young people's perspectives and positionality.

Using a social constructionist perspective, my conceptual argument is that my participants positioned themselves as sexual agents in various ways, through the activities and discussions in the design workshops, and in their talk about and around digital technology.

Here, my introduction brings together disparate fields of literature to discuss childhood sexuality, the role of digital technologies and the provision of sex education.

1.1 Childhood, Sexuality and Technology: Mainstream Perspectives

Digital technologies are ubiquitous in the lives of young people living in the UK, where 93% of the UK population owns at least one phone and 85% of the UK population is online (Ofcom, 2015). Children will now be using computers from as young as 3 or 4 years old (Summers et al. 2008), and between the ages of 5 and 15 will spend on average over 5 hours a day in front of digital screens (Ofcom, 2016), which are central to children's playtimes from increasingly younger ages (Haughton et al, 2015). By the time they are teenagers, 77% of them will own a smartphone and 76% of them will have a social media profile (Ofcom, 2016), an integrated and accepted norm in young people's everyday lives (Harley et al. 2018).

Alongside this proliferation, media effects research has focused on the premise that digital technologies can cause maladaptive attitudes and behaviours, including digital technology and social media addiction (Young, 1998; 2004; Griffiths and Meredith, 2009; Bragazzi and Del Puente, 2014; Turel, 2015), loneliness and depression (Yao and Zhong, 2014), less inhibited and antisocial anonymous internet use (Hirsh et al. 2011; Joinson, 2001; Suler, 2004) and increased aggressive behaviour, particularly in relation to playing violent video games (Anderson and Gentile, 2014). Regarding child development, of particular concern is the exposure given to explicit content, specifically violence in video games (Anderson et al. 2010), but children can also be exposed to sexist, racist and pro-anorexia content, and the promotion of illicit drug use and hate speech through everyday technology use (Livingstone et al. 2014).

Central to concerns about exposure to explicit content is young people's access to pornography and, related to this, 'Sexting': a less prominent but nevertheless high-profile concern about children sending and receiving explicit messages or images of themselves (Mitchell et al. 2012). An evidence assessment by Horvath et al. (2013) raises concern around children's increasing access of pornography, which they link with maladaptive attitudes and beliefs and engagement in 'risky' sexual behaviour. In their report, they provide recommendations to the Department of Education around educating children on the safe use of the Internet which explicitly covers access and exposure to pornography, as well as renaming 'sex and relationships education' to 'relationships and sex education', the

new name featured in the abovementioned government guidance (Department for Education, 2019).

Media effects research therefore, has a significant weighting in government guidance (e.g. Cabinet Office, 2014), and we can see these conclusions linking pornography exposure, attitudes and behaviour strongly echoed in policy. The new guidance states that relationships and sex education should include:

“rights, responsibilities and opportunities online; online risks; not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further; the impact of viewing harmful content; that specifically sexually explicit material often presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours; that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is against the law” (Long, 2019: p13)

Positivist approaches to media effects research rely on a ‘technologically determinist’ agenda, where technology itself is identified as the prime mover of psychological and social change, along with associated problems (Harley et al. 2018). As I will now discuss, a historical examination of the development of technologies and childhood sexuality shows us that there have always been these concerns, with critical research challenging the utopian view of technology, focusing instead on its social and contextual role, taking into account subjective agency and experience (McCarthy and Wright, 2007).

1.2 Childhood, Sexuality and Technology: Critical/Historical Perspectives

Technology and its influence on the human psyche has always been a concern, from Socrates’ apprehensions about the transfer of human knowledge through the new technology of writing in the fifth century BC (Bloom, 1991) to the telephone being considered a threat to morality and social cohesion at the beginning of the twentieth century (Fischer, 1994). Since then, cinema studies in the 1920s (Jowett et al. 1996) and television studies in the 1950s and 1960s (Bandura, 1963) have considered these media to be threats to morality, as well as affecting sexual development during childhood and adolescence (Huston et al. 1998).

David Buckingham (2000) describes a “history of concern” around new forms of media, which rests on his idea of the lost ‘Golden Age’ of childhood innocence (Buckingham, 2000, 2005, 2013), an ever-shifting imaginative past whereby each generation of children is thought to be newly corrupted by the most recent form of communication technology. The

“history of concern” which Buckingham (2005) articulates follows roughly the same trajectory as collective concerns around the development of technology, starting with popular literature, cinema, children’s comics, television, and now the Internet and associated new media. Whilst the technologies and associated content are new, and while concerns around these technologies are not groundless adult anxieties around the perceived threats have always existed (Taylor, 2010).

The premise of childhood innocence is fraught with difficulty. Childhood as a ‘natural’ state of innocence is a powerful and taken-for-granted ideal, where innocence is vulnerable and in need of protection. However, as Taylor (2010) argues, we have not always thought about childhood in this way. She reminds us that it was the French philosopher Rousseau who pronounced the natured purity of children, contradicting and overriding previous ideals of children as savages in need of discipline (Jenks, 2005). These are Western notions, drawing on Judeo-Christian narratives (Kline, 1995), mirroring the story of Adam and Eve, binding up sexuality with temptation, sin, innocence and its loss. Multiple scholars have problematised the abovementioned ideals as ‘common-sense’ presumptions of childhood (e.g. Blaise, 2005; Buckingham, 2000; Canella, 2002; Taylor 2007; Walkerdine, 1997).

A *natured* purity comes loaded with cultural connotations. This reflects Leanne Tiefer’s (1995, 2004) argument that the essentialist model of ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ sexuality is defined biomedically. She argues that this (biomedical) model of sexuality is privileged in society, promoting the ideal that sexuality can exist ‘naturally’ outside of a subjective, cultural and historical context. When applied to children, the model of child sexuality emerges as inbuilt, limited, simple and benign (Taylor, 2010), silencing the discussion of childhood sexuality and denying children a sexual agency (Epstein et al. 2003; Jones, 2006; Renold, 2006; Robinson, 2008).

Critical scholars (e.g. Plummer, 1982; Tiefer, 2004) have proposed that we consider sexuality not as an intrinsic and essential biological entity but as a sexual script (Simon and Gagnon, 1986), “enacted in physical performance and created, not just shaped, within the sociocultural moment” (Tiefer, 2004, p. 31). I will propose that the socio-cultural metaphor of ‘sexual scripts’ is a productive way to examine the interception of childhood sexuality and digital technology, underpinning the analytic approach taken in my thesis. To frame this, I will now briefly illustrate how scholarly works on digital technology and sexuality lead us to consider new sexual scripts.

1.3 Technosexuality

Digital technology problematises how we occupy sexuality. For example, the Internet has been pivotal in reshaping queer spaces (Driver, 2006), transforming gay male sub-culture first through 'Gaydar' in the late 1990s (Mowlabocus, 2010) and later through mobile phone apps such as '*Grindr*' (Blackwell, Birnholtz and Abbott, 2014). But while digital technology has provided new spaces to occupy and exercise sexuality, such as in chat rooms (Seal et al. 2015), sex blogs (Tiidenberg, 2013) and immersive virtual worlds (Cypress Valkyrie, 2011), this intersects with the offline world. Gies (2008) reminds us that physical bodies are always involved in digital interactions through placement and manipulation of technological interfaces, with users always experiencing the body as they engage with technology (McCarthy and Wright, 2007; Harley et al. 2018). For instance, in contrast to the (originally) desktop platform Gaydar, *Grindr*, running only on mobile devices, uses the mobile's global positioning system (GPS) to determine the proximity of other users, who are presented in order, layering physical and online spaces (Blackwell, Birnholtz and Abbott, 2014). Digital technologies force us, therefore, to reconsider boundaries of 'the real' and 'the virtual' in sexuality (Harley et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2017).

Nevertheless, a distinction between 'the real' and 'the virtual' is a prominent sexual script in considering online sexual activity. Much of the work around online dating has concerned representations of users' 'true' or inner selves (e.g. Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons, 2002; Ellison et al. 2006; Bargh et al. 2002), and some have also considered users strategically misrepresenting themselves (Hall et al. 2010), or "fudging" as it is sometimes called, (Toma et al. 2008) as strategies for gaining profile responses. These interactions are also often judged by the 'success' of moving these relationships offline (Whitty, 2007; 2008; Whitty and Carr, 2006). Here, the virtual world is a means and a goal for obtaining an offline relationship and is seen an inferior representation of one's 'true' or inner self.

A similar distinction can be seen in the definition of cybersex. Some argue this definition should include solitary activity such as viewing online pornography (Ross and Kauth, 2002), while others highlight cybersex as an "interactive, erotic experience" (Waskul, 2002, p. 200), reflecting commonplace assumptions that masturbation and solo sexual activity is a poor substitute for having sex with another person (Laqueur, 2003). However, what constitutes 'another person' in cybersex is further problematised. Web 3.0 gives opportunities for users to interact erotically with virtual bodies, or avatars (Gilbert et al. 2011), prompting new

questions, for example around online cheating and infidelity (Whitty, 2005) - the distinction between 'real' and 'virtual' worlds still vivid.

Immersive virtual worlds, more specifically 'Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games' (MMORPGs, see Harley et al. 2018) provide new ways to represent the body. Some MMORPGs have pushed eroticism as graphical innovation has improved (Coyle et al. 1996; Kendall, 2002), with, for example, a range of modifiable body parts and genitalia available for erotic use in Second Life (Waskul and Martin, 2010), with options to improve upon or even transcend the human body (Seymour and Lupton, 2004). Since this vast variety of avatars can be controlled by players of any gender/sexuality, Cypress Valkyrie (2011) notes the broadened scripts available from endless combinations of bodies, avatars, and sexual acts, suggesting a potential 'virtual sexual revolution'. This idea was brought to public attention vividly in Charlie Brooker's (2019) *Black Mirror* episode *Striking Vipers*, featuring two male, heterosexual characters who have sex with each other as male/female avatars in a virtual reality game.

MMORPGs can, therefore, shift typically heterosexist representations of sexuality (Hillier and Harrison, 2007), and allow explorations of sexuality that transgress commonplace scripts. Bardzell et al. (2014) comment on the explorations of sexuality that include cybersex as animal avatars, "group sex, animated sex, vampiric blending of sex and pain, death, sexual ostracization" (p. 3946), a finding reflected in my own work on virtual reality pornography, which included the memorable participant-generated scenario of "being ravished by a velociraptor" (Wood et al, 2017, p. 5444). Virtual spaces can therefore challenge traditional norms about sexuality, bodies and sexual practice (Harley et al. 2018).

Although this is perhaps most vividly seen in MMORPGs, the manipulation of digital spaces for these means can be seen in a range of technological practice. Adams et al. (2003) challenge ageism through the 'sexy selfies' of older adults, and social networks such as *Instagram* and *Tumblr* have been highlighted for their activist application around the eroticism of fat bodies (Hester and Walters, 2016; Kargbo, 2013). Online spaces keep the body free from disease, pregnancy and social stigma, which researchers have suggested creates a 'safe space' for sexual exploration (Ashford, 2006; McLelland, 2005; Hillier and Harrison, 2007), the affordances of digital technologies, such as anonymisation, facilitating exploration into potentially taboo sexual areas to establish new erotic possibilities (Kannabiran et al. 2012).

From this perspective, technology can be celebrated as a safe space for experimentation, arousal, gratification, fun and pleasure (Waskul 2002; Bardzell and Bardzell, 2011). This marks a vivid contrast to the rhetoric of concern exercised in talk about young people's sexualised use of technology. For instance, Döring (2014) notes adolescent sexting is often linked to sexual objectification, exploitation and criminal prosecution under child pornography laws, while Burkett's (2015) study of sexting in young adults finds participants made sexting a mundanity, for reasons of fun, peer bonding and joking. As Harley et al. (2018) write, adolescent "bodies are rendered *too* present, *too* visible, or shared too widely" (p. 113, emphasis in original). The Internet has long been lauded as a democratic safe space for young people to explore identity politics (Bessant et al. 1998), and critical scholars have observed the paradox of stigmatising young people who exercise 'sexiness' through sexting, while sexual agency is made a requirement for participating popular culture (Ringrose et al. 2013; Döring, 2014).

It is widely acknowledged that although some qualitative work on young people, digital technology and sexuality is now emerging, less is known about how technology intersects with young people's everyday communication and is changing young people's sexual cultures (Albury and Crawford, 2012; Ringrose et al. 2013). This is the focus of my research, with critical attention on maintaining young people's sexual agency as a matter of sexual health.

1.4 Young People's Sexual Agency: Critical Health Perspectives

Sonia Livingstone, a social psychologist in media and communications has done a great deal of work exploring youth perspectives of growing up in a digital world (see: Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016). Recently, she has used the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to frame her work. She argues that this framework allows us to step beyond technologically determinant research highlighting the 'effects' of media use, described earlier. Livingstone (2016) indicates this invites a shift, from conceiving children as passive and mute subjects in need of special protection, to children as independent right-bearers with agency and voice (see also: Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone and Bulger, 2014; Livingstone and Third, 2017). This leads us to ask contextually meaningful questions, starting in children's lives, and considering the difference 'the digital' makes.

Such an approach has been taken by Ringrose et al. (2012; 2013, work also with Livingstone) in their examination of teen sexting. They argue that for the young people in their research,

sexting represented a complex set of social practices, whereby technology intercepted with young people's broader socio-cultural environment. Young people highlighted the vital role mobile phones had in playing out their sexualities, but were notably critical about sexting as a practice, recognising how normative-gendered discourses were propagated through this practice. Teen sexting acquired heterosexualised 'currency', for young women being asked for an image had value and, for young men, acquiring images gave them popularity with their peers (Ringrose et al. 2013). Analysing young people's talk via focus groups, Ringrose and colleagues examined how these (new) technological practices (re)produce (old) gendered norms. Instead of blaming technologies for malfunctional behaviour, or accusing young people's naïve usage of said technologies (Harley et al, 2018), the authors rather ask the utopic feminist question: "What would it mean for us to live in a world where teen girls could unproblematically take, post or send an image of their breasts to whomever they wished?" (Ringrose et al, 2013: p. 320)

Beyond this technological framing, Livingstone's (2016) formulation highlights the importance of work that seeks to gain youth perspectives on sexuality while acknowledging their sexual agency. This is reflected in Michelle Fine's (1988) early work examining young women's perspectives on adolescent sexuality, where she found her participants entrenched in discourses of pleasure and desire, yet this was not addressed in the restrictive, anti-sex rhetoric of sex education and school-based health clinics. Coined "the missing discourse of desire", this idea has been taken up by critical scholars examining childhood sexuality (e.g. Vance; 1984; Tolman; 1994; Irvine, 2005; Ingham, 2005; Allen, 2007; Beasley, 2008; Schalet, 2011; Hirst, 2013). Yet nearly twenty years later, Fine and McClelland (2006) proclaim that desire is "still missing after all these years"; critical health researchers argue better sexual health outcomes can be achieved through a 'discourse of desire', since young people are given a right to pleasure (Hirst, 2013) and granted comfort with one's own body (Ingham, 2005).

It is worth noting that the 'missing discourse of desire' as a concept was built largely around young women (Fine, 1988; Fine and McClelland, 2006), since this is where the absence of it was seen most pertinently, in comparison to young men (Holland and Thompson, 2010; Tsui and Nicoladis, 2004; Allen, 2005). Sex education can bolster male privilege, by presenting men as the active desiring initiators of sex, only giving space for women to be represented as passive sexual subjects (Allen, 2004; see also: Hollway, 1989). Moreover, as McAvoy

(2013) argues, the more recent rhetoric of encouraging young people to be 'good choice makers' in sex education and sexual health provision, advantages boys and disadvantages girls. 'Contemporary' sex education matters such as negotiating consent disproportionately burden 'responsible sexual behaviour' onto women (Coy et al. 2016), and constructions of women's sexual 'empowerment' in sex education often reinforce traditional gender roles (Lamb and Peterson, 2011; Bay-Cheng et al. 2011).

New Zealand researcher Louisa Allen (2004) builds on the 'discourse of desire' to form a 'discourse of erotics' that goes beyond an acknowledgement of desire, rather recognising the embodied practicalities of sexual experiences, making such a discourse possible and legitimate particularly in school environments. In a rich data corpus of 10 focus groups and over 1000 survey responses, Allen (2008) found young people consistently wanted to know more about how to make sexual activity more enjoyable and how pleasure could be obtained. She argues that it is these personal sexual experiences that held the most resonance for her participants (Allen, 2001), which she argues can draw sex education and sexual health information closer to young people's lived experience of sexuality.

Allen (2013) has also highlighted how, although Fine's (1988) article led to a plethora of work exploring young women's desire (Tolman 2002; Bay-Cheng et al. 2009; Impett and Tolman, 2006; Jackson, 2005), almost all this work still frames female sexual desire as being absent. This reinforces the idea that young women do not ordinarily experience desire, or as Tolman (2002) articulated in her research with young women, desire is difficult to talk about in the context of female objectification, is potentially guilt inducing, and might get young women 'into trouble'. Allen (2013a) seeks to highlight girls' desire as everyday and tangible through photo-diaries and photo-elicitation.

In this work, Allen (2013a) unpacks an 'unofficial curriculum', which could be likened to what is termed a "hidden curriculum" (Jackson 1968, *cited in* Martin, 1976) in education research, as "lessons which are learned but not openly intended" (Martin, 1976, p. 137). Through participant-generated images, and subsequent interviews orientated around those photographs, she found sexuality was present in her participants' school lives in a multitude of 'unofficial' places. Participants commonly took pictures of couples holding hands (Allen, 2013b), illustrating how young people learnt about 'normal' relationships through watching couples interact. Less obvious places included graffiti, with a participant taking a picture of an etched carving of a penis on their desk, images not offered through their 'official'

sexuality education. Allen's work shows how, despite 'desire' not being present in young people's formal schooling, a discourse of desire is still evidently possible within a schooling environment.

Digital technology was evident in Allen's work, albeit to a limited extent. Although this research was conducted prior to the ubiquity of digital technology in young people's lives detailed earlier, her participants often took photos of their own mobile phones, or their friends' mobile phones to illustrate how important 'texting' was in the maintenance of romantic/sexual relationships (Allen, 2013b). As demonstrated in this section, more recent work looking at how young people's sexuality intercepts with technology has focused on specific behaviours related to new technologies, such as sexting; yet more open-ended research into young people's sexual cultures happened before the advent of ubiquitous computing. I suggest, therefore, that HCI is an appropriate framing for a contemporary inquiry into young people's sexuality. Within HCI, social computing has made people's everyday experiences with technology a significant strand of research (McCarthy and Wright, 2004), but also HCI's pioneering of design methods as a form of research inquiry has potential to build on the use of visual methodologies (Allen, 2013a, 2013b) to research young people's sexualities in a way that acknowledges young people's sexual agency.

1.4.1 Young People's Sexuality & Neoliberalism

Throughout my analysis I draw on the notion of neoliberalism. I use Bay-Cheng's (2015) definition of this, where young people (and particularly young women) are given an imperative of *personal* agency when it comes to sexuality. This discourse prioritises individual autonomy, self-interest and empowerment (Bay-Cheng, 2012; Charles, 2010; Evans and Riley, 2015; Goodkind, 2009; McRobbie, 2008), asserting personal responsibility for consequences, rather than socio-political or structural responsibility (Brown, 2006). While this is commonly associated with macroeconomic policies seeking open market, industry deregulations and the abandonment of social welfare, this has cultural permutations (Harvey, 2007).

My own focus on young people's sexual agency means my own analysis may not be devoid of the assumptions around neoliberalism, and I provide some reflections around this in my conclusions. However, it is worth noting that this particular definition of neoliberal discourse is built around a *requirement* of agency, as Bay-Cheng (2015) states:

“Neoliberalism purports to celebrate and protect agency, but it also operates as a hegemonic imperative such that not exerting free will – no matter the reason – invalidates one’s status as a fully-fledged human. In this way, neoliberalism does not simply affirm agency, it demands it.” (p. 280)

1.5 Youth Cultural Studies

My thesis also relates to a significant body of work around youth cultural studies. Pivotal within this is the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) who pioneered a subcultural approach, which considers how different kinds of youth sub-culture are maintained particularly in relation to class cultures (Hall and Jefferson, 1993). Muggleton (2005) charts the development in youth cultural studies from this early work to a reconstituted terrain of ‘post-subcultural studies’, indicating a move away from a portrayal of subcultures as static or frozen, to consider post-modern cultural forms including flux and fluidity. Additionally, scholars have identified a shift from ‘colourful’ (Nayak, 2003) and ‘spectacular’ (Cohen and Ainley, 2000) forms of subculture, particularly in the form of music and dance cultures, to “structurally embedded inequalities” (Bennett, 2005, p.256) which pay more attention to individual youth biographies (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006).

An early example of this was Paul Willis’s (1977) ethnography of teenage working class men, who detail how their socialisation into masculine culture, with an emphasis on heavy manual work, resulted in a construction of an identity which delegitimised their middle-class school culture. This development of a ‘counter-school culture’ was also seen in Angela McRobbie’s work with teenage girls, finding that a ‘culture of femininity’ (McRobbie, 1978) was built around girls’ forthcoming roles as domestic labourers. McRobbie’s study of ‘bedroom culture’ has since been returned to and updated (Lincoln, 2014), and has been built on particularly by Valerie Hey (1997) who examines young women’s friendships in particular, considering the “intimacy, secrecy and struggle” (p.2) of maintaining these social ties within the confines of femininity.

This body of literature reminds us that young people’s sexual and gendered identities take place within the wider socio-cultural landscape of youth culture. ‘Masculinity’ and ‘Femininity’ are evidently socio-political, and young people’s accounts of gender and sexuality can be seen as existing within these wider discourses. While the emphasis of my analysis is perhaps more ‘micro’ in my adoption of discursive psychology (see Chapter 2),

there are inevitably also ‘macro’ discourses of youth culture to consider, which may be given less attention in my analysis. I provide some reflections around this in my conclusions.

1.6 HCI, SHCI & Design Methods

As McCarthy and Wright (2004) note, technology forms an integral part of our everyday experiences, indicating a shift from earlier models in HCI of human cognition and usability. HCI researchers are increasingly highlighting the importance of sexual and erotic life within this wider shift (Bertelsen and Graves Petersen, 2007; Blythe and Jones, 2004; Brewer et al. 2006). Kannabiran et al (2011) argues that “HCI is a legitimate (and relatively new) domain of human sexuality in its own right and is worthy of study as such” (p. 702), defining this domain as SCHI (Sexuality and HCI). They note that while the majority of HCI work situates digital technology in a technologically determined way, as a means of providing technological solutions to enhance users’ sex lives, increasing work uses human sexuality as a lens for critical interrogation and generating fresh perspectives (Kannabiran et al. 2011). It is here where I situate my work, utilising HCI’s adoption of ‘design methods’ as a means for exploring young people’s sexuality.

Much of this more critical work examines how digital and virtual worlds produce new erotic possibilities. For example, Kannabiran et al’s (2012) work analyses how people described and geolocated sexual encounters on *ijustmadelove.com*, finding the level of anonymity provided by the platform made a form of digital exhibitionism through the platform possible. Through virtual ethnography, Bardzell and Odom (2008) observe how this has led to new sexual communities in the MMORPG Second Life (SL). They highlight how in the ‘Gorean’ SL community (virtual simulations of the Gor fantasy novels), BDSM (bondage, domination and sadomasochism) is played out through appropriating the settings, events and artefacts in the game. As I will elaborate on in Chapter 4, BDSM is seen by some critical scholars as a largely misunderstood practice (Taylor and Ussher, 2001), and these representations in SL provide a platform to make visible these practices, and challenge taken-for-granted ideals. In a similar way, Bardzell and Bardzell’s (2011) study of sex toys puts a ‘discourse of desire’ (discussed previously) at the fore, arguing that the designers of these high-end, sophisticated toys must put pleasurable, embodied, affective experiences at the centre of their practice.

While it is tempting to emphasise the “progressive sex-positive” (Bardzell and Bardzell, 2011, p. 265) dimensions of this research, it is important also to note that the sexualised use

of digital technologies can reproduce potentially harmful representations “cloaked in a veneer of progressiveness” (Su et al. 2019, p. 30). Norman Makoto Su and colleagues’ (2019) recent study of anticipating sexual intimacy with robots illustrates this starkly, in their analysis of forum posts from owners of ‘Real Doll’ (see: Smith, 2013) sex dolls. While the owners of these dolls exercised narratives of ‘meaningful’ relationships with their doll(s), which went beyond sexual relationships and, in particular, imbued ‘care’, they also (re)produced problematic discourse. Indeed, it would be hard to find a more fitting metaphor for the objectification of women than the male ownership of female sex dolls, which Lu et al (2019) note is overwhelmingly the case. Ann Light (2011) argues that HCI might look to “avoid perpetuating the political status quo through conservative and apolitical designing” (p. 430), and to these ends I suggest there is much to be done in SHCI. Light (2011) points us towards design work that exists to raise questions, such as Gaver et al’s (2003) work on ambiguity, systems that “encourage users to supplement them with their own interpretations and beliefs” (p. 240). This approach is echoed in some SHCI work. Kaye and Goulding (2004) have done work around ‘intimate objects’, asking participants to sketch devices to mediate intimacy, exploring *possible* technologies which captured the interactional essence of romantic intimacy. Here, participants drew on ideas from tangible interaction (Dourish, 2001), presenting devices that share warmth and rhythm to simulate physical hand holding, and objects which translate digital notifications (e.g. a voicemail message) to physical movements (e.g. a ‘love egg’ rolling in a concave dish). Such designs are not seen as solutions to a need or problem, rather design is conceived as a medium to critically explore ideas and imagine possible futures (Dunne and Raby, 2013), in this case, how intimacy can be expressed in our technological interactions.

Ambiguity can also be welcomed as a resource in design methods. These encompass a range of methods, often including activities and tasks with the ‘users’ of technology to inform a design process (Tomitsch et al. 2018). This can perhaps be seen most explicitly in Gaver et al’s (1999, 2004) work on cultural probes, which have gained great traction in HCI work (Boehner et al. 2007). These are packets containing designed objects which participants/users/people complete, which in Gaver et al’s (1999) original work contained postcards, maps, a disposable camera and a photo album. Intended to be e(pro)vocative, ambiguous and experimental (Boehner et al. 2007), materials were returned to the researchers in Gaver et al’s (1999) study haphazardly (“piecemeal and leisurely” p. 26) via

post. For Gaver and colleagues, these produced a form of ‘user-centred inspiration’, not as directly leading to designs, but existing in dialogue with, and as a resource for, designers through their design process.

In SHCI, Vetere et al. (2005) used very similar cultural probes to Gaver et al. (1999) to look at ‘mediating intimacy’, alongside interviews, providing a thematic analysis under the (overarching) themes of ‘before intimacy’, ‘during intimacy’ and ‘consequences of intimacy’, highlighting the range of self-disclosure, trust and reciprocity practices identified by participants through this process. They then developed these ideas into design proposals, such as a wearable device to give ‘hugs over a distance’. However, it is worth noting that such a structured, ‘data collection’ model of cultural probes was not how they were originally conceived. Boehner et al (2007) raise concern over researchers situating cultural probes as a social sciences method, finding that many researchers combine probes with more standard qualitative methods such as interviews, as a means of ascertaining ‘facts’ about participants (and developing design requirements). They argue that researchers often shape interpretative methods, such as cultural probes, into objective methods. To these ends, they suggest the challenges that probes pose are epistemological, in that their (re)appropriated use raises questions around what constitutes valid knowledge in design research. It is worth noting that although Ventere et al (2005) did combine probes with interviews in their ‘mediating intimacy’ study, they did not present their analysis as an objective account of participants, pointing out that the naturally “incomplete” quality of probe studies necessitates “subjective interpretations” from the researchers.

Using designs methods as research methods for sexuality research, therefore, requires us to take epistemology/ontology/methodology seriously. As I will discuss in the next chapter, in this research I used ‘design workshops’ as data collection, which I suggest build on the visual methods of Allen (2013a, 2013b) discussed here. However, I do not present this as objective data, rather I treat it as qualitative data to be analysed in a qualitative paradigm.

1.7 A Qualitative (and Social Constructionist) Methodology

My thesis considers two broad overlapping research questions:

- (1) How young people construct and contest their gendered identities and sexualities through these design workshops, and in their reported use of digital technologies
- (2) How young people's understandings of gender and sexuality can be used to design digital technologies to deliver sex education and sexual health information

These questions, focused on capturing rich meaning, require a qualitative methodology. Therefore, the aims of my thesis are not to produce theory-testing or generalisable research findings (akin to quantitative research), rather I am concerned with producing locally situated, contextual knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2013, see also: Smith, 2015; Willig, 2013).

Kidder and Fine (1987) define such an approach as ‘Big Q’ qualitative research. They compare this to ‘little q’ qualitative research, which employs qualitative methods but is still underpinned by quantitative (positivist) principles. I argue my approach to qualitative research is ‘Big Q’ qualitative research (Kidder and Fine, 1987) in that it seeks to interpret data as locally situated, with an emphasis on understanding meaning-making through examining multiple and potentially conflating versions of reality (Tolich and Davidson 2003; Braun and Clarke 2013).

As such, I situate my work as ‘social constructionist’ (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009; Henriques et al, 1984). As I will discuss in my Methods chapter (Chapter 2), this was specifically informed by discursive psychology which is situated in a long tradition of social constructionism (Gergen, 2009; Kitzinger, 1994; Burr, 2003). However, for now, I provide a brief discussion of social constructionism, and I use this framework to provide the definitions of sexuality and gender integral to my thesis.

Vivienne Burr (2003) suggests social constructionism takes a critical, historical and cultural approach to knowledge and ‘truth’, seeing knowledge as “fabricated and sustained by social processes” (ibid. p. 5). In locating ‘truths’ as socially contextual and discursively constructed, assertions of unbiased, objective observations become far removed. Celia Kitzinger’s (1987) ground-breaking work on ‘the social construction of lesbianism’, which predates many researchers using social constructionism in sexuality research, expands on this notion. She contrasts “weak” social constructionism, that merely considers social ‘elements’ to knowledge, to “strong” social constructionism; that is, how social processes (i.e. modes of interaction) actively construct knowledge and reality. In building on researchers using queer and feminist theory to inform social constructionist readings in sexuality research (e.g. Allen, 2008), it seems fitting to use such a framework to examine how young people constructed and contested gender and sexuality through my use of design methods. This was a way of examining young people’s contemporary understandings of sexuality and gender.

Kitzinger (1994) considers how the category of 'lesbian' was constituted by early (male) theorists of sexuality to police women's gender behaviour, particularly at a time when a feminist movement was emerging. Clarke (2008) describes how "the image of the doomed, barren and mannish lesbian was used to encourage female conformity to heterosexual gender norms" (Clarke and Braun, 2009: p. 241). Mainstream psychology has, therefore, served a regulatory role within this. There has been a plethora of research looking at 'sex differences' (Geary, 1998) in psychology, which although contentious (and questioned right from the start, see: Woolley, 1910), is closely mirrored in recent HCI work, such as work on 'gender-inclusive software' (Burnett et al. 2016; Burnett, Churchill and Lee, 2015). However, such an approach has been seen by many feminist researchers as promoting a "malestream" psychology. This is a "male-centric" perspective, where men are presented as the norm and women as some deviance from this, which is, in turn, in need of explanation (Tavris, 1993). The act of looking for sex differences, such as the work on gender-inclusive software, takes as given an essentialist view of gender, as discussed above, the result of biological differences between male and female bodies.

In contrast, critical psychology actively seeks to problematise such 'taken for granted' categories. In this vein, the social constructionist model of gender, and sexuality, is *something that people do*. As Judith Butler has famously argued, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990: 25). By engaging in gendered practices, we produce and reproduce a gendered reality. From this perspective, there is no 'inner-essence' of gender or sexuality.

A critical psychology perspective critiques many of these 'taken for granted' categories, not only gender and sexuality, but more widely held psychological notions such as personality (Sloan, 2009), and traditional scripts of public health, such as individual behaviour change (Murray, 2014). What characterises this broad perspective is a focus away from individualistic values, rather focusing on groups and society at large (Fox, Prilleltensky and Austin, 2009).

As I will discuss in the next chapter, I draw predominantly on a specific strand of social constructionism in my analysis: Discursive Psychology. Here psychological concepts such as accountability, cognition, emotion, identity and embodiment are not treated as pre-existing 'things', rather they are considered as contested and negotiated in social interaction –

indeed discourse is *where psychology happens* (Wiggins and Potter, 2008). Moreover, as I will now discuss, the constructive role of language is integral to my thesis as a whole, since I am concerned with examining how young people's sexual identities are made possible through discourse.

1.7.1 Social Constructionism and the Body

A focus on Discursive Psychology (discussed in the next chapter) means that for analysis the focus on language and discourse, rather than the material concerns of the body, and social constructionism has been criticised for negating such material and physical concerns (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). The tension is that there is no place for material ('fleshy', physical, real) body within 'strong' social constructionism, as 'reality' is inherently problematic. In short, reality is 'produced', it does not pre-exist, hence problematising the ontological status of a ('fleshy', physical, real) body.

This is a concern for gender and sexuality researchers, whose subject is often at the level of 'material' bodies, indeed Chapter 3 of my thesis is entitled 'Sexual Bodies'. While there may be no easy conceptual resolution to this, it is worth considering scholars who have grappled with this tension to provide a (tentative) conceptual framework.

Susan Bordo's (1993, 1997, 2000, 2004) work is highly relevant here, where the body is presented as an inherently cultural artefact, a place where discourses are 'played out'. Her argument is that discourse has effects which are inherently material, the body that is experienced and conceptualised is mediated by cultural discourse. This bears resemblance to the work of Grosz (1994), who argues the body is a "cultural and historical product" (p. 187). For Bordo (1997) discourse has "concrete consequences" (p. 187), a sentiment echoed by other social constructions who lay claim to a material body (e.g. Harré, 1991; Ussher, 1989).

Whilst a criticism for going beyond discourse can be critiqued in such a conceptualisation of the body (e.g. Scott & Stam, 1996), I would argue that acknowledging the body as a (material) agent within and of discourse goes some way towards recognising materiality within a social constructionist framework. Nevertheless there is a tension, which may never be entirely resolved conceptually. Here I am reminded of a conversation I had with Celia Kitzinger, for a special issue of *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, who has written

extensively on social constructionist methodology (see above), which I think helpfully puts such concerns into some perspective:

Matt: Can epistemological concerns lead to paralysis?

Celia: These arguments get rehearsed and rehearsed, and you can end up just worrying about politics and theory, and epistemology, and not do anything because there is not an answer, at least not one I have found in 30-plus years of doing research. My sister Jenny and I, we have both written an awful lot on methodology (e.g., Kitzinger 1994a, 1994b; Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996, 1997) because we thought that somewhere there would be the right way, or a better way, or a valuable way of doing it. The burning ambition now is that there is a problem with the world, these people's rights are being abused, and how can I find out why that is happening? How can I challenge it and put it right? That overrides everything else.

(Kitzinger & Wood, 2019, p.30-31)

1.8 The Structure of the Thesis

My thesis responds to mainstream perspectives of child sexuality, that of a *natured* purity, by giving a critical account, informed by social constructionism, of how young people constructed their sexuality with digital technology. In avoiding commonplace narratives around the impacts and effects of digital technology, I provide a big Q qualitative analysis of design workshops, which explore three distinct but related thematic areas of young people's sexuality, that of sexual bodies, sexual cultures, and sexual health.

This requires a youth-centred approach to research. In Chapter 2, I discuss how I negotiated access with four local youth services in the northeast of England to conduct my research. Here I focused on the challenges of conducting youth-centred work in these spaces, in providing examples of how they could often become dominated by the youth leaders' perspectives, mirroring the mainstream 'media effects' research discussed earlier. These perspectives were often positioned by youth workers as intrinsically superior to the perspectives of young people and were sometimes directly contradictory. This relates to ethical issues, also discussed in this chapter, particularly in the challenges of prioritising young people's voices. I also discuss how my epistemological and ontological position prompted my analytic approach, using a thematic discourse analysis informed by discursive

psychology. I outline the details of this approach in relation to the design method of 'design workshops', and how I utilised this as a qualitative research method.

My three thematic data chapters around bodies (Chapter 3), cultures (Chapter 4) and health (Chapter 5), analyse data from these workshops, and consider how young people positioned themselves within these discourses throughout. I highlight in Chapter 3 that focus on the body is crucial in technosexuality, and I discuss how I explored this with young people through a collaborative body-mapping activity, where young people 'mapped' socio-cultural understandings of sexuality and gender onto inflatable dolls. I examine this visual data concurrently with extracts from the workshop and discuss my findings in relation to the literature on the social indicators of appearance and cultural appearance norms. I discuss how autonomy and control were common discursive devices for the young people participating in my research, which sets the groundwork for sexual maturity as a dominant script for my participants. Here I also note how participants identified a lack of LGBT appearance cues, while heterosexual appearance cues were abundant.

In Chapter 4, I turn analytic attention to the different ways young people talked about sexual cultures, which I divide into three thematic areas. I discuss how young people prioritised positioning themselves as sexual knowers, as 'mature sexual adults', how young people exercised a judgement over appropriate and inappropriate sexual activity as 'judges of sexuality', and how young people displayed curiosity and inquiry around a variety of non-mainstream sexual practices and LGBT topics. Throughout this chapter, I discuss how young people referred to use of digital technology in a variety of ways in order to articulate these positions, demonstrating how the use of technology is interwoven with how young people (collaboratively) constructed themselves as sexual agents.

I consider this positioning across Chapter 5, where I relate these perspectives to the provision of sexual health. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I consider how young people designed their own technologies for sexual health through a Lego building activity, and I discuss young people's talk around these designs in relation to mainstream and critical approaches to sexual health and sex education. The second section is orientated around two (hi-tech and lo-tech) technologies deployed in these local settings. I relate the relative success/failures of these in relation to my participants' positioning.

My conclusions consider contributions across my thesis as a whole. I identify these as conceptual contributions, where I consider how young people positioned themselves as sexual agents through their talk around digital technology, methodological contributions, where I argue design workshop data should be seen as a form of interactional data, and policy and practice contributions, where I consider how my findings could be applied to the provision of sexual health and sex education. Finally, I suggest how my thesis indicates directions for a future programme of research.

Chapter 2 Methods

This chapter gives an account of my methodology, describing how I negotiated access to my participants in the youth service and locating my fieldwork in workshop-based research. I build on my discussion of social constructionism in Chapter 1, discussing how the thematic analysis of my data was informed by Discursive Psychology (DP). I spend the second half of this chapter discussing ethics and raise a particular issue in respect to youth-centred research, that of working with gatekeepers in the youth service. Unusually, I present some data at the end of this chapter to discuss working with gatekeepers as a methodological issue.

2.1 Research beginnings working with local councils

My research was initiated through discussions with public health representatives in Newcastle City Council and Northumberland County Council, who were partnered with the Digital Civics Centre of Doctoral Training. In 2014, these public health representatives approached Open Lab looking to collaborate on a project around sexual health. They had previous involvement with the project 'Feedfinder' (Balaam et al. 2015, see also: Simpson et al. 2016; Simpson et al. 2017), and were interested in applying a similar model to this area. It is worth noting that this period was shortly after public health services became the responsibility of local authorities, which had led to financial and other resource strains on this service. The council therefore had vested interest in developing digital technologies around sexual health.

I first met with these public health representatives in late 2014. Here, they vocalised a need to develop interventions to improve sexual health, decreasing the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and increasing access for under-18 contraceptives. They also emphasised that rates of chlamydia and gonorrhoea were of concern. Within this meeting, I also voiced my perspective informed by the critical literature, around "permissive" sexual health education which respects young people's sexual agency, as outlined in the introduction. It was agreed that, to align these perspectives, young people must be involved in this 'design process', akin to a User-Centred Design approach (Rodgers et al. 2011). It was agreed that I would work with groups of young people from youth services in Newcastle and Northumberland, with a view that these would eventually inform the design of digital technologies to promote young people's sexual health.

This chapter outlines my research approach, study design and methodology. First, I outline the nature of my research, conducted with four youth services in the northeast of England, and in dialogue with public health representatives within the local authorities. This partnership led to a series of design workshops, carried out with participants who attended these youth services. This was conducted in two phases. The first twelve workshops (phase 1) were conducted as a series of three engagements, held with each of the four youth services. Each workshop was based around a specific 'design method', to investigate young people's perspectives on sex and sexuality. The following eight workshops (phase 2) involved participants playing two games, designed and informed by the first phase of the research. These elicited insights around using digital technology to deliver sex education and sexual health information. I discuss how I located the analysis of this data within a broader qualitative *paradigm*, informed by critical psychology and social constructionism.

2.1.1 Quality and Rigour

Statistical-probabilistic generalisability is an unsuitable marker of quality in qualitative research (see: Braun and Clarke, 2014; Lewis et al. 2014; Smith, 2018; Tracy, 2010; Yardley, 2000), as a 'Big Q' qualitative methodology (Kidder and Fine, 1987 – see also Chapter 2) is built on an epistemological position of knowledge as constructed and subjective (Lincoln et al. 2017). There have been attempts to develop qualitative standards of quality criteria, such as Elliot et al. (1999) setting up seven principles to these ends: 'Owning one's perspective', 'Situating the sample', 'Grounding in examples', 'Providing credibility checks', 'Coherence', 'Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks' and 'Resonating with readers'.

However, there are concerns that a generic form of quality criteria for qualitative research can be unhelpful, particularly for discursive research. Reicher (2000) raises concern specifically over 'Providing credibility checks', since interpretations from researchers may necessarily differ from participants (see 'Critical & Discursive Psychology' and 'Ethical Data Interpretation' below).

Since a set of generic criteria may be problematic, I found Lucy Yardley's (2008) set of 'Open-Ended, Flexible' quality principles for qualitative research particularly helpful. These are (1) sensitivity to context, (2) commitment and rigour, (3) transparency and coherence and (4) impact and importance. I now briefly discuss these in relation to my research.

(1) Sensitivity to Context

I demonstrated sensitivity to the context of my research through contextualising the research in related literature throughout my analysis. Although for some this may run risk of overinterpretation, in that it may be seen as imposing too much meaning onto the data, I would like to emphasise that this is *my* interpretation of the data, drawing particularly on discursive psychology and critical theory. Extended transcripts are present in my thesis and are open to alternative interpretations. However, in relating my analysis to pre-existing work, I suggest this adds to the plausibility of my analysis. As such, my thesis contributes to wider work in this area and should be understood to be in dialogue with the related work.

Sensitivity to context can also be demonstrated by representing marginalised voices. As a queer researcher, I was particularly attuned to non-heterosexual (and non-cisgender) voices and made a conscious effort to represent these voices in my thesis, as informed by aspects of queer theory.

(2) Commitment and Rigour

This can be demonstrated through thorough data collection, breadth and depth of analysis, methodological competence and skill, and in-depth engagement with the topic. In total I had a data set of 22 workshops, which were transcribed in full. This was a large and rich dataset, and I conduct a lengthy analysis in my three data chapters. These were also accompanied by photographs, which add another layer of data to my analysis (see ‘Analysing the Visual’ below). I have used discursive psychology extensively and have proven expertise in the approach and subject matter.

(3) Transparency and Coherence

I ensured my research question was a good ‘fit’ with my methodological approach, in that I was looking for how gender and sexuality was ‘constructed and contested’, and discursive psychology is well-suited to these considerations for language practice. I have also attempted to draw on my own subjectivity where relevant and discuss reflexivity specifically in the conclusions.

(4) Impact and Importance

I see my research as having methodological and theoretical contributions, which I discuss in my conclusions. In addition, I provide contributions for policy and practice, and to these ends specifically provide some ‘principles for policy’ for practitioners working with young people.

2.2 Negotiating Access with the Youth Service

The public health representatives, mentioned previously, identified four youth services for me to conduct my research with, representing urban (Newcastle city centre) and rural (Northumberland) locations. All sessions took place at the youth centre where the service was based, with the exception of Brampton (see below). The youth service engaged with young people from predominantly under-privileged backgrounds.

Know-it	Know-it are a Newcastle city-based youth service which offers young people information, advice, counselling, support, community activities and sexual health services. They operate under drop-in provision and project-based work, working in partnership with parents, GPs, health workers, teachers, the police and other voluntary and community projects. The group I worked with were their Know-it 'Champions', a young people's volunteer group of people aged between 16 and 18, who meet weekly to develop new projects, and offer opinions on the services available to them. Attendance to the group for fieldwork ranged in size from 2-6.
PRONG	PRONG offer drop-in sessions in a low-economic suburb of Newcastle. The sessions are informal, offering youth activities (e.g. cooking) alongside advice, support and opportunities to socialise. They run nightly sessions for different groups of young people. The two groups I worked with were the 'under 16s' group (13-16), the 'over 16s group' (16-18) at different stages of my research, dependent on the capacity of the youth service. Groups ranged in size from 2 – 8.
Thornside	A community project group meeting at a centre in rural Northumberland, offering youth activities alongside advice and support. This group was open to people aged between 13 and 18, serving young people from a number of surrounding low-economic towns, which comprised one larger centralised group whom I worked with for my research. Attendance to this group ranged from 6-10.
Brampton	A smaller group of young people from a low-economic area of rural Northumberland who were identified as requiring additional support. These young people worked with a youth worker both inside and outside of their school. The youth worker facilitated social activities for these young people

	(swimming, dancing etc) as well as providing advice and support. These three young people were close friends, attending the sessions altogether. This youth group did not have a single base, so sessions were held at the Thornside youth centre. This group had 3 participants for all sessions.
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Table 1: Youth Services involved with the research

Negotiating access can often be seen as challenging when working with marginalised young people (Bengry-Howell and Griffin, 2012). However, because I was directed to the youth service through the local authorities, access to these groups was reasonably straightforward. The youth services appeared keen to participate, approaching me in the first instance to see how they could be involved with the research. This was perhaps due to the research topic being a point of common interest, one that the local authorities had a vested interest in. Considerable interest was also directed towards the ‘digital angle’ of my research. My relationship with these youth services and local authorities hinged therefore on certain expectations from me, which could be seen as ‘actions of reciprocity’ (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton, 2001) for this granted access.

I met with public health representatives from Newcastle and Northumberland regularly to update them on progress of the project. This involved sitting on a number of committees around communicating sexual health in Newcastle and Northumberland, and contributing to events organised by the local authorities around the digital dimension of sexual health. Around a year into these engagements, the local authorities requested that we (the Lab) build an app for young people to find and review outlets for young people to pick up free condoms as part of their ‘Condom Token’ scheme (see: Wood et al. 2018). As I discuss in Wood et al. 2018,, this was an initiative instigated by the local authorities rather than young people, therefore it does not follow the youth-led trajectory of my research. However, this can be seen as a consequence of my relationship with the local authority, which rested in part on the premise that digital technology for the sexual health service would be developed as part of this project.

My relationship with the youth services themselves took on its own separate dimension, in establishing an ongoing relationship with these youth services as my research progressed. Much of this was also premised around digital technology. After the engagements, I offered participants to try *Oculus Rift* development kit headsets, BBC *Micro:bit* kits and QR Code temporary transfer tattoos, all relating to different ongoing projects in my research lab. At

the youth workers' request, I also brought these to Know-it's summer celebration event. These, in turn, have informed some of the engagement work that I have done at Pride events. With colleagues, I have found that running a stall at local Pride events has been a successful way of raising visibility of research and communicating research findings (Gatehouse et al. 2018). Some of my participants have been present at Pride, engaging with the activities I and my colleagues have run at the stalls we set up at these events.

Being a present and 'friendly face' at these additional events could be seen as a way of gaining trust and finding common ground between researcher and participants (Bengry-Howell and Griffin, 2011). This was in many ways successful, and I had a particularly successful relationship with youth workers and young people from Know-it and PRONG, who were normally very happy to facilitate my fieldwork. However, my multiple positionings, as my relationships extended across the local authority, the youth services, and young people themselves, raised a number of questions. The 'promise' of digital technology to the local authority resulted in the development of an app which was antithetical to my research approach and is a deployment I have subsequently criticised (Wood et al. 2018). This also raises challenges about favouring adult perspectives over those of young people, as I will explore in more detail in the second part of this chapter. Digital technologies can be seductive, to both local authorities and young people, and on reflection these 'actions of reciprocity' (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton, 2001) could have been made clearer from the outset. HCI's lure of digital technologies may grant access over and above what is usual in social research.

2.3 Workshop Based Research

Workshops have a long tradition as a HCI method (Osborn, 1963; Cooper, 1999; Ehn, 1993; Grudin, 1993; Buchena and Suri, 2000; Bogers et al. 2010; Wilde, Vallagårda and Tomico, 2017; Anderson and Wakkary, 2019), taking up a vast range of different forms and purposes. My attempt at a cohesive definition is that they involve multiple participants around a topic of interest through collaborative activities. This definition resembles the definitions of focus groups in the social sciences, now an established form of data collection (Farnsworth and Boon, 2010; Morgan, 1997), defined as a way of exploring collective views through group interaction. Although their link to 'market research' (Merton, 1987; Morgan, 2002) may be an uneasy fit with HCI, with HCI's emphasis on participatory practice (Kensing

and Blomberg, 1998), I suggest it is productive to examine the relationship between the two, as this has important implications for the analysis of this data.

Research adopting workshops is guided by a range of different philosophies, epistemologies and principles, which steer their approach and their expected outcomes (DiSalvo et al. 2014). Researchers' adoption of workshops can often reflect a certain form of design thinking (Simon, 1969), which frequently draws on forms of artistic inspiration. For instance, Wilde, Vallagårda and Tomico (2017) used workshops to explore the relationships between the body, material and context to inspire new forms of interaction, using inspiration from theatre, drama and dance. Vines et al (2014) similarly used theatre activities as a way of exploring scenarios and prototyping experiences and, most recently, Anderson and Wakkary (2019) draw on a rich tradition of participatory arts in their influential 'magic machines' workshop technique (see also: Anderson, 2013). Biskjaer, Dalsgaard and Halskov (2010) indicate how researchers employing workshops have used a whole range of approaches and activities, often borrowing from popular culture, to elicit perspectives and understandings from participants in group settings. It is worth mentioning that the above approaches take a predominantly phenomenological approach (Wilde et al. 2017; Vines et al. 2014), that is, it is concerned with uncovering the 'lived experiences' of participants.

Other approaches that have adopted workshops includes design fiction 'future workshops', (Kensing and Madsen, 1992; Lauttamäki, 2014) where fictitious futures are employed to explore design ideas (Tanenbaum et al. 2012; Blythe, 2014; Blythe et al. 2016), and Agonistic design: that is, looking at the spaces where vigorously disputed perspectives are debated, as seen in Björgvinsson's et al. (2012) work running *Malmö Living Labs*. Workshops are, therefore, not always about designing something concrete or solving a problem.

However, as Anderson and Wakkary (2019) note, workshop formats often are directed on outcomes. In Participatory Design, for instance, participants make active design decisions through a staged process of engagement (Kensing and Blomberg, 1998). This trajectory is also used in a User-Centred Design (Rodgers et al. 2011; Simonsen and Robertson 2012) approach, commonly adopted in Interaction Design with Children (Druin 2002; Frauenberger et al. 2012). Rodgers et al. (2011) articulate this process as: (1) building a design space; (2) establishing design principles, (3) designing and developing a prototype, and then (4) evaluating this with participants. Some forms of 'future workshop' also go through a similar structured process of: (1) critiquing a problematic situation; (2) generating

images about an ideal future and (3) setting an action plan for implementation (Tomitsch et al. 2018).

A focus on outcomes can be criticised for negating the activity that happens within the workshops themselves (Anderson and Wakkary, 2019), mirroring Dourish's argument that "implications for design may underestimate, misstate, or misconstrue the goals and mechanisms of ethnographic investigation" (Dourish, 2006: 541). Likewise, in the social sciences, focus groups can be focused on outcomes, in the form of uncovering the attitudes and opinions of participants. However, as Hollander (2004) argues, focus groups, and I would argue by extension design workshops, are potentially complex social situations. Feminist psychology has argued that focus group data can be wasted or even misused if we do not consider their interactive and contextual nature (Hollander, 2004; Kitzinger, 1994); however, this data is often only analysed for its thematic content (Webb and Kevern, 2001; Wilkinson, 1998). To expand on this, I am suggesting that the rich, multifaceted, 'messy' data that can be generated through employing workshops may be sanitised, refrained or even misrepresented through reductive reasoning.

Despite workshops clearly being complex social interactions, it is rare to see analysis of their social processes, although there are some notable exceptions. Rosner et al. (2016) examined the various ways participants engaged and resisted with their craft activities and interventions to elicit further understandings about their participant group, arguing that Design Workshops must be considered in how they "construct the world they study" (p1131). Vines et al. (2012a; 2012b) took a similar approach. In presenting 'older old' participants with a series of 'Questionable Concepts' (provocative designs intended for criticism and debate) analyses focus upon critiques provided by participants, suggesting 'critique' as a meaningful resource for design. Although analysing the intricacies of these interactions is often sacrificed in favour of reporting on design outcomes, researchers increasingly pose these interactions as analytically meaningful.

As interactional work on focus groups tells us, this can include participants building or questioning each other's points of view, disagreements/agreements with one another, and participants elaborating on their position on a given topic, based on interactions with others within the group (Puchta and Potter, 2004; Hollander, 2004; Kitzinger, 1994; Wilkinson, 1998). Additional levels of interaction may also be added when using naturally occurring / pre-existing social groups to recruit participants, as this allows us to examine the jokes,

anecdotes, teasing and arguing present in day-to-day interactions (Kitzinger, 1995).

Kitzinger (1994) also indicates that the use of pre-existing groups can also mean participants more readily challenge each other on comments and statements, particularly when reported views and observed behaviour by other participants appear to contradict one another. Data collection with existing groups may then result in data that is considered more “naturalistic” (Wilkinson, 1998). I would argue this is particularly applicable to data from workshops, since these are activity based.

The use of group methods to discuss ‘sensitive’ topics has also been well established (Farquhar et al. 1999; Hoppe et al. 1995; Wellings et al. 2000). Kitzinger (1995) indicates that in analysing the humour, consensus and dissent in a group discussion, researchers can work in a culturally sensitive manner, catering to shared understandings and common knowledge. Frith (2000) suggests this makes group methods particularly suitable for conducting research around sex and sexuality, suggesting that the collaborative sharing of experiences and perspectives provides conditions whereby participants can feel comfortable talking about sexual experiences.

Group methods of data collection have been used by many researchers exploring young people’s perspectives on sex and sexuality in the social sciences (Frith, 2000; Cameron et al. 2005; Morin et al. 2003). Data generated from groups is conversational, and researchers have found this allows for intimate topics to be navigated sensitively (Hirst, 2004; Allen, 2005). As discussed, focus groups always contain questioning, building and contradiction, which have provided researchers with fruitful opportunities for analysis, such as young people negotiating sites of sexual pleasure (Allen, 2008), sexual dangers (Bay-Cheng, Livingstone and Fava, 2011) and consent (Coy et al. 2016).

Researchers employing group data collection have also begun to explore the virtues of visual methods and activities. Louisa Allen, who has made extensive use of focus groups to explore young people’s perspectives on sex education, has used media images, greetings cards and books to examine young men’s critical engagement with the messages in mass media (Allen, 2005), and used card sorting to discuss how successfully sexuality topics were covered in their school-based education (Allen, 2008). Kronberger et al (2012) argues that visual methodologies can facilitate discussion around topics driven by participants, rather than being pre-determined by a focus-group guide or schedule. The use of visual methods also goes some way to avoid privileging accounts of verbally mature young people (Clark,

2011). Design workshops, which are inherently based around activities and visual data, were therefore ideally suited to my fieldwork with participants who were predominantly from under-privileged backgrounds.

2.4 Workshops with the Youth Service

2.4.1 Initial Workshops

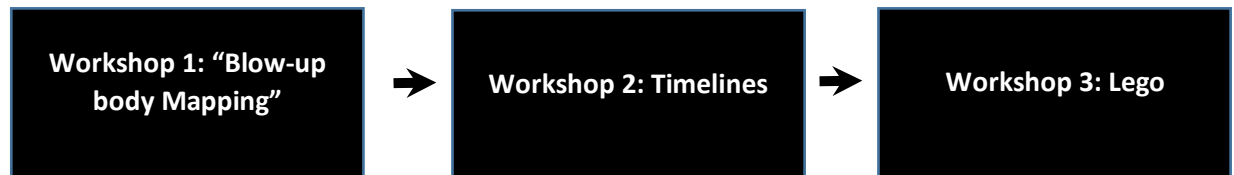


Figure 2.1: Workshop flow, Phase 1

For the first phase of my research, I held three design workshops with the four youth services, each focused around a specific design method. These workshops followed the trajectory in Figure 2.1, and I elaborate on the methods in each of my data chapters (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). These were discussed with the staff of the youth services before the workshops, so the activities were not completely unfamiliar to members of the youth service, whilst also adequately addressing our research purposes. Workshops were held either on three sequential days over a school holiday (for two groups), or across three weeks in the time allocated weekly for the relevant youth group drop-in sessions (for the other two groups). Each of the workshops were between one and two hours in length.

2.4.2 Gameplay Workshops

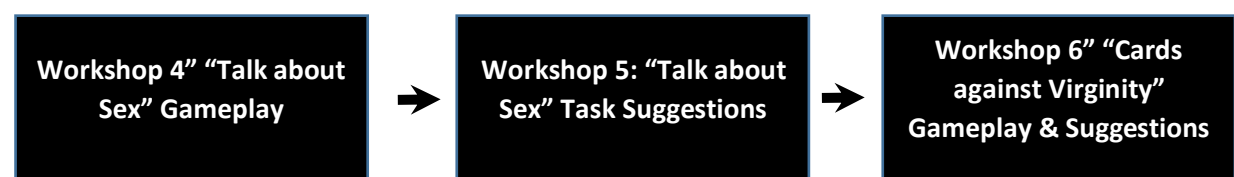


Figure 2.2: Workshop Flow, Phase 2

The second phase of my research was conducted as a series of three workshops with youth groups “PRONG” and “Know-it” (which I label Workshops 4, 5 and 6 for clarity). In workshop 4, I asked young people to play the game ‘Talk about Sex’, a mobile-based game which prompted face-to-face interactions about topics of sex and sexuality. Workshop 5 was conducted one year later, where young people played an adapted version of the game and were asked to provide their own suggestions. This format was mirrored for Workshop 6,

held in the following year, this time around a card game, asking young people to provide their own suggestions. I elaborate on these methods in Chapter 5.

2.5 Participants

Fifty-five young people in total participated in my research. Twenty-one participated in phase 1 of the research, and a further 32 participated in phase 2. A small number of participants (6) had engagement across both phases of the research. Attendance varied according to young people's availability, with Appendix G providing a full break-down of attendance to these sessions.

All participants were teenagers, varying in age from 13 to 18. All these young people were users of the youth service. This is a significant age range; a 13-year-old, who is below the age of consent, would by assumption have a very different perspective on sexuality than an 18-year-old. This was reflected in the approach from the youth services, with PRONG for example holding separate groups for separate age ranges, and all young people in the Know-it volunteer group were aged over 16. Thornside was the group with the most diversity in terms of age, which may reflect the resources available in rural vs urban areas. However, in this group, older children often took on more responsibility, in the form of mentorship for example, overseen by the youth workers.

Thirty-three participants were female and 20 were male, although in phase 1 of the research participants were predominantly female (20 female, 1 male). The one male participant in this phase of the research was a gay man who participated in the Know-it advisory group, who was good friends with the other members of the group and contributed equally to the discussion. In the second phase of the research, participants' gender was more evenly split (19 male, 22 female). Most participants identified as heterosexual (37), although there was representation from non-heterosexual participants, with 7 identifying as bisexual, 8 as gay or lesbian, and 3 as pansexual. Six reported that they did not know their sexual identity. A breakdown of participant demographics is provided in Appendix F.

2.6 Recording and Transcription

All workshops were audio recorded and transcribed orthographically by me, following guidelines in Braun and Clarke (2013). This meant the transcripts included all verbal utterances, including non-semantic sounds, and were not 'cleaned up' into standard English,

in order to retain the way words are said; this is important in interactional analysis, as I elaborate below. The focus of the transcript was to capture ‘what’ was said, rather than how, although certain phonetic qualities were highlighted. Emphasis was highlighted by underlining, loud (shouted) speech by CAPITALS, and cut off speech with a dash (i.e. wor-). Significant pauses were indicated with ((pause)) or ((long pause)), and shorter pauses with (.). Non-verbal sounds were indicated in brackets, such as ((laughs)). Overlapping or inaudible speech was similarly indicated as ((in overlap)) and ((inaudible)). ‘Best guesses’ in transcription were also indicated with a double bracket: ((best guess)). Extended sounds in words were indicated with colon after the extended syllable (i.e. “re::ally). Regional accents were indicated where easily translated into written text (i.e. “me mam”). Reported speech was presented ‘in inverted commas’ and names of media in *italics*. Data was anonymised during transcription. Photographs were also taken throughout the workshops in Phase 1 by a workshop assistant.

2.7 Data Analysis

In order to take into account the social meaning-making that occurred in my workshop data, I drew on principles from Discursive Psychology (DP) in my analysis. Here psychological concepts such as accountability, cognition, emotion, identity and embodiment are not treated as pre-existing ‘things’, rather they are constructed, contested and negotiated in social interaction – indeed discourse is *where psychology happens* (Wiggins and Potter, 2008). Jonathan Potter (1996) has said that in DP approaches, psychology should be treated as an object both *in* and *for* interaction, fundamentally the way descriptive accounts are put together ‘does stuff’ in interaction, to achieve certain means. While DP is seen as a strand of Discourse Analysis (DA), this is a broad umbrella term that includes many different approaches to discourse and language practice (Edley, 2001).

While poststructuralist DA informed by a Foucauldian tradition (typically) talks about discourses more widely in society (see: Gavey 1989; Parker, 1992), DP talks about discourses more locally, drawing on an intellectual tradition including conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). From a DP perspective, we identify how people, as agentic users of language (Potter et al. 1990), use discourses to create versions of reality. These are sometimes defined as interpretative repertoires (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984) or discursive resources (Wiggins, 2016). Some of these are well established, but sometimes ‘new discoveries’ are made in contemporary writing around sociolinguistics (e.g.

Bolden, Hepburn and Potter, 2019; see below). Below is a list of the discursive resources I identified; I refer to these throughout my analysis.

Extreme Case Formulations (ECFs)	a description that takes an exaggerated form, used to add 'discursive weight' to a particular conversational point or argument e.g. "the <u>worst</u> thing that <u>ever</u> happened to me"
Minimisation	a speech act which downplays the significance or importance of a conversational item e.g. "it was barely noticeable"
Pronoun Use	examining different pronouns (I, we, you, us, they) for how they manage accountability, with personal pronouns (I) inferring personal accountability, collective pronouns (we) inferring collective accountability etc., e.g. "we're all in this together"
Three Part Lists	listing in interaction, commonly in three parts, adds a rhetorical weight to an argument, in emphasising a multitude of reasons or perhaps a certain sequence e.g. "there's your condoms, there's your card, off you go"
Script formulation	an account presented as a regular occurrence, frequent, normal and expected e.g. "that always happens"
Active voicing/thought	reporting the words or thoughts of others as if spoken or read directly adds authenticity to an account e.g. "they said 'oh really, I didn't know'"
Narrative structure	the way an account is presented tells a certain story about events, and emphasises certain aspects e.g. "it wasn't until the last three hours"
Metaphors	can also frame accounts in particular ways e.g. "it was a scene from a horror movie"
Membership categories	these categories can be referred to in making inferences about certain behaviour e.g. "I mean, she's my Mum, she shouldn't do that"
Emotion categories	references to emotional state can serve a variety of interactional functions, as explainers etc. e.g. "'cos I was upset"

Modal verbs	express the likelihood of something, or an obligation, and manage responsibility in interactions, or infer a level of causality “they did/could/should/might do that to her”
Hedging or silences	interrupt the flow of interaction, and can precede dispreferred assessments, or indicate a ‘delicate’ issue e.g. “they (.) just (.) umm (.) and I-“
Positioning	how a subject situates themselves in relation to something or someone else, e.g. “I just don’t want anything to do with that” (Korobov, 2010) ²
Subversive Completions	where a speaker intercepts another’s conversational turn, which can exaggerate or derail the action being produced “e.g A: I can wait- (B: “can wait another three weeks”)” (Bolden, Hepburn and Potter, 2019)

Table 2: List of discursive devices identified across my research, adapted from Wiggins (2016)

Although I recognised the constitutive nature of language and discourse, and the potential for multiple and shifting meanings (Taylor and Ussher, 2001), my analysis retained a focus on patterned meaning across the dataset. I was, therefore not so focused on the microanalysis of language use and practice, as favoured in discourse analytic approaches. However, my analysis was underpinned by “strong” social constructionism (as discussed in Chapter 1), that is, how the social interactions incurred through employing these design methods constructed versions of reality for participants.

2.7.1 Critical & Discursive Psychology

Psychology has typically had an internalised or cognitivist focus, treating aspects such as personality, gender, cognition and emotion as pre-existing, natural and discoverable ‘inside people’s heads’ (Hepburn and Jackson, 2009). Discursive Psychology (or DP), as established by Edwards and Potter (1992), radically overthrows this position to propose such internal

² ‘Classic’ positioning theory as outlined by Davies and Harré (1990) is more typically aligned with a Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Korobov (2010) argues that ‘classic’ positioning theory undermines DP, in that they are driven by a collective construction of sociality. While I do not necessarily share the view that discourses in DP and Foucauldian DA are irreconcilable (see: Potter et al. 1990), my use of positioning is more aligned with Korobov (2010) in that it considers agents’ ‘acts of positioning’ through discourse, rather than these subject positions existing in any wider sense (see also: Wetherell, 1998).

psychological concepts are discursive constructions, that is, they are used and managed between people in social interactions. As such, it is defined as applying notions from discourse analysis and rhetoric to psychological issues (Billig, 1991; Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

A focus on psychological concepts as a product of discourse therefore pivots on the notion of situated practice (Hepburn and Jackson, 2009). This sets it apart from other qualitative methods in psychology, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) or certain forms of Grounded Theory, which can treat talk as revealing these inner psychological states (to a greater or lesser degree). As Hepburn and Jackson (2009) state, “‘Psychology’ and ‘reality’ are produced, dealt with and made relevant by participants in and through interaction” (p. 216).

DP often focuses closely on the detail of interaction, at the level of turn-taking, pauses and intonation in speech acts between participants (Wiggins, 2014). This bears relation to conversation analysis (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2007), which is based in an ethnomethodological tradition, which considers “the methods people use to make sense of the world around them” (Garfinkel, 1967: p. 167) and talk as the site of social action.

DP has been productively used as an analytic method in many different areas. Wiggins (2009) examined how blame is managed in National Health Service (NHS) weight management treatment, analysing discussion groups between patients and practitioners at an NHS weight management service. Here Wiggins focused on how participants’ managed accountability and resisted personal blame for weight gain, an account that simultaneously drew heavily on individualistic constructions about weight. Her use of DP meant she was able to consider how these constructions were produced in ‘naturally occurring’ interactions. This provided an account of these interactions which brought to light socio-cultural understandings of weight and fatness, providing a challenge to approaches that ‘psychologise’ weight. DP therefore allows us to consider the situated, social, political and cultural context in which human behaviour is produced (Hepburn and Jackson, 2009).

It would, of course, be entirely legitimate to take an ‘experiential’ approach to this research: that is, understanding young people’s experiences, views and practices around sexuality and gender. However, for my research question: “How young people construct and contest their gendered identities and sexualities” (see Chapter 1), a more critical qualitative approach

was appropriate. While ethnomethodological approaches often focus on reproduction of a discipline's processes (Garfinkel, 1967), DP concerns itself with the reproduction of psychological concepts relating to how they produce particular identities or achieve different goals within social interaction (Wiggins and Potter, 2010).

While my research was driven by these principles of DP, the processes involved were akin to a 'Thematic Analysis', as I now discuss.

2.8 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a widely-adopted form of data analysis, particularly since Braun and Clarke's (2006) widely cited article on 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. Since then it has been popularised not only in psychology but also in the social sciences more widely, particularly in applied areas of qualitative research. However, since their original article, they have expressed frustration at researchers seeing TA as a monolithic 'recipe' for data analysis, underpinned by an (often unwitting) adoption of positivist research values (Clarke and Braun, 2018). Instead, the authors emphasise the theoretical *flexibility* of TA, requiring epistemological decisions from the researcher.

As discussed throughout, I brought a lot of assumptions to my research. I have a background in critical and social psychology, which inevitably shaped my research interests and approach to analysis. I am a gay man, with commitments to LGBT rights and LGBTQ Psychology (Wood, 2016). I have a Masters degree in Health Psychology, which I approach from a critical perspective. My training in qualitative methods has led me to favour discursive, social constructionist approaches to analysis. All this was integral to my subjective positioning as a researcher, which Braun and Clarke have highlighted as intrinsic to their approach to TA – which they have more recently labelled 'Reflexive TA' (Braun and Clarke, 2019). I discuss how I conducted my analysis in relation to the six 'stages' of thematic analysis discussed in Braun and Clarke (2006), but note how these have shifted and altered in relation to the authors' more recent writing (e.g. Clarke and Braun, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2019), and recognise this process is not necessarily linear (see: Braun and Clarke, 2006).

2.8.1 Data familiarisation

My familiarisation with the material was greatly helped by transcribing the data myself, after which I read through the transcripts several times. This also included immersing myself in the visual material that was produced through the workshops.

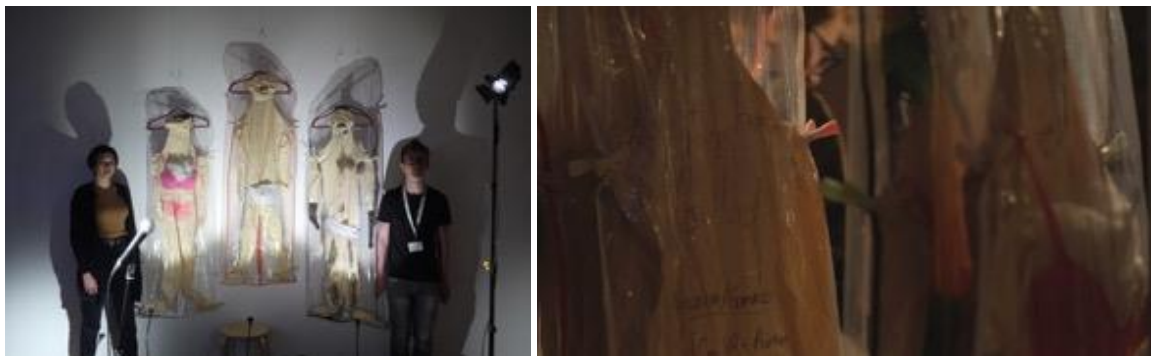


Figure 2.3: Dolls presented in 'Inflatable', displayed (left) and on clothes rail (right)

In the first year of my PhD I produced, with fellow PhD Student Ko-Le Chen, a performance piece entitled 'Inflatable' about the 'Blow-up body-mapping' workshops. This included engaging with the audio recordings, transcripts, physical artefacts and photographs produced in the workshops. This process was invaluable in reflecting on the content of the workshops, and specifically my role as a workshop facilitator. As a part of the performance (itself a 'constructive' act), I hung the (deflated) inflatable dolls in translucent suitcases hung from a clothes hanger, which I kept next to my desk. This provided me with a physical medium of data which I often return to, and prompted many conversations about my work with colleagues and visitors. I also produced a short video about this performance (https://youtu.be/Ot_ZeTfKajI). As well as being a means of disseminating the findings from my work (discussed in Chapter 3), archiving my work in this way led to many valuable conversations about it, which greatly assisted in me in preparing to analyse my data.

2.8.2 Coding

I then coded my transcripts, in their entirety, across the data set. In this process, I was looking to identify anything of potential interest or relevance to answer my research questions. I used codes to identify and provide labels to portions of my data that might be potentially useful. This often included coding the same data with multiple codes, when capturing different elements of the data was potentially helpful in answering my research questions.

In reflecting a critical approach to coding (Clarke and Braun, 2018), this was understood as active and reflexive, an organic process which was not guided by a coding frame. Therefore, coding was not a reductive process; rather, in and of itself, an analytical one. In Thematic Analysis, this is seen to be a combination of "data-derived" (semantic) coding, and "researcher-derived" (latent) coding. Data-derived codes are informed by semantic meaning

of the data (i.e. mirroring the concept and language of participants), and “researcher-derived” codes use conceptual and theoretical frameworks to identify implicit meanings within the data. My coding process used a combination of both these approaches. My latent codes were informed by my background in critical sexuality, which was in turn informed by critical psychology and social constructionism. However, I did not limit myself to this, as I also used the content of the data to inform my semantic codes. I provide a sample of this coding process in Appendix H.

2.8.3 Generating Initial Themes

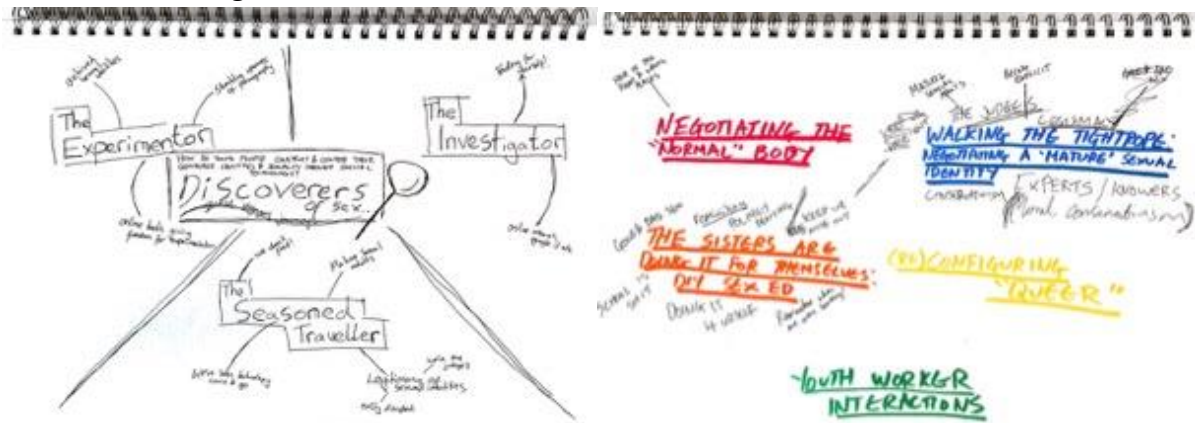


Figure 2.4: Initial Thematic Maps

I then went through a process of clustering these codes into initial themes through visual mapping (Figure 2.4). Since Braun and Clarke’s (2006) original article, they have indicated how studies using Thematic Analysis often use themes as ‘Domain Summaries’, which simply capture summaries of issues relating to a specific issue or topic (Clarke and Braun, 2018). Instead, I looked for themes as capturing a ‘centralising organising concept’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Braun, Clarke and Rance, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2018), about the data. Moreover, whilst Braun and Clarke (2006) originally conceived this step as ‘searching for themes’, this can be read as a realist ontology, whereas ‘generating’ recognises the central role of the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

Therefore, I generated themes as needing an ‘essence’ or ‘core concept’ to underpin the analysis of that theme. In this way, themes were seen as an active creation of the researcher (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000), rather than something ‘emerging’ from the dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In taking this approach, I was looking to move beyond an analysis which summarised and described the surface meaning of the data; rather, looking to interpret

(and tell a story about) how understandings around sex and sexuality were constructed by young people, through their use of design methods.

2.8.4 Reviewing Themes

In seeing themes as a creation of the researcher, telling a story about the dataset, I reviewed and iterated on my themes many times. This involved drawing up many thematic maps (Figures 2.4, 2.5), which I also discussed with my supervisors.

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) suggest two levels of reviewing at this stage, looking for internal and external heterogeneity. After drawing up my initial set of themes (Figure 2.4), I found they had good internal homogeneity, in that they cohered meaningfully and had clear distinctions; however, in examining the external heterogeneity, I found the themes did not satisfactorily capture meanings evident in the data set as a whole. This was perhaps due to my previous analyses (i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate work) being on smaller data sets. In re-coding my data iteratively, as expected in the ongoing, organic process of TA (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and through discussions with my supervisors, I reframed my analysis at a broader level.

2.8.5 Defining and Naming Themes

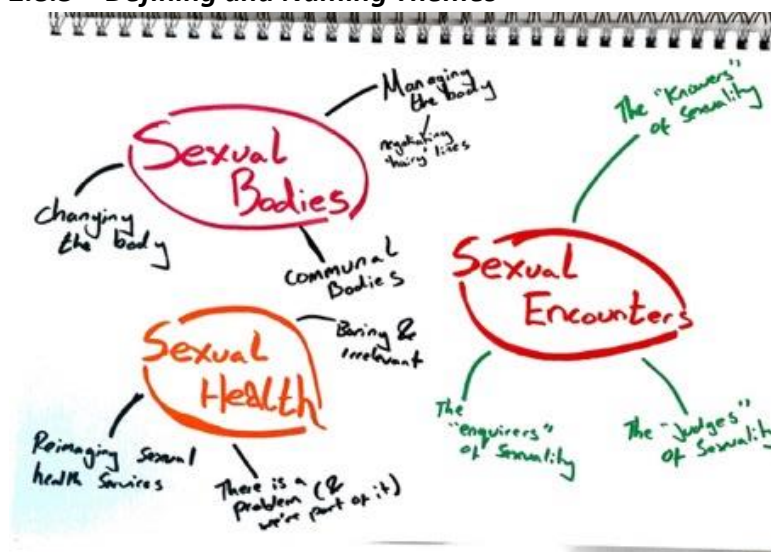


Figure 2.5: Final Thematic Map

Defining and naming themes happens when you have a satisfactory map of your data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After I had drawn up the map in Figure 2.5, I drew up a document which identified the 'essence' of each theme and the aspects it captured (one of which is provided in Appendix I). This also involved identifying three sub-themes for each of my

‘overarching’ themes. This ensured that each theme was coherent, and that each told a compelling story about the data.

The final stage of thematic analysis is writing the report, which may be self-evident but is, nevertheless, an important part of the analytic ‘work’ in thematic analysis. For instance, in my final thematic map (Figure 2.5) Chapter 4 was conceptualised as ‘Sexual Encounters’, which I later reframed as ‘Sexual Cultures’ to better encapsulate the subject positions discussed in this chapter. All this indicates the fluid nature of conducting thematic analysis, which was further influenced by my use of visual material, as I now set out.

2.8.6 *Analysing the Visual*

The write-up of my data also involved incorporating photographs taken from Phase 1 of my research. As discussed earlier, this visual material was creatively utilised in the data familiarisation stage and informed my line of thinking as I progressed through coding and refining my themes. This was reflective of the, rather more limited, guidance around analysing visual material (Pink, 2013; Rose, 2001), which recommends reflexive, immersive engagement with visual material, rather than the systematic coding of visual material. Recently, researchers have engaged with visual material in this manner alongside the steps of Thematic Analysis (Gleeson, 2012; Hayfield and Wood, 2019). This includes considering both the content of visual material, and the purposes for which the material was produced. For instance, in Phase 1 of my research, a workshop assistant took pictures throughout the making process. There were just as many choices involved in the taking these photographs, and the story that they told, as there were in young people’s construction of the dolls.

This provided a particularly fruitful data-source for my first chapter on ‘Sexual Bodies’, but also provided illustrative examples of the points in my analysis in subsequent chapters. As such, the photographs were treated as ‘extracts’ of data, which supplemented and enhanced its “complicated story”. In keeping with the social-constructionist underpinning of my research, I understood these images as produced in accordance with dominant narratives and societal resources available to participants (Pink, 2015), interrogating how the images reproduced social and cultural understandings from participants. However, this process was also necessarily reflexive, maintaining an awareness of how I as ‘the researcher’ presented accounts of young people through this visual material, rather than them being read as straightforward accounts of ‘what happened’ (which would indicate a positivist positioning). The reflexive dimension of talking ‘on behalf’ of my participants was an

important dimension of my research, particularly in working with community partners, which is the focus of my next chapter.

2.9 Research Ethics

Researching young people and sexuality can come under considerable scrutiny (Allen, 2009). I was required over the course of my research to complete six full applications and amendments to faculty ethics boards. An over-emphasis on standardisation and regulation can overlook (and potentially detriment) thornier and more complicated aspects of qualitative research (Miller and Boulton, 2007; Boulton and Parker, 2007; Burgess, 2007; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2008), what Price (1996) calls 'snakes in the swamp' (p. 207) in qualitative research.

As I put forward in my introduction, as an ethical stance my research prioritises the voices and perspectives of young people, seeing children as independent right-bearers with agency and voice (see also: Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone and Bulger, 2014; Livingstone and Third, 2017). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) requires states to assure children have the right to express their views and have full freedoms of expression. As Balen et al. (2006) note, service provision has increasingly recognised children as active beings. For all of the youth services involved with my research, young people aged 13 and upwards accessed these confidentially.

This does, however, come up against some institutional guidelines which require the consent of parents/guardians for participants under 18 (Gill, 2004; McIntosh et al. 2000), which is also reflected in the guidance from Newcastle University (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/research/researchgovernance/ethics/ethicstoolkit/toolkithumans/>). Coyne (2010) challenges the 'blanket' requirement of parental consent for all children under the age of 18, since this fails to recognise children's agency. The requirement of parental consent can be a significant barrier to participation, prioritising the parents' voices over and above those of young people (Balen et al. 2006). As Alderson et al (2006) have argued, even very young children can demonstrate a basic understanding of the purpose of research, and the British Psychological Society (BPS) also states that in circumstances where the views of participants should not be suppressed, a rationale should be made for not seeking parental consent (BPS, 2018).

In my initial applications to the SAGE ethics committee, the reviewers recommended an opt-in form from parents, or in another application that under 16s should be excluded from the study. However, excluding these young people would have impinged on young people's rights and freedoms, particularly as this research was happening at a location they normally occupy. Requiring parental 'opt-in' in the case of my research would have been clearly unethical, since young people were accessing these services confidentially. This dilemma was successfully resolved by arguing that it was the youth workers, who were responsible for the young people in this setting, who were exercising consent for young people's involvement. As Balen (2016) argues, this approach is still not without problems, since involvement is still predicated by adults who, as I will show in the next section, often exercised a great deal of power and control in these settings.

However, this approach was effective in mitigating anticipated 'risks' of participation. McCarry (2012) argues involvement with children in sensitive research is problematic especially if research has the potential to trigger difficult memories or unexpected responses, since children have fewer resources than adults and are more limited in the external support they can seek. The nature of the activities meant that issues surrounding sexual abuse or self-harm could feasibly arise as part of the workshops. However, as the workshops took place with service users, participants clearly had these support services around them. Additionally, youth workers were always present during the fieldwork and knew these young people well, so could deal with any issues arising from the research directly with participants.

For these reasons, I gave additional attention to the consent process of my research. Although the youth workers were asked to inform participants about the research before my arrival, I made no assumption that they had done this. The workshops always started with me having an informal discussion with participants. Here I explained who I was, my background in (Social) Psychology, and why I was interested in this research. I also explained the nature of research and what participation entailed; that the session would be audio recorded and transcribed, and that anonymised extracts and photographs would be used in my thesis and published research. I also emphasised their right to withdraw. Within the youth centres, there were always spaces to which young people could retreat, to do activities unrelated to the research such as cooking, card games etc. If participants did leave the session for any reason, I spoke with them about their rights to withdraw from the study.

As mentioned earlier, I made myself accessible to my participants in surrounding activities and events, with the wish to make ongoing discussion about my research available to them.

I was also required to rethink the participant information sheets and consent forms. Initially I had adapted an information sheet pro forma, used by researchers in my previous institution, which gave lengthy explanations about me, the research, what the research entailed, their rights to withdraw etc (Appendix A & B). This was positively received by my ethics committee, and for a while was even used as an exemplar in the Newcastle University ethics toolkit for human participants. However, in practice, these proved ineffective, with my participants having very little interest in reading such lengthy documentation (making the informal discussion I had with them all the more important). For the subsequent phases of my research, I redesigned the information sheet and consent form into postcard-sized sheets (Appendix C). Here, the information provided was considerably shorter and more digestible and was carefully designed to be less clinical. These were much better received by participants, and this was commented on by the youth workers. If I were to do similar research again, I would look to increase the quality of these materials further, perhaps printing the information sheets professionally so young people were more likely to keep them, as they were often left in the room at the end of the workshop. Researchers have also sometimes embellished information sheets with cartoons (Coyle, 2014) which could further increase the accessibility of these materials.

2.10 Sensitive Subjects with Vulnerable People

It would be remiss in a thesis claiming social constructionism not to mention that 'vulnerable' and 'sensitive' are socially constructed categories (see: Allen, 2009). Louisa Allen, who has worked extensively in this area (Allen, 2001; 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2013a; 2013b; 2015) has written about how the construction of young people as 'risky', 'irresponsible' and 'recalcitrant' in relation to sexual cultures serve as institutional and discursive categories which undermine the agency and competency of young people, leaving her feeling as if she had acted 'unethically' towards participants (Allen, 2009). This perspective rings very true for me. Having young people, sexuality and gender as my subjects means I often feel I am required to defend my research in a way that other researchers are not. This frequently leads me to respond defensively about the importance of the subject matter, asserting young people as independent right-bearers with agency and voice (Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone and Bulger, 2014; Livingstone and Third,

2017), and rehearsing adherence to institutional ethical considerations around informed consent, confidentiality and risks (as discussed above). These considerations are, of course, more complex, and I attempt to tease out some of the most pertinent issues below.

2.10.1 Is participation 'required' at youth groups?

Allen (2011) articulates her difficulties when researching young people's sexuality in school settings where young people may be expected to participate in research taking place in institutional settings. I also encountered this difficulty in my own research. In a discussion with facilitators at 'Brampton' (see above), facilitators had offered to take young people to a sports event in a local city if they attended all of the workshops. While in this case this added 'incentive' was a comparatively low stake, it does raise ethical questions. In the research materials, I was careful to frame participation as voluntary (see: Appendix A-C), however it is important to acknowledge that this framing of participation as voluntary co-existed alongside practices of youth groups themselves, which may contradict my expressed intentions. I suggest this is particularly pertinent in research that is conducted alongside local authorities. Earlier in this chapter I observed how working alongside local authorities may grant access over and above what is usual in social research. I suggest this also has implications for participation. Since local authorities initiated this research, and partner organisations often emphasised its importance, this may have led to incentives being offered to participants without my knowledge.

2.10.2 Participant Disclosure

The level of disclosure offered by participants has been raised as an ethical issue with potentially vulnerable participants (e.g. Dickson-Swift et al. 2007; Oakley, 1981; Reinhartz, 1992); this was particularly pertinent in my research, as participants were often discussing deeply personal topics. This came to the fore for me when shopping in my local supermarket, where I saw one of my participants stacking shelves. While I did not attempt to avoid eye contact, I felt this individual did not want to acknowledge my presence. In the workshops she had been very forthright in disclosing some personal encounters online, and for me this experience emphasised the importance of respecting the 'four walls' of the workshop room and not to presume participants want to engage beyond this. However, this was juxtaposed when a (queer identifying) participant met me at a local Pride event, who had likewise disclosed some very personal details to me, where they were apparently delighted to see me and initiated some dialogue about the research. Hence correct or

incorrect procedures around this are, inevitably, subjective. This made me reflect on insider and outsider positions with my participants (Gallais, 2008). For this queer participant, I was an insider, and inherently there seemed to be trust and kinship within our participant-researcher relationship. For the previously mentioned participant, a heterosexual woman, I was an outsider, making our participant-researcher relationship more complicated. Conducting research from an 'outsider' position can make researcher-participant relationships more ethically problematic (Gallais, 2008) and these encounters were a reminder to me of how these issues can play out.

2.10.3 Ethical Data Interpretation

The relational ethics of interview-generated data is a hotly contested debate in the ethicality of discourse analysis (Hammersley, 2014; Taylor and Smith, 2014), and these debates are also relevant for group data collection. At its core, this concern is how a discursive psychology researcher's interpretation of what is said in data collection can be radically different to the 'intended' position of participants. Whilst everyday conversation relies on constructions of 'attitudes', 'opinions' and 'experiences', a discursive analysis seeks to deconstruct this, looking at discursive patterns in talk and how they are employed to produce discursive achievements.

McMullen (2018) gives an example in her own research of a participant who took exception to her analysis. She identified a pattern of discourse around 'enhancing oneself, diminishing others', and a participant took this as saying something about her personally. McMullen helpfully distinguishes 'common sense' understandings of language from the perspective of a discursive psychology. For McMullen, these were cultural and temporal narratives relevant to their current discursive context, whilst her participant perhaps unsurprisingly (and quite possibly unwittingly) took a realist position of there being a straightforward relationship between her talk and 'internal' constructs of attitudes, opinions and the like.

Researchers have grappled with this tension in different ways. Hammersley (2014) called for us to reconsider the notion of 'informed consent', since there are rarely times in life when individuals are entirely honest about (or, indeed, may not even know) their 'true' intentions. I would argue this is particularly the case with discursive work, where the individuals may not know that the researchers are going to employ this method of analysis. Indeed, to give 'consent' for words to be interpreted under a certain 'lens' does seem peculiar, since it

would be impossible to pre-empt this (and moreover, the readers' interpretations of a researcher's interpretation).

One way to contend with this apparent ethical quandary is to consider the exposure to risk; the extent to which participants will be harmed by our analysis. Josselson (2007) stated that she sees no evidence of significant harm "except in the rarest of cases" (p. 551) and that she took comfort from participants being unlikely to read what she has published. For me this is a curious argument. I would suggest that hoping that participants do not read our papers is not the most robust defence of a discursive psychology position.

Some scholars have suggested 'intelligibility' is a matter of concern here, that a discursive analysis may not make sense to or interest participants. While this may be relevant for my participants, particularly as they are mostly individuals under 18 and are perhaps unlikely to engage with an in-depth analysis of language practices, this position has been contested. Potter (2010) calls such a position "speculative, presumptive and patronising" (p. 665), citing Hepburn (2006) finding that the process of reflecting back these practices to workers on the NSPCC child protection helpline was engaging and productive.

Drawing from Potter, my ethical stance is that a discursive analytic approach offers a productive perspective in which to examine talk. Research by necessity involves a level of interpretation (otherwise we would simply present our verbatim transcripts), and I consider my interpretation of the data no more ethically problematic than an analysis from a different perspective. Potter (2010) offers insight into how being analytically sensitive to individuals is not the same as taking what they say at face value:

"if participants express a strong and authentic commitment to god, should analysis too be religious? If participants deny the existence of the holocaust should that become an accepted feature of further analytic work? Being analytically sensitive to the displayed understandings and perspectives of participants in the way that DP advocates is not the same as endorsing the existence of those things." (p. 664)

While discursive psychology can run the risk of presenting itself as an 'absolute' interpretation of data, it is worth emphasising that the process is still necessarily subjective. For me, qualitative research and analysis is all about choices, from the subject matter and the methods employed to the quotes presented and how they are analysed. I contend that my analytic sensibility prioritises young people's perspectives, respecting and

acknowledging these accounts, and that analysing them in depth is an exercise in respecting those accounts, not diminishing them.

Of particular note for me, young people's participation in these spaces was predicated by adults in my research, and of particular note, the youth workers, who often exercised a great deal of power in these youth group settings. Whilst my research questions and research approach are youth centred, analysing the interactions youth workers had with the young people, and me, was also important in understanding these power exchanges. I will now take an unusual step: to discuss some of this data as part of this methods chapter, identifying youth worker intervention as a methodological challenge in youth-centred research.

2.11 A Methodological Challenge: Working with Gatekeepers

Whilst the narrative of my data chapters are focused on how young people construct and contest gender and sexuality, I spend the remainder of this chapter discussing how these narratives were constrained by the discourses of adults, specifically youth workers present at the youth centres where I conducted my fieldwork.

In phase 2 of my research, a new worker, Joel, had started working for PRONG, and took on responsibility for the young people participating in two workshops. He unexpectedly took on an active facilitator role within the workshops: "Right (.) if anyone wants a hotdog, hotdogs (.) you've got a choice of ketchup or ketchup" / "Twentieth today, longest day! Starts gettin' dark after today, again". Joel often interrupted during the facilitation of the group: "We'll see how we go, if I need to chip in, I will", notably during the consent process: "What are they consenting to?" Matt: "It depends so (.) it all says on here, so it says you've read the information sheet, you understand it's a research study, I'm a researcher at Newcastle University (.) uhh...", and when eliciting feedback from young people: "Has anybody got any feedback, has anybody got any that they would like to write on that you think should appear on the screen when the questions come round when the whole game's called Let's Talk About Sex, so what do you think, do you think it does that? ((pause)) No? Not really? Anybody else got a comment? ((pause))"

These interjections resulted in displays of frustration from both me and my participants, most notably through Joel's offer of alternative pens for writing down suggestions for tasks the game could play through:

Joel: Do you want some biro's because that's shiny paper, it might erm, smudge.

Matt: Ohh, okay (.) it should be uhh (.) like we've done it before bu-

[Joel offers pens]

Dale: No (.) Joel (.) it's fine.

Joel: Is it all right?

Dale: Here, here.

Joel: There's some extra pens if not.

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In line 2 in the above, I give a display 'hedging' (Schegloff, 2007) around Joel's offer of pens, a 'skirting around' response which indicates a dispreferred interactional turn, i.e. a denial of this offer. This refusal (and hedging) was made more explicit by Dale, more unusual in interaction analysis (Schegloff, 2007), an explicit statement of "No (.) Joel (.) it's fine", a display of resistance against this figure of authority. It was clear, however, that Joel still occupied a position of power, retaining and qualifying his offer of pens, "there's some extra pens if not." This mundane example set the scene for much of these workshops, and his occupation of power was all the more evident through his interjections in the gameplay – "if I need to chip in, I will". The following interaction occurred in response to task 21, 'take a selfie on someone else's phone':

Dale: No, I 'aven't, I 'aven't got a camera.

Matt: Do you wanna take a selfie on my phone (.) oh no, that's probably bad isn't it?

Joel: No, you can't do that.

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In my role as workshop facilitator, I retract from my offer of using my phone with a 'minimisation' tactic (Watson, 1997), suggesting that it's "*probably* bad" (emphasis added) to use my phone to complete this task. This is in stark contrast to Joel. Like Dale's refusal in the above, but from a very different positioning, Joel uses an explicit statement of "No", which in his role as youth worker is akin to a 'telling off'. This is a conversational tactic which Joel uses to enact a role of authority, "you can't do that" (emphasis added), the use of

“can’t” as a modal verb inferring the likelihood of this event happening, i.e. it won’t under his watch. This brief exchange is hierarchical, in that it sets his status above mine – Joel’s say is conclusive and final, and set very much apart from the interactions of “us” (as young people). It is worth noting that positioning me as a young person here was made all the more evident before the session commenced, where he solicited my feedback on a sexual health pamphlet, not as a researcher, but as an individual who was (at the time of fieldwork) under 25.

Therefore, many of these interactions consisted of Joel setting his perspective over and above contributions from the rest of the group. One of the proposed tasks for this group was “suggest a piece of life advice” to the group, where the following interaction occurred:

Dale: I'm great at life advice.

Matt: W-w-what life advice would you have given?

Dale: Just yo-lo it.

Leah: ((laugh)) Yo-lo it.

Matt: Y-

Paul: Yo-lo it.

Leah: Yo-lo, you only live once.

Matt: Yo- ohh, you only live once.

Dale: Just yo-lo it, yeah.

Matt: Could be useful advice.

Joel: I'd say don't drink too much is a good bit of advice.

Cat: ((laugh))

Dale: Yeah that is a good one.

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Through my asking of young people’s “life advice”, the colloquial expression “yo-lo” resonated, in that it was repeated by many group members. Here, I interactively sought clarification through enacting confusion (“y-”), where this expression was explained: “you

only live once.” Here, my cautious display of affirmation (“could be useful advice”) was interposed by Joel, who interrupted the conversational flow with a piece of his *own* advice: “I’d say don’t drink too much”, qualifying it as “a good bit of advice”. Joel’s status in this interaction sets this suggestion as superior, to be taken over and above the suggestion from Dale. Through this, Joel sets himself as a vessel of apprise, providing a by-the-book ‘official’ piece of public health information. This contrast in tone underscores the response from group members, who are bound in possible responses given the implicit hierarchy present – Cat: ((laugh)) / Dale: “Yeah that is a good one.”

Joel took it upon himself to give a number of suggestions around tasks the game could offer, resulting in what could be seen as a ‘battle of control’ between young people and Joel. At one point, Joel suggests “all the names you can think of for like male body parts” or “a slang word for penis”. When it is pointed out to Joel that this was on the list of tasks already: “That’s on there though” (Dale), Joel qualifies this again through use of modal verbs, “Yeah that was shout them out, you *shouldn’t* really shout them out” (emphasis added). In a session with another group the following day, Joel gives a different suggestion, around presenting “myths or facts”:

Joel: But could you do some sort of, y’know that fact thing when it comes up on the screen like, myth or fact, if you drink *Doctor Pepper* for prolonged periods your testicles drop off.

Kez: ((laughs))

Yan: ((laughs))

Joel: Myth or fact, you can’t get pregnant if you have sex standin’ up (.) like, I’ve had questions asked by many young people that was a genuine one, the other one was, you can’t get pregnant if the cat’s in the room.

Kez: ((laughs))

Yan: ((laughs))

Matt: So:

Kez: Like should it be more like that, like-

Matt: So, bu- bu-

Joel: You think it's funny but like, they're genuine questions, an' one young lad did ask me once, in a session about sexual health, he went, 'if you drink too much *Doctor Pepper* does it make you infertile-'

Matt: (sigh)

Joel: -an' like-

Yan: (don't think) that's true.

Joel: I think you'd 'ave to drink like, a lot of *Doctor Pepper* for that to happen, but I don't think there's any sort of medical research that would back that up.

Matt: So there's a line isn't there, do you (.) genuinely think, people believe, if there's a cat in the room-mmh that, I don't know it's an open question-

Siobhan: But the thing is though-

Matt: -do you think they're takin' the, mick there?

Siobhan: Even if you're, I don't think so ((laugh)) even if you're-

George: I mean-

Siobhan: But you'd be surprised, like.

George: Yeah (...)

Joel: Yeah, maybe not the cat in the room but definitely though, you can't get pregnant if you have sex standin' up.

Matt: Yep.

Joel: You can't get pregnant if a girl's on her period, things like that.

Matt: Yep.

Joel: Are genuine kind of like, "Oh well you can't because your girlfriend's on her period" so it's like-

Matt: Mmm.

Joel: "Yes you can" and, erm, it's sort of, without asking those questions you're not gonna, like, dispel those myths, you're not gonna open up that discussion about that.

Matt: Yep.

Joel: As opposed to kind of like, take a selfie on someone else's phone, erm, write down the name of the first person you've kissed.

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Here, Joel rather bolshily pushes this concept into the group discussion, reeling off various 'unbelievable' questions he has apparently been asked by young people, presumably 'other' than the young people physically in the room. This narrative is driven forward with little opportunity for interception, cutting off other speakers as he spearheads forward this idea. The repeated mantra Joel provides of "myth or fact" is binary, reducing sexual health down to 'falsehood' or 'truth', serving a discursive function of 'kids say the funniest things.' Joel responds to laughter from the group - "you think it's funny" - with a statement of authenticity (see Chapter 3) - "they're genuine questions", although here "testicles drop off" is lessened to "make you infertile." After punctuations of frustration from me, I directly challenge Joel on this, where Siobhan (another youth worker) and George (a young person who takes on a supervisory role in the group) back Joel up. This mirrors my previous work where the dominant construction of young people was that of them being 'naïve' (Wood et al. 2018). Siobhan and George's conversational work, in turn, positions me as 'naïve' - "you'd be surprised" (Siobhan) / "yeah" (George) - for resisting Joel's narrative.

Whilst Joel does back down on one of the claims I directly challenged him on ("you can't get pregnant if the cat's in the room"), he continues along a realist pursuit of myth-busting, repeatedly emphasising the validity of his claims ("definitely" / "things like that" / "are genuine"). In so doing, Joel himself becomes the dictator of correct sexual knowledge. He poses an assumption through reported speech (Holt, 1996), which adds further discursive weight to his argument "'Oh well you can't because your girlfriend's on her period'" with an instantaneous response "So it's like (Matt: Mmm) 'Yes you can'." The objective of an app, from Joel's perspective, should be to "dispel those myths", and discussion should be "about that", rather than the tasks as they currently stand. Although this perspective was not concurrent across all the youth workers I worked with, youth worker Siobhan, who was also

present in this group, also shared this meaning-making with Joel (albeit less forcefully) – “you need to be doing it for a point rather than just sort of, havin' a laugh really” / “if it's literally just doin' the thing that's on the screen I don't think there's any real information comes from it kind of thing” (Siobhan). Talk about Sex, from the perspectives of these youth leaders, should be “for a point”, and provide “real information.”

Whilst this may have significance, more so for the status and positioning of the youth service (which I discuss in Wood et al. 2018), I want to suggest this positioning also had implications around the mobility of young people as sexual agents in this setting. As mentioned earlier, possibilities for young people to occupy sexual agency were constrained by the status Joel (and other youth workers) occupied. However, the participants did have available to them more indirect displays of resistance. In a session that took place before the myth-busting crusade witnessed in the previous extract, when asking for suggested tasks for the games to play through, Joel wrote down two proposals:

Joel: I put: what is the legal age of consent in the UK?

Matt: ((laugh))

Dale: Sixteen.

Joel: Explain the *Condom Token* Scheme.

Leah: (while eating a hotdog) I know that.

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In a rather more relaxed setting than the previous extract, illustrated very fittingly with Leah speaking through mouthfuls of hotdog, (limited) responses to Joel's suggestions were made possible. Both Dale and Leah reel off immediate responses to Joel's suggestions: “sixteen” / “I know that”, in quick succession, which could be seen as an example of a ‘subversive completion’ (Bolden, Hepburn and Potter, 2019), completing another speaker's conversational turn to subvert its meaning. Like the previous extract, Joel presents himself as the purveyor of ‘correct’ sexual knowledge, with Dale and Leah's subversive completions providing a rebuttal to this assertion – they already know the answers to Joel's questions - indicating the futility of asking them. Also in this group, Dale provides the only direct confrontation of Joel (aside from the abovementioned offer of pens):

Joel: Are you wanting more sort of like, cos I was just thinking about questions like "What is the legal age of consent in the UK?"

Matt: Mmmhm.

Joel: Stuff like that.

Dale: That's a boring question.

Matt: So:

Joel: That's a borin' question?

Leah: ((laugh))

Dale: Oh God.

Matt: Why do you think it's a boring question?

Leah: It's (edu)cational.

Dale: Educational.

Joel: Is that not the whole point of the game?

PRONG, Design Workshop 5, App Reviewing

Joel frames this suggestion as a question to me, an “are you wanting” of his perspective as a sexual health worker. Joel enacts a process of realisation, voicing his thought in a time-specific manner, he “was just thinking” of an application to traditional ideals of sexual health – “What is the legal age of consent in the UK?” Here, Joel’s idea was classified as “(edu)cational” which, in turn, was dismissed as “boring.” There was some indication that the challenging of Joel was perilous (Dale: “Oh God”), but overall, these conversational conflicts indicate potential barriers to voicing the perspectives of young people. Joel’s talk voices conviction that this game should be didactic, a perspective which railroaded input from young people. Generally speaking, sessions with Joel were unsuccessful in addressing my (youth centred) research questions.

2.12 Conclusions

This example illustrates how problematic it is to consider adults speaking ‘on behalf’ of young people. Young people have their own agency and voice, separate and distinct from those of youth workers. The priority of my thesis is to focus on the discourses of young

people, how they positioned themselves in my fieldwork, and the implications this has in designing technologies for sexual health. However, it is important to note that the fieldwork was conducted in an adult-mediated environment. This chapter has situated my analysis contextually, as conducted by a (queer) adult researcher, through a critical qualitative social psychology approach, informed by social constructionism and discursive psychology.

Chapter 3 Sexual Bodies

Understandings of sexuality are tied up inescapably with the human body. Sociological writing about the body has typically been located in relation to shifts and changes socio-culturally (Gill et al. 2005, see Chapter 4), having clear implications for sexual health (see Chapter 5). Therefore this chapter in many ways ‘sets the scene’ for the rest of my fieldwork, discussing how young people constructed the ‘sexual body’ through my workshops. Here, I discuss how I started my workshop engagements with a body-mapping activity, asking young people to plot their ideas of gender, sex and sexuality onto inflatable dolls, resulting in rich and complex interactions around notions of the sexual body. However, this chapter also uses data from the Lego workshop, which I elaborate on further in Chapter 5, when this data spoke to notions of the sexual body.

Bodies are cultural and historical products (Grosz, 1994) which we imbue with sociocultural meaning through clothing (Frith and Gleeson, 2004) and other appearance practices (Frith, 2012). An influential way of thinking about this has been through the idea of ‘body projects’ (Giddens, 1991; Shilling, 1993; Featherstone, 1991), that the body is in a constant state of unfinish, requiring ‘work’ to accomplish an identity. As Giddens (1991) states, “We have become responsible for the design of our bodies” (p. 102). ‘Body projects’, then, intercept with a wide variety of disciplinary interests, from sociology, design, fashion and psychology, to name but a few.

The ‘responsible’ management of one’s body is linked with neoliberalism, which as defined by Featherstone (1991) locates the body as a vehicle for self-expression, reinforced by consumerism. When neoliberalism is applied in (feminist) psychology, this is seen to reflect injunctions of ‘being free’ and ‘choosing’ whilst simultaneously being bound by the discipline and regulation of society (Gill, 2008). This is also intermeshed with discourses around technology. Lupton (2013) notes the uptake of mHealth (mobile health), which often includes voluntary self-tracking, further enforcing self-regulation and self-control over our bodies. Pitts (2005) links the notion of body projects “irreversibly” (p. 229) to technologies (in their widest sense), noting developments of medicine and surgery which make the body appear “more plastic, more available for cultural expression and transformation” (p. 230).

Turning our attention to tangibles, wearables, virtual and mixed realities, the role of the body has an increasing bearing in HCI research, albeit from a different perspective, as seen

in the shift to thinking about physical interfaces in embodied interaction (Dourish, 2004). Designers have also brought the body into the design process, sometimes called ‘embodied design ideation’ (Wilde et al. 2017), which includes techniques such as bodystorming (Buchenau and Suri, 2000), video (Ylirisku and Buur, 2007) and performance (Loke and Robinson, 2013).

In the first of the design methods I employed, I wished to capture broad understandings around sexuality and gender with my participants. Body mapping has been used in HCI as a Design Method (Almeida et al. 2016; Wallace et al. 2013) and considering the history of body mapping as a method (discussed next), it was a logical extension to use this to explore young people’s constructions of sexuality. To utilise design workshops as a group method to gain collective perspectives (see Chapter 2), it made sense to configure this a collective activity, rather than requiring young people to complete this task individually.

3.1 Blow-up body-mapping

“Body-mapping” was a technique pioneered in medical anthropology and health studies, whereby participants are asked to collectively ‘map’ understandings of a topic onto an outline of the body. Cornwall (1992) describes her use of Body Mapping with women living in southern Zimbabwe. Distancing herself from a western, scientific model of the body as culturally natural, she asked her participants to draw maps of the body to examine culturally specific understandings of the body. This included assumptions around contraception (e.g. “the pill works by making the man’s sperm unable to work” p. 3) and anatomy (e.g. “the womb as a gateway through which semen and eventually the mature foetus is passed” p.3). Cornwall indicates the contextual knowledges gained from using this method, a shared reference point for talking about the body.

This method has also been used specifically to explore matters of sexual health (Chenhall et al. 2013). The authors indicate that use of this method, with small groups collectively mapping bodily features onto a life-sized outline of a body, explored many related issues around sexual health, from drug and alcohol abuse, to anorexia, bulimia and violence. This resulted in complex and multi-layered stories about the characters created. This was particularly relevant for my research, as a critical approach to sexual health looks to go beyond traditional scripts of sexual health. The use of body-mapping has been used to extend discussions around sexual health to include matters of “pleasure, desire and sexual

entitlement” (Gubrium and Shafer, 2014), areas highly relevant to critical approaches to sexual health.

Three dimensional body-mapping, as demonstrated by Tarr and Thomas (2011), poses opportunities to explore more intricate aspects of embodiment, in their case to visualise the experiential levels of pain of professional dancers. I was intrigued by the possibilities of 3D body mapping to explore matters of sex and sexuality, as a three-dimensional medium presented novel opportunities for dressing and customising the body through clothing and craft materials. It has been suggested in making and crafting research that new understandings of thinking and acting can be enabled through the collaborative processes of making (Adamson 2007; Ingold, 2013). In addition, visual research methods can be seen to “stimulate, refresh or reframe conversations” (Wagner, 1994, p. 4) and can, with young people on topics as identified by young people, generate new (visual) ways of interrogating social understandings (Mason, 2006).

I situate ‘Blow-up body-mapping’ as an extension of these methods. It has been argued that constructionist research can disregard the body, focusing rather on language and discourse (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999). Bodies are intrinsic to research in gender and sexuality, yet in taking a discursive and constructionist approach my focus was not on experiential accounts, as favoured by many researchers utilising body-mapping (Cornwall, 1992; Chenall et al. 2013; Gubrium and Shafer, 2014). I therefore provided a culturally loaded material for participants, gender-‘neutral’ inflatable dolls.

Although the dolls were gender-‘neutral’ in that they were devoid of genitals, breasts, or other distinguishing features, inflatable dolls are inevitably gendered, culturally representing objectification, allowing me to examine young people’s relationship with socio-cultural representations of the body. Using craft materials I asked young people to plot their ideas of what sex and sexuality mean onto the dolls, inviting participants to make a man and a woman, or someone of a different gender. Participants were presented with a range of different materials they could choose from in crafting their dolls. This included underwear, tights, balloons, wool, pompons, felt, paper, feathers, pipe cleaners, lipstick, nail varnish, sharpie pens, scissors, tape and glue. Sometimes young people also incorporated materials they had available in their youth centres. My aim here was to have a broad range of craft/clothing materials which young people could use as they wished.

Twenty-one young people participated in this stage of the research, mostly from under privileged backgrounds (rural Northumberland and low-economic suburb of Newcastle, see Chapter 2), although one group was predominantly made up of middle class participants. In this phase of the research, participants were overwhelmingly female (1 male, 20 female, see also Chapter 2), therefore the account that follows is predominantly of young women. This analysis considers how their talk about appearance intersected with socio-cultural discourses (Frith, 2012), which argue relayed expectations of how young people, particularly young women, should be managing and maintaining their bodies. I argue that these were justified and policed through dominant discourses of femininity, and specifically through (post-)feminist ideals of individuality and authenticity, which simultaneously denied a visual identity to sexual minorities.

3.2 Social Indicators of Appearance

To begin my analysis, which combines both visual and textual elements, I would like to present a photograph of two dolls created in the ‘blow-up body-mapping’ workshop conducted with group “PRONG”. These dolls were created by four female participants who were between fourteen and sixteen years old.

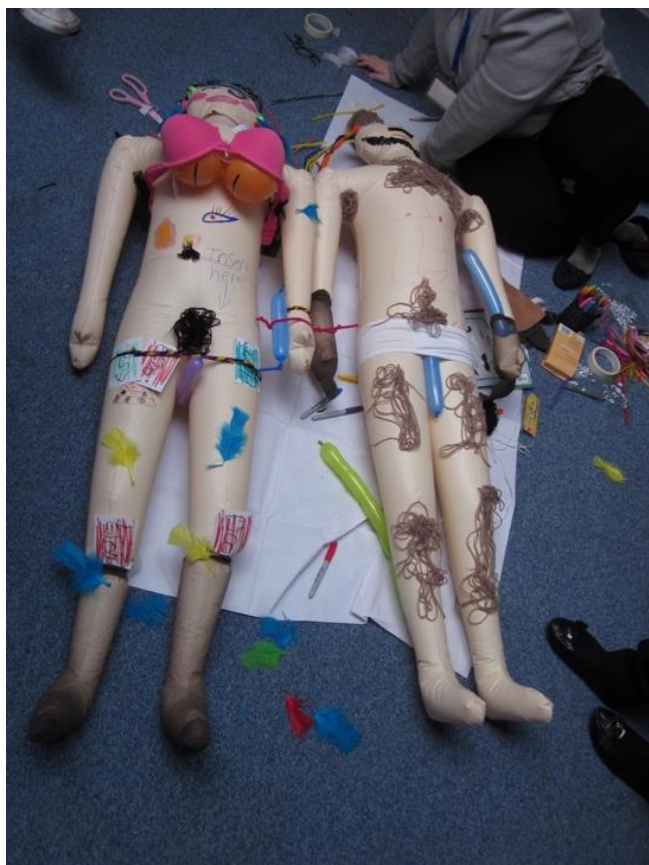


Figure 3.1: Male and Female Dolls made by “PRONG”

Critical analyses of “the beauty system” (see: Wolf, 1991), have long asserted “men are real, women are made up” (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1987, p.212). Women are required to engage in various forms of ‘work’ to maintain their femininity which is not required by men, an argument I will return to throughout my analysis. Although masculinity is also subject to maintenance, men can be ‘real’ without this work (Black and Sharma, 2001). With these participants making both a man and a woman in this design workshop, I argue that my *visual* data illustrates this vividly. In making a ‘man’ the participants covered the doll with layers of wool, representing body hair. In adding more and more hair to the doll, the male doll became more and more ‘natural’, the hairy and unshaved man is arguably still the most accepted form of masculinity (Clarke and Braun, 2019). In sharp contrast, the more items added to the female doll, the more entrenched in cultural discourses she became. Participants constructed a narrative around the doll, developed partly in response to questions asked by the moderators and youth workers:

Matt: So why are you using feathers?

Ursa: ‘Cos she's a hooker.

Julia: Aw we'll need dollar signs!

Tilly: Aw my God!

PRONG, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

The young people’s narrative changed at various points during the construction of the doll, whom they later named ‘Jade’. At times the term “hooker” or “prostitute” was synonymous with being a “stripper”, and they completed this ‘look’ with “stripper money” and a “dildo” to provide her additional pleasure, a narrative resembling the objectified status of the inflatable sex doll. At a different point in the workshop, she was “Kim Kardashian” because of the “cheese string underwear” a participant had made for her. What was notable here was that participants drew on a range of *sexualised* narratives in characterising the female doll, and these were not present when participants constructed the male doll (although see Chapter 4 for a discussion on how at one point the narrative of the male doll became entwined with the subordination of the female doll).

As outlined in the introduction, appearance rearticulates social divisions, inclusion and exclusion, as well as indicating status and socioeconomic positions (Frith, 2012). As

demonstrated, many cultural markers and identities were inscribed onto the female doll when participants completed this task. In the workshop with the young people at PRONG, Tilly states: "To be honest right, she looks like a chav." The term 'chav' is a reference to the 'under-class' as a social category (Hayward and Yar, 2006), associated with certain kinds of clothing, accessories and bodily appearance, but also implying failures of consumption, a perception of bodily excess due to immoral or irresponsible lifestyle practices and choices (Frith, 2012; Hayward and Yar, 2006). Mockery is seen to reconstitute class boundaries (Raisborough and Adams, 2008), and here it is notable that in relegating the doll to the category of 'chav' these categories are being rehearsed and reproduced by participants who are predominantly from a working class background.

The social regulation of appearance practices was often referred to by participants. In the group 'Know-it', a group comprised of exclusively middle class young people, participants exercised their cultural capital in extensive talk around appearance practices. In various ways, this group talked about a 'culture of judgement' around young people's appearance practices, particularly at school, and 'the non-uniform day' was a notable site to interrogate this:

Molly: On a non-uniform day it's the entire school, different friendship groups, with people you wouldn't usually talk to and you wanna, kind of, you want people to think "Oh yeah, y'know she looks good, he looks good" y'know, you don't want people to be like "That's, hmm, that's a bit strange" or "Ah, she looks a bit sloppy" or, y'know-

Know-it, Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping

In highlighting the 'non-uniform day' as a distinctly public event, Molly indicates a heightened degree of display, and therefore judgement and regulation. The objective as expressed by Molly is a verdict from peers of looking 'good.' Makeover television shows use the same nomenclature, for instance: *'How to Look Good Naked'* (see: Frith, 2012), the word 'good' comes with an implied set of cultural values. Makeover television shows rely on hosts with considerable 'cultural capital' who pass judgements of what is, and what is not, 'good taste' (Hayes, 2007; Tyler, 2008; Philips, 2008). 'Good taste' is implied heavily in Molly's account. In the context of a non-uniform day, one must not look "strange" (departing from agreed sets of appearance 'rules') or "sloppy" (not trying hard enough). Participants often

spoke of passing judgement on others' appearances (Beth: "[we] immediately judge somebody on what they're dressing like"), and when I (as a workshop facilitator) commented I once wore sandals on a non-uniform day it was met with shock (Beth: (gasps)). The narratives of television makeover shows are said to rest on class distinctions (Frith, 2012), and in making judgements of good and bad taste, I suggest these participants are relying on similar discretions afforded to them through their cultural capital.

We may consider these social distinctions of appearance to reflect the idea of 'appearance cultures', sociocultural standards of appearance which are incorporated into peer cultures (Clark and Tiggemann, 2006; Jones and Crawford, 2006), particularly in a school environment. However, participants in Know-it displayed an ambivalent relationship with the idea of appearance cultures within the context of the workshop:

Polly: Yeah I think I, like, through our high school I kind of, like ((unclear)) between what we considered being like the popular group and, like, y'know I had like other friends as well an', um, I think even when after, like, high school in general and going to sixth form was like, y'know, made me realise, y'know, I don't have to (.) dress like that I don't have to.

Molly: Yeah.

Polly: Y'know, follow them round, wear loads of makeup, and dress nice for school, an- um, it's actually been like a girl who we've been to school with who, y'know, went into their friendship group from being in, erm, in sixth form, in (.) even in noticing now the way that she dresses and the way that she acts, she won't say hello to people in the corridors who used to be friendly with, y'know like me, me and my friends have been talking about it, it's kind of realising y'know, like, does she not realise that, that's not y'know 'all that' kind of thing, and that she doesn't, y'know have to do that and it's not actually really that special, that some of these girls actually are, like, not very nice. ((laugh))

Madeline: Mmm.

Polly: Y'know as if she'd, like, if she'd, like, worked her whole way through high school, [not] gunna be friends with them.

Andrew: So it is kind of, like, when you get into like the social group you can find yourself changing the way you dress and the way you present yourself.

Madeline: Mmm.

Andrew: To kind of fit in.

Molly: I think a lot of the time though, you don't realise you're doing it (.) like you don't, you're like, you're generally like, say if I saw, like, if I'd found some, like, a couple of new friends, umm and I thought "Oh, I like what she's wearing, I like what she's wearing" and went out and bought it sort of sub-consciously I'm conforming to their friendship group but then, like, I don't really realise that I'm doing it.

Know-it, Design Workshop 1: Blow-up Body-Mapping

Previous research into young people's appearance cultures have argued that everyday interactions among peers, particularly at school, exert a major influence on the body concerns of young women (Carey, Donaghue and Broderick, 2014). Whilst this may be the case for the participants attending 'Know-it', participants also expressed disdain towards (some of) these cultures of practice. Polly's account of her friend presents "the way that she dresses and the way that she acts" as one and the same, her changed appearance an indicator of her changed 'status' within the school environment. However, "these" girls "are, like, not very nice" - through Polly's talk she positions herself as more 'mature' and 'self-aware' than this 'immature' mind-set "I don't have to (.) dress like that."

After Polly's disregard for those who change their appearance as a way of gaining access to a social group, it is curious to see how Molly justifies social conformity – "You don't realise you're doing it." Here, "changing the way you dress and the way you present yourself" (Andrew) is justified when it is apparently "subconscious", implying that a 'knowing' change would be less legitimate. Discursive (social constructionist) research considers these references to states such as 'the unconscious' for their interactive function, which will become relevant to my analysis later.

Appearance is a carefully balanced and negotiated practice which intersects with young people's social status (Frith 2012) and their sexuality (Clarke, Hayfield and Huxley, 2013). The young people in my research drew on a range of sexualised images, particularly in the construction of the female doll by the participants attending PRONG. Appearance relates to

perceived notions of 'attractiveness', and, as I shall explore in the next two themes, common 'rules' (Boynton, 2003) govern what this constitutes, particularly for women:

Aaron (Youth Worker): All right so throw a bit of a curveball into it: do you think boys and girls have different opinions on what that perfect look is for the other person?

Gill: Yeah, some boys like fat girls some boys like skinny girls (..) and to some (..) I dunno, some lads might think some fat ugly (..) I dunno (..) some fat ugly spotty girl.

Elsie: ((laughs))

Brampton, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

In responding to Aaron's question about whether there are gendered differences in perceived 'attractiveness', Gill answers a slightly different question, around whether boys themselves have different ideas about what is classed as 'attractive.' However, there is contradiction in this account. Although a degree of variability in 'attractiveness' is granted ("fat girls" or "skinny girls"), there is a clear indication of what the *wrong* 'look' is: a "fat ugly spotty girl", further undermined by the precursor of "some", and Elsie's laughter.

Much feminist work has considered the societal pressures women face in looking and presenting in a certain way, what Boynton (2003) calls the rules women must abide by in order to maintain their femininity. Through my use of design methods, I will argue participants reproduced many of these discourses in specific and nuanced ways. I will first discuss how this applied to talk and representations of body hair, which was a notable feature of my 'blow-up body-mapping data', before discussing policing conformity more widely. My analysis concludes with a discussion of how discourses of individuality and authenticity also underpinned participants' representations of the 'sexual body', yet these were nevertheless governed by gendered norms.

3.3 Constructing the Hairy/Hairless Body: Negotiating "Hairy" Lines

As I will discuss, constructions of body hair were a prominent part of how young people crafted and talked around their dolls, however this was also evident in some of the other methods that I employed. During a Lego making activity (discussed in Chapter 5), I asked young people to make devices to promote sexual health (see Chapter 5), where in the following, Steph from Thornside addressed this with a hair removal device.



Figure 3.2: Hair removal device made in Thornside Workshop

Matt: Ok, could ya- could you tell me, could you tell me about what you've made?

Steph: You sha:ve the tree.

Matt: You sh-

Steph: ((laughs))

Matt: ((laughs)) What's the tree, sorry?

Steph: The fanny. ((laugh))

Matt: ((laugh)) The tree's the fanny, ok()a()yeh: Umm, so something to sha::ave, so, so why would someone want to shave their (.) tree?

Sally: So then it doesn't end up like that. (Indicating Lego tree)

Steph: ((laughs)) It'd be a bit prickly! ((laughs))

Matt: So do you think that would help with sexual health, something to shave the- pubic hair?

Lory: Well yes, 'cos little kids, when(ever) they have sex they would just sit there and go, do I need to shave, do I not, now, y'kno:w?

Matt: So you do need to shave?

Lory: Nah, ya did nah.

Sally: No, you don't need to.

Steph: Well, it would be kinda embarrassing if you didn't.

Matt: Well (.) it depends. In the seventies, everyone had, y'know-

Steph: From the hair, I'm not from the hair-

Matt: I mean it's there for a reason.

Steph: I weren't from the hairy century, so they can stay there.

Matt: ((laughs))

Steph: It's the hairy centuries. ((laughs))

Thornside, Design Workshop 3: Lego

In the above extract, through making a device to “help with sexual health” (see Chapter 5), an imperative of shaving pubic hair was co-constructed by group members. It is noteworthy that this is a gendered discourse, between participants who were young women, with an apparently neutral Lego object (the tree) made to be female genitalia (the fanny). This discourse stood up to scrutiny, as challenged by me (i.e. “do you think that would help?”). Lory comments that young people might be uncertain about the accepted protocols of removing pubic hair (“do I need to shave, do I not?”), yet the idea that a woman should remove pubic hair before engaging in sexual activity is strong (“now, you know?”, “Well, it would be kinda embarrassing if you didn’t”). When I further challenged this, indicating the historical credentials of hair removal, this was challenged by a discourse that distanced themselves, as contemporary young adults, from these historical dimensions (Billig, 1988). In stating “I weren’t from the hairy century”, implying an accepted norm that young women *should* be removing their pubic hair.

Removing leg and underarm hair has long been given as an example of the “hairless ideal” for women as a widespread social norm (Basow, 1991), promoted greatly by various media representations (Hope, 1982). Attendance to pubic hair is a more recent phenomenon, again propagated by portrayal of women in the media (Schick, Rima and Calabrese, 2011) and, perhaps most notably, cultural prominence of the “Brazilian wax” (i.e. complete removal of hair from all pubic regions, see: Labre, 2002). While a large portion of women report tending to pubic hair removal in some way, a smaller proportion report complete removal (around 20%, see: Herbenick et al. 2010). However, we can note that in the extract above, the device designed by Steph is to “shave”, rather than to “tidy” or “trim”, and that

the purpose of this is for sexual activity, i.e. naked genitalia (rather than simply a 'bikini line', see: Braun, Tricklebank and Clarke, 2013) should be attended to appropriately.

The removal of body hair, reported as particularly high amongst younger generations (Herbenick et al. 2010) and demonstrated here and in much of my data, was an important part of maintaining a sexual identity as young women. Yet also indicated in the above quote is an indication of personal agency: "you don't need to". This introduces the notion of 'choice', the neoliberal conceit I described at the beginning of this chapter and to which I will return.

3.3.1 Reasons for Removing/Not Removing Body Hair



Figure 3.3: Presentations of male body hair in Thornside (left), Brampton (centre) and PRONG (right)



Figure 3.4: Representations of body hair on the female body in PRONG (left – concentrated amounts of body hair), Brampton (centre - bikini line 'stubble') and Thornside (right – concealed with underwear)

During my "blow-up body-mapping" workshops, the medium of the inflatable dolls often became a site for contesting body hair for both men and women. As discussed previously, male dolls often featured an apparent abundance of body hair (Figure 3.3). Dolls made up to be 'women' also often featured concentrated amounts of body hair, for example in the armpits or around the pubic area. However, noteworthy in my transcripts was that almost all hair on the female body needed to be accounted for in some way. Amongst the reasons

presented for the female doll having body hair were “her razor broke”, she “got bored”, “she’s religious, she’s not allowed”, she “gets tired” or “it might be winter”. In contrast, although young men were often constructed as “lazy”, overall the male dolls did not require a reason for body hair; rather, justification was required for the hairless male:

Matt: Because you have ummmm. (.) people like Tom Daley (.) doesn't have any hair on him, I guess (.) he's thought of as quite ah (.) I don't know (.) modern?

Roxy: He doesn't like women.

Matt: Oh yeah.

Abigail (Youth Worker): Is that not cause he's an athlete, a swimmer more?

Tilly: You don't wax-

Abigail: Yeah, the diving and stuff, yeah.

Matt: Do you reckon that's the only reason? Or is there kind of-

Tilly: He might just like being cleaner (.) preference.

WEYES, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

The above quotation relates to the findings of Clarke and Braun’s (2018) study around the constructions of male body hair removal, that is, it is often associated with non-heterosexual bodies or athleticism. Although research into male body hair removal has posed questions around how gendered we should consider this practice (Braun, Tricklebank and Clarke, 2013), in my research the hairless man was presented as the exception, rather than the rule. The one hairless male doll that was made was in the Thornside workshops, where the doll “Jeffery” was also said to be gay (Figure 4.8). In contrast to the previously mentioned device to “shave” (female) pubic hair for sexual activity, Jeffery “trimmed” because “he was going to go out to a gay bar”. Visual indicators were sometimes used for gay men, although more widely the link between sexuality and appearance was disputed, as I discuss at the end of this chapter.

Looking at the visual data and transcripts associated with this method in conjunction with one another, we can see a rather striking example of different standards applying to the body hair for men and women. Male dolls were able to exhibit body hair in wild abundance, which did not require a justification, beyond the mere laziness of men. The (gay) male dolls

required a reason *for* removing their body hair, (a “trim” rather than a “shave”) yet the reasons for this were presented on a more practical level; a display of sexuality, athleticism or hygiene. This reflects the notion that men have “options” regarding body hair practices, with both hairy and hairless men being accepted, and indeed desirable, forms of masculinity (Terry and Braun, 2016). In contrast, the reasons provided for a woman *not* shaving suggested something inhibited them from partaking in this norm, as discussed above: perhaps a broken razor, fatigue, religious beliefs or the cold winter months. Choices around body hair were not granted for the female dolls but despite this, as I will now discuss, “choice” as an “interpretative lens” (Braun et al. 2013; Stuart and Dongahue, 2012) was prevalent:

Madeline: So, what makes for like a-a good pair of female legs?

Molly: Well it depends, it depends what (.) you'd want like some-some girls are like have to be really, thin legs or some girls prefer a bit more curvy legs, it just depends on, your, perspective on what you want.

Polly: Mm.

Molly: Umm, feminine usually means, shaved or, waxed or whatever.

Madeline: Mm-hmm.

Molly: But that's not really, that's not always the case, some people don't really want, don't really feel like they want to do that or, are not really bothered so they don't, so it's-it's really up to perspective of what you think would be feminine.

Madeline: Mm-hmm.

Matt: Mmm (.) so girls can have unshaved legs and still be feminine?

Molly: Umm, yeah?

Polly: Yeah, it's I mean, a lot of the time feminine, femininity is not in the actual way you treat your body but in the clothes that you wear, umm, because you can have because you can have like unshaven legs and then wear some really sleek trousers and a pair of heels and you'd still look incredibly feminine.

Molly: Mmm.

Polly: But no one would know, or even if you wore a skirt or tights, people still wouldn't really know, so it's y'know (.) it de- it I think it massively depends on what you wear rather than, the way that you, like, take care of your body.

Molly: Mhm.

Matt: Would someone say, be teased though if -

Bryony: Yeah.

Matt: - they had unshaven legs?

Molly: I think -

Bryony: It's certainly something that you would comment on.

Molly: Not something- I don't think they'd like be publicly like "oh look at that!" but I think, I think a lot of people would be like, to like whispering, and being like, we- I, y'know this person's old enough now, y'know, why would they be, like, why would they live like that?

Know-it, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

An imperative of 'choice' that Molly draws upon in the beginning of this extract relates to the findings of Terry et al. (2017) and Li and Braun (2016), finding that "free choice" permeated across the responses of their body hair qualitative surveys. In examining the design workshop transcripts as qualitative data, we can examine the minutiae of how "free choice" was co-constructed (Wilkinson, 1998) by group members. For Molly, a good pair of female legs is "what you want". This is, notably, not constructed as what a woman might "have". "Want" is reflective of a neoliberal discourse, the individual being responsible for their own bodily practices (Gill and Donaghue, 2013); these are choices that are *required* to be made, to navigate femininity successfully. It is also notable how the choices are limited by Molly. In this portion of talk, legs can either be "thin" or "curvy", in the choices available to young women as neoliberal agents. Molly then indicates the 'hairless ideal' (Basow, 1991) as "shaved or, waxed or whatever", but is quick to reassert claims of agency. "Choice" as a qualifier to amounts of body hair practice is common (Terry et al. 2017), and Molly works hard to assert this agency ("not always the case", "some people...don't really feel like that" / "are not really bothered"). This makes the case that women need not be 'passive cultural

dupes' (Crann et al. 2017; Gill and Donaghue, 2013), leaving femininity apparently totally open, simply down to "perspective".

Yet, as the extract progresses, this construction of choice breaks down. Polly comments that womanhood need not be undermined by the presence of body hair. However, if clothing is not removed, it should be concealed or hidden, through appropriate ("feminine") clothing, reflecting the enforced invisibility of women's body hair (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004). Likewise, body hair on peers is a legitimate thing to "comment on", a self-policing regime of women's bodies, and subject to "interactional sanctions" (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004), in this case a "whispered" disapproval.

After Molly's long account of femininity being a personal choice earlier in the extract, it is striking to see the last words of the above extract: "why would they live like that?" This reference to lifestyle rings true with Breanne Fahs' (2011, 2012) body hair assignment. Here, students were tasked with growing their body hair and keeping a reflective journal in exchange for extra course credit. This task, which was from an experiential rather than a constructionist perspective, was hugely disruptive in these young (undergraduate) participants' identity of being as a woman, subject to intense scrutiny from others, and feelings of disgust around their own bodies. Given the hostility women students reported (Fahs' 2011, 2012) when they did not remove their body hair, from both themselves and others, it is perhaps not surprising that Molly asks "why" women "would live like that".

This extract also displays an aged discourse around the removal of body hair, particularly notable as my participants were younger than those in most previous research in this area:

Madeline: Is there an age when, when girls should shave their legs, or-

Molly: Well, it just depends because it depends on how far developed-

Polly: ((When you start ((unclear))))

Molly: Like, some girls, umm shave them because they genuinely have to and they think "Oh this" y'know, like, "this is noticeable now".

Polly: Mmhmm.

Molly: Some girls shave them because they feel pressured to because they think "Oh my friends are, maybe I should." Umm, so it-so it really just depends and some girls think like "Well, I don't need to shave so I won't start shaving until I need to."

Madeline: Mmm.

Molly: So it just depends on, like, what your situation is, umm, but like, the general age that I, like ,that me and my friends experienced was, like, urr, twelve-thirteen? Fourteen?

Polly: Mmm.

Beth: Yeah I think fourteen is a little old, I was thirteen.

Polly: I think sometimes it just depends on your hair colour as well.

Molly: ((Exactly))

Polly: If you've got really dark hair-

Molly: Yeah.

Matt: Mmm.

Molly: Then often.

Beth: More noticeable.

Polly: Yeah, then y'know, your body hair will be a bit darker, and then it might be more noticeable, so you might (.) start shaving your legs earlier so-

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Later, Polly states she started shaving her legs when her Mum said "you're probably like, old enough", indicating a 'rite of passage' around body hair removal, something one does as a 'mature' adult, as I discuss in chapter 6. It is relevant to note that in positioning themselves as 'mature' sexual adults, participants denied the sexuality of their early teens. It has been argued that the removal of body hair for young women is, inherently, sexualising young women (Tiggemann and Hodgson, 2008). In stating that 'thirteen' is an appropriate age for a young woman to start removing her body hair, the young, female body is presented as a regulated, sexual object. The above extract even goes so far as to suggest that age is almost irrelevant to the removal of body hair, hair is to be removed when it becomes "noticeable".

'Passive cultural dupes' (Crann et al. 2017; Gill and Donaghue, 2013) are drawn upon here, indicating the illegitimacy of removing body hair because your friends are. Shaving should happen when a young person "needs" to, i.e. when it is noticeable. Fahs (2011, 2012) points out the racialized dimension of this discourse, relevant as this workshop was conducted with a group of young, white women. In the abovementioned body hair assignment, participants who were 'women of colour' often found that their thicker and darker body hair posed an even greater threat, as the presence of noticeable body hair was associated with having to 'work harder' in a variety of different appearance practices to maintain their femininity. Although my participants are careful to bind their discourse to a rhetoric of 'choice', (i.e. "you might") and diversity ("some girls"), the suggestion is that, regardless of the (unacknowledged) implications, "shaving" should be considered for hair which is (more) 'seen' – and non-white women may be inveigled into this at a younger age (see also: Patton, 2006).

The 'rite of passage' dimension indicates the relevance of body hair removal as a process of growing up. Terry et al. (2017) have also indicated this aspect of body hair removal with one participant reporting they saw their mother shaving and "couldn't wait" to do the same. In referring to the aged dimension of the practice, body hair removal is constructed as a 'mature' practice, even though young(er) women may be expected to do it. Bordo (1993) and Terry et al. (2017) indicate the visceral pleasure of the complicity and participation in bringing the body closer to the ideal. This was also present in accounts from my participants, who in addition, simultaneously asserted a level of maturity in engaging with this practice:

Andrew: I've heard, I have, like, heard of people who, like, when they have, like, a 'night in' like, they have a bath, they do it because it, like, feels nice.

Beth: Yeah.

Andrew: To- like, when you've shaved your legs.

Molly: I'm usually someone who, like, prefers a routine, so like, like a- like every week I'll have like a set day when I'll sit and I'll do it or, like, just 'cos- it's just something that I generally prefer to keep on top of.

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Here, it is notable that Andrew, the one (gay) male member of this group presents body hair removal in terms of comfort, women partake in this practice because it is apparently enjoyable. Similarly, Molly presents herself as embodying a ritualised practice of regularly attending to body hair. She is “someone who...prefers a routine”, setting aside time to manage her body as someone who “keeps on top of” matters. She is positioning herself as an agentic agent, a postfeminist (McRobbie, 2004) practitioner of self-improvement (Elias, Gill and Scharff, 2017).

3.4 Navigating Non-Conformity, Policing Conformance

In the previous theme, I discussed how my participants talked about regulating and monitoring their body hair practices in a way that propped up a “feminine ideal” (Li and Braun, 2017). Removing leg, underarm and pubic hair may be the most obvious hair removal practices, but they exist as part of a plethora of activities women are expected to do, societally, in the maintenance of their femininity. As Black and Sharma (2001) comment, they are required to “paint, moisturise, deodorise and de-hair” (p. 100). In this theme, I will broaden my focus to examine in more depth the interactional sanctions (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004) these young women spoke about in relation to varying degrees of non-conformance. However, I want to argue that young people talked about resisting societal ideals in a way that, broadly, reinforced traditional scripts of femininity, and that ultimately navigating non-conformity often resulted in a policing of conformance.

As part of the commentary around the labour women are required to invest in their bodies, attendance to eyebrows is often commented on (Black and Sharma, 2001; Fahs and Delgado, 2011); yet, to my knowledge, this has not to date been explored in depth. In my research with one group of participants (“Know-it”), a lengthy discussion about attendance to eyebrows came about. This was, perhaps, prompted by the practice of crafting features onto the inflatable dolls, but also may be considered a more contemporary practice in attending to appearance norms. As my participant Polly stated: “All of a sudden, it was like, everyone needs to have lovely eyebrows.”



Figure 3.5: Eyebrow Mapping in “Know it” Blow up Body-Mapping

In the below, Polly reports on the experience of having her eyebrows ‘mapped’. Over the past five years the ‘scouse brow’ - that is, a trend for larger and thicker eyebrows - has emerged as a trend in popular culture (Jensen, 2017; Teal, 2013). Since the rise of makeup tutorials, particularly on *YouTube* (see Garcia-Rapp, 2016), an agreed set of ‘rules’ (see Boynton, 2003) has ‘emerged’ around what the correct appearance of eyebrows should be. There was a lengthy discussion about this amongst the “Know-it” group, which was made up of participants who were 16+ (see Appendix F). Here, participants spent an extended period ‘mapping’ eyebrows onto an inflatable doll (Figure 3.5). This was accompanied by discussions around eyebrow practices:

Polly: A lady talked to me in the shop the other day and she was li- ‘Do you want to have your eyebrows “mapped”?’ I was like, ‘What?’ and she just drew massive things on me face I was- no! ((laugh))

Molly: ((unclear))

Polly: It was like, take that off my face, it’s ridiculous.

Matt: I haven’t heard of that.

Molly: Was that, like, to make them the same size?

Andrew: Ye:ah.

Polly: Umm, well she just sort of pointed out where the sort of the eyebrows should end, the eyebrows should hold - it’s ridiculous – well, where they should begin and they should end, and apparently mine are too short, umm-

Molly: They should. ((laugh))

Polly: And where ((laugh)) mine should, the curve should be somewhere different, so she just sort of drew in ((laugh)) where everything should be, but it just ended up looking like I had two massive black lines there, and I- I got a *Snapchat* picture, I didn't have, like a permanent one I wouldn't do it .((laugh))

((laughter))

Polly: Just sent it to a friend and was, like, "What have I done! To my face!"

Matt: ((laugh))

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The beauty salon has been presented by Black and Sharma (2001) as a site *par excellence* where attainment of femininity is played out. In analysing the discourses of professionals talking about their beauty practices, beauty therapy is seen to be a carefully negotiated domain. The maintenance of femininity requires fulfilling the desire for a 'normal' look, whilst balancing a sensitivity to a woman's subjective tastes. In the above, Polly recounts an experience that departs from this expectation and, in response, repeatedly presents verbal resistance to this incident of having her eyebrows 'mapped'. First, she displays naivety to the process of mapping: "What?", dismisses the "massive things" drawn on her face and shortly after utters, "No" and "take that off my face, it's ridiculous". Modal verbs (see chapter 2) are used, "should end", "should hold", "should begin", "should end" and "should be"; however, this notion of "should" is mocked by Molly, and Polly punctuates her account with various dismissal tactics. This can be seen explicitly, through laughter (which is a minimisation tactic in discursive psychology, as explained in 2.7 Data Analysis), a second utterance of "it's ridiculous", and the final words in this extract "What have I done! To my face!" She displays comprehension, explaining to the group the process of 'mapping' but she also, subtly, undermines the 'rules' over eyebrow shape, i.e. "apparently mine are too short". Polly also indicates the boundaries of what is and is not acceptable for her, she "wouldn't" have a permanent alteration.

It is notable, therefore, to examine how the conversation progresses. The resistance and dismissal displayed above is reduced later in the workshop as Madeline, one of the workshop facilitators, asked how the experience felt:

Polly: It was, it was just all normal 'cos it was what I'd sort of seen on *YouTube* channels on *YouTube* and sort of like in the magazines had all said (.) this is what sort of the ideal eyebrow shape so it was sort of like "Oh, okay" ((laughter)).

((general noise))

Polly: If you can make my eyebrows look like, sort of, how they'd ever been perfect sort of thing, yeah go for it, but I was just looking really weird, and didn't really like it! ((laugh))

Madeline: So then did you, umm, did you have to go and take off the makeup?

Polly: Well, I didn't, 'cos my Mum was with me, and she just, she's very good at saying "No no, you like nice, you look nice, that's fine." I think she just wanted to get out anyway, 'cos the ones, it was only *Lakeland*, I wouldn't go into any other shops, but I did end up buying the product, which was such, such an asking for-

Verity (Youth Worker): Oh no!

Polly: Nightmare!

In indicating that *YouTube* (and magazines) have normalised expectations around eyebrow practice, Polly plays down the dismissive discourses present early in the group. With an air of submissiveness ("oh, okay"), and reporting a social conformity as encouraged by her mother, Polly's narrative ends with a sense of giving in – "I did end up buying the product". Therefore, this is a narrative of compliance, despite recognising the problematic dimensions of doing so: "such an asking for" or "Nightmare!" The relevance of popular media in women regulating their bodies has been highlighted in quantitative (Nowatzki and Morry, 2009) and qualitative (Jackson and Vares, 2015) research, and we can see this is reflected in Polly's discourse; however, this is also wrapped in submission and defeat. Participants did, infrequently, indicate the struggle of maintaining appearances as a young woman:

Molly: Why is she not wearing makeup? What's, she looks really different, or be, like, "Oh, you look really tired today" like I've had that before, like-

Beth: Oh, I hate it when people say that!

Molly: They've been like-

Beth: Like, screw you, I woke up late!

Molly: I've had like, I've had the four people who have been, like, "Oh, you look really tired today" 'cos I'm not wearing as much as I usually do or, maybe I've put a different colour, like, on my face so it's a bit, paler or urm whatever, but-

Beth: Maybe I did my eyeliner on the Metro and it goes, like, ((laugh)) slightly wrong!

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Here, participants discourse turns from something more submissive to more abrasive, featured particularly by Beth: "I hate it" / "screw you I woke up late". Other participants were slightly more gentle in their accounts, but nevertheless this can be read as a 'retaliation' against the 'beauty system' (Wolf, 1993). It is also interesting to note that later in the workshop, Polly remarks that she ended a relationship in part because her ex-boyfriend "actually started to complain, and actually started telling me that I should wear makeup, 'cos I wasn't makin' enough effort". In this, Polly is indicating that comments on makeup are 'off limits', and grounds for offence. However, a less abrasive stance is taken by Polly about body hair comments from her current boyfriend:

Polly: So I'll probably shave my legs to go out, unless I wear jeans then I probably won't bother, but then y'know, like, my boyfriend makes jokes, y'know ((laugh)).

Molly: Yeah.

Polly: Like, "Your legs are really hairy"?

Molly: Ye:ah ((laugh)) yeah.

Polly: Not like a "Shave your legs now, that's disgusting" but like a- "Come on-"

Matt: Mmm.

Polly: Kind of thing so-

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In contrast to comments about makeup, the same disdain is not present for Polly's boyfriend's comments of her body hair, a mundane, joking, "light hearted" comment. "Jokes" about body hair can be understood as social sanctions (Toerien and Wilkinson, 2004), to be had at the expense of the hairy woman. Here, the removal of body hair is

presented as a benign expectation – a gentle teasing is to get a woman ‘back on track’ with her body management practices.

Fahs and Delgado (2011) report on how the body hair assignment was commented upon by male sexual partners, threatened by the apparent “manliness” associated with this practice, indicating how this reinforced men’s possession of and control over women. Participants in Fahs’ (2011, 2012) research, who were older than my participants, often responded to men’s apparent control over women’s bodies in this manner with hostility. Indeed, many studies adopting qualitative questionnaires to explore body hair practices have found that body hair removal is ‘up for grabs’ for comment in a relationship (Li and Braun, 2017; Terry et al. 2017; Toerien, Wilkinson and Choi, 2005). In my findings, participants aligned with (men’s) assumption that they *should* be managing their body hair, similarly Li and Braun (2017) reported that women classed men’s discomfort with pubic hair “understandable”. This was presented as a benign expectation, a comment of “come on” - a taken-for-granted practice to produce an ‘acceptable’ femininity (Toerien, Wilkinson and Choi, 2005). The young women I worked with often reported managing their appearance more attentively while they were in a relationship:

Beth: ((laugh)) I said umm, a-a I a had assumed you'd wear more makeup if you haven't got a boyfriend 'cos, you're wanting to get one.

Andrew: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Beth: But then-then, you said, no when you've got one you wanna wear more makeup and like-

Molly: Yeah yeah I, I still have that ((laugh)).

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In the above, young people present a kind of ‘catch 22’. The young woman wears makeup, in part apparently to “get” a boyfriend, but “when you’ve got one” the young person wears even more makeup, which could be seen quite literally as ‘maintaining face’ (Goffman, 1967). Here, the (heterosexist) romantic relationship is presented as a place where women’s appearance is managed and maintained, both in its presence and its absence. In contradiction to Polly commenting that she ended her previous relationship because of

'complaints' that she wasn't attending to her makeup 'properly', in Polly's talk about her current relationship, she nevertheless comments that body management is a big part of this: "Like I'd go to his, like, on a Thursday because like, I um, either have the morning off, or the full day off school on the Friday, and literally like on Thursdays I'll often, like, I'll wash my hair, and I'll, like, do all my makeup properly and I'll make myself look all nice" (Polly). Institutionalised heterosexism (Jackson, 2006) clearly governs these discourses; however, young people's justification for these appearance practices was quite different:

Molly: I'm not, like, I wouldn't be uncomfortable not wearing makeup, in front of like, my boyfriend, but then I just usually would anyway? Like I jus- it's something that, like, I would do, just 'cos I would, like, you say I want to make an effort, but not because I feel as if I have to.

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Here, Molly accounts for her appearance practices, specifically wearing make-up, on her own terms. She 'just happens' to enjoy wearing make-up, associated with "making an effort", she presents this as a practice independent of her relationship, and emphasises that she doesn't "feel as if I have to." Rosalind Gill links the fashion practices of young people to the notion of post-feminist femininities (Gill, 2008). In a post-feminist era, new representations of femininities have arisen, particularly in the media, underpinned by neoliberal agendas. Here, under the guise of 'empowerment', 'new' representations of femininity arguably reproduce cultural misogyny. We can consider Molly to be doing exactly this, framing her bodily regulation as a simple consequence of her own choices:

Molly: Some people, some people, like, care that something that, 'cos eyelashes kind of open up your eyes, urr like, eyes are just such a big part of your face, I think that's why people put a lot of makeup on them so, if-um, eyelashes do, like, open up your eyes, so the bigger they are the more your eyes are, like, open and then they look, and they look bigger, that's why people do eyeliner as well 'cos eyeliner kind of opens up your face a bit more, I dunno.

Madeline: Yeah.

Molly: That's usually why people do it.

Beth: People do blush sort of thing, contouring.

Molly: Oh yeah there's, like, contouring, like you, like, on different parts of your face you put, like, lighter shades of makeup to, like, kind of define your face and define your features, and make your face look essentially thinner, like, make your cheek bones stand out more and, like, make your nose, like, less- I don't know it's-

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Molly displays a literacy in beauty products, discussing the affordances of makeup, in turn presenting makeup use merely as a reasonable practice of self care. This extract reads almost as a pro-forma beautician's script (Black and Sharma, 2001), "people put a lot of makeup" on eyes because they "are just such a big part of your face". This is highlighted further in how directive Molly's narrative is ("eyelashes do, like, open your eyes" / "the bigger they are the more your eyes are, like, open" / "they look bigger"), with this information being presented as 'facts' (Billig, 2003; Potter, 1996). Taking on the role of the knowledgeable young person, Molly picks up on Beth's interjection of contouring with more beautician discourse ("define your face and define your features"). We also see a fleeting reference to the "thin ideal" ("essentially thinner"), particularly noteworthy in how it is interwoven within these 'matter of fact' speech acts. Molly is clearly, as a neoliberal agent, well acquainted with this post-feminist discourse (see: Stuart and Donaghue, 2012). Through this literacy, Molly presents herself as a 'mature' sexual adult (see Chapter 6), a status granted to her through apparent experience:

Andrew: But I think it is that thing of, like, when, especially when you're younger, like, you say you don't know why you did it now, but, like, when you're younger you have to kind of, fit in, and kind of look, kind of more conventionally, like, a-as this, kind of, attractive as you can, all of the time, and make people kind of respect you because, I think-and I think that's part of kind of, younger kind of puberty kind of starting to, become adults, you have to kind of, pitch yourself where you want to be, umm-

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Reflection on the younger self was associated with the 'wrong kind' of fitting in, conventional and "attractive as you can, all of the time". This relates to Molly's talk earlier, where she spoke about removing her leg hair on a certain night every week as someone who "likes to keep on top" of matters. Young people often contrasted their current beauty

practices to the immature practices of their younger selves: “I bought my first thing of foundation, oh God that was a mistake, it was like three shades too dark it was awful” (Beth) / “I literally used to go to school like with um, like literally, like, fake eyelashes on ((laugh))” (Polly). The buying and wearing of makeup was also set up as a pass into adulthood, with Beth reminiscing about “the first time that I was allowed to buy foundation.”

Some of the participants attending ‘Know-it’ also asserted that for the ‘older’ young person, there is diminished importance of appearance practices: “I’m not there to impress people or look nice” (Polly). As demonstrated through this analysis, appearance concerns are pertinent for young people, and their accounting for them is noteworthy. Andrew’s narrative is particularly interesting for where they position themselves ‘now’: an appearance ritual to “pitch yourself where you want to be”. Participants often turned to discourses of neoliberalism in accounting for their appearance practices, which I will now examine in how participants framed notions of individuality and authenticity in their dressing of the dolls, which also prompted participants to provide accounts of their own experiences.

3.5 Individuality and Authenticity

Through ‘blow-up body-mapping’, participants regularly added tattoos and piercings onto the dolls (although participants from ‘Know-it’ were a notable exception to this). Some feminist work has characterised such body modifications as extreme practices which give credence to the ‘beauty myth’ (Wolf, 1993), self-mutilation practices which sit alongside harmful western beauty practices (Jeffreys, 2000). However, participants provided justification for both the dolls’ and their own body modification practices that was more around self-authentication, individuality and rebellion.

Matt: So it says 'love me for who I am'...is that a tattoo? Why has she got that?

Sarah: ‘Cos I’m getting it so I made her get it...she’s got one on her back as well.

Matt: The same thing?

Sarah: Yeah.

Matt: And why is she getting that?

Danika: ‘Cos maybe she feels left out. Like, different when she got it.

Mary: She was sick of people going "you want this love" and then she changes for them, now she's just thought, "eh, you love us for who I am now, like."

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This tattoo, given to the female doll in the group of young people from 'Thornside', was therefore an assertion of individuality. The words inscribed onto the body were a statement about a (somewhat essentialist) notion of self-identity, made in response to feeling "left out". Ferreira (2014) writes about how tattooing practices for young people can be seen as a response to uncertainty, vulnerability and insecurity. The narrative Danika draws upon speaks to this notion, characterising her as an individual who feels "different". Not only can the permanence of tattoos give a sense of a stable and coherent identity in uncertain times (Ferreira, 2014), but for the young people in Riley and Cahill's (2005) research, tattooing was associated with bravery and independence, as counter-narratives to fragility, dependence and passivity (Bem, 1993). Mary's interjection speaks to this idea directly, contrasting a submissive narrative ("she changes for them") with autonomy ("you love us for who I am now, like"). Associations of the authentic, 'true' self, 'inner' self are common in accounts of tattooing practice (Riley and Cahill, 2005), as well as other subcultural identities (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995), and this was reflected in discourse from my participants, both for the imagined character and also extending into narratives about participants themselves ("I'm getting it so I made her get it" Sarah).

In some cases, talk around body modification practices produced conflict between the 'adults' and 'young people' present in the design workshops. In my workshops with 'Brampton', a group comprising of three fifteen-year-old girls, young people asserted the legitimacy of tattooing, particularly if it was of significance, e.g. "if it's, like, some- like, a memory of something of someone...like, means something to you" (Debbie). However, consistently and repeatedly the youth worker, Kay, asserted her dislike for tattooing: "I keep saying to youse like I don't, like, do tattoos (.) I don't like them (.) I'm just putting it out there". Associations of body art with rebellious identities are prominent (Fisher, 2002; Sullivan, 2001), but also challenged (see: Riley and Cahill, 2005). In my research, I argue that young people assert their identity from a sense of rebellion. This was particularly relevant for the Brampton group where one of the participants spoke of getting a hip piercing:

Kay (Youth Worker): Question (.) why do you want your hips done?

Gill: I dunno, I just do!

Kay: Why?

Gill: I don't have a reason, I just want them done!

Aaron (Youth Worker): You just think you'd look cool?

Gill: Yeah...but you've gotta have 'em- surgery to get it removed.

Matt: Oh my God.

Elsie: That's like the one on your neck (.) and the one on, like, your collarbones.

Matt: Does that (.) does that put you off at all?

Gill: Nah.

Matt: Not even having surgery to take it out?

Gill: Nah!

Matt: How come?

Debbie: Been through a lot of surgeries so I don't wanna get it!

Brampton, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

The decision to have a tattoo or piercing is often framed as control or autonomy over an individual's body (Ferreira 2014; Riley and Cahill 2005; Sullivan 2001). This is reflected in the above with the modal verb "done", an action-orientated word implying the completion or finishing of something (i.e. "hips done" / "them done", see: Potter, 1996). Kuhar and Reiter (2013) discuss how this autonomy is negotiated in adult/child interactions, suggesting young people actively participate in conflicts as they arise. Here, the conflict is between the young person (Gill) the youth worker (Kay), and to a certain extent myself (Matt). Kay's question, clearly indicated, plays a role in managing the accountability in this extract. Kay asks "why?" twice, unsatisfied with her first answer, interrogating her justification for wanting her "hips done". Implicit in this account is that such a decision requires justification. The extract has similarities to Riley's (2002) work, where she was initially alarmed by the bodily practices of her participants, likewise I was vocally set back by the 'extreme' nature of such body modification ("Oh my God" / "does that put you off at all?" / "not even having surgery to take it out?"). Our discourse, as adults, mirrors that of piercings being 'bodily mutilation'

(Jefferies, 2000), however this is easily 'brushed off' by Gill ("Nah!"). Her justification: "I dunno, I just do!", and later "but I like it", holds her ground conversationally. The conversational 'conflict' itself became a site for Gill to rehearse her autonomy.

This discourse can be seen in contrast to the voiced frustration, later in the extract, of the schooling system limiting and controlling young people's autonomy. The neoliberal, post-feminist subject must deny value to any constraints over individuality (Baker, 2010; McRobbie, 2007; see also: Stuart and Donaghue, 2012). As an institution imposing restriction over young women's appearance school must be rejected: "a load of rubbish" (Gill) / "stupid" (Gill/Debbie). Neoliberalist post-feminism subscribes that women are autonomous and freely choosing, but they are also boundaried and constrained (Braun, 2009), in turn complicating notions of choice and agency (Gill, 2007; 2008). In this way, we can observe how choices were made legitimate or illegitimate by this group of young people, seen below through a discussion of cosmetic surgery. This was prompted as young people fashioned a "bum" onto the doll, a negotiated activity: "That's cool, does she need any stuffing in her bum? Or is it, is it all right?" (Matt). The discussion soon led to "implants" (Kay), and girls who "have their boobs and their nose and everything else done" (Gill).

Aaron (Youth Worker): So then how-how do you feel about people who get cosmetic surgery?

Elsie: It's too fake.

Debbie: I don't like fake people.

Gill: Depends on what their reasons are for.

Aaron: Okay.

Gill: They might wanna, might wanna feel better about themselves.

Debbie: Something's wrong.

Elsie: Well yeah if they got, like, if they've got, like, a proper- yeah, if they've got, like, an- uh- reason behind it, like, girls who get breast cancer and then get surgery after it.

Aaron: Right, okay.

Elsie: Like that- the- I would say that that's, like, normal (..) if someone if someone was, like, I dunno just walked up into some cosmetic surgery one day and was, like, "Well I want my boobs done" then, I dunno, I just think it's too fake.

Aaron: So it's - so you think it'd be okay if, uhh, a reason was there.

Elsie: Yeah, so if they had like a medical (.) is (okay).

Kay (Youth Worker): Some girls can have a [inaudible] and they take them away because they're too big.

Elsie: That's a medical reason though.

Kay: Yeah, that's what I'm saying

Brampton, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

In talking about cosmetic procedures, participants once again orientated their talk as action, through the modal verb "done", and in this context notions of completion or finishing are even more relevant. At first, these young people dismiss cosmetic surgery as "fake". Holliday and Sanchez Taylor (2006) interrogate the word 'cosmetic' to mean something that is superficial and trivial, a deviation from the 'inner self' (see: Dollimore, 1991). This is problematic for the neoliberal postfeminist, required to deny influencers of wider social influences (Baker, 2010). However, cosmetic surgery is justified to correct the female body ("Something's wrong" Debbie), the obligation on women to construct a 'feminine' body (Leve, Rubin and Pusic, 2011, see also: Braun, 2005). A "reason" to have cosmetic surgery must therefore be "medical", seen through Kay's interjection around breasts which are "too big", which the young people are quick to ascribe to being "medical". Here, a mere decision crosses the line of being "too fake", those who exercise excessive falseness branded as "fake people" who are, in turn, dislikeable. It is notable that earlier piercings which also require surgery are not subject to the same interrogation, they are an addition to the body which adds authenticity, rather than a ("fake") enhancement of the body, which indicates being disingenuous.

3.6 LGBT Authenticity?

Therefore, we can see discourses of neoliberalism dictating a new set of 'rules' as to how appearance should be attended to. As indicated earlier, these rules have consequences for minorities, such as black women, but these consequences also apply to LGBTQ people.

Visual identity has historically been important for LGBTQ people, as a means of 'standing out' and 'fitting in' (Hutson, 2010), signalling belonging and membership (Clarke & Smith, 2015; Clarke & Turner, 2007; Eves, 2004; Hutson, 2010; Rothblum, 1994). However, participants routinely dismissed 'stereotyped' assumptions around LGBT appearance through neoliberal discourse, dismissing the link between sexuality and appearance.

Matt: Uh huh. What sexuality do you think Josie is?

Lory: She's gay.

Sally: If she's gay why does she have a condom in her bra?

Rachel: I think she's straight.

Matt: She does have a condom in her bra.

Rachel: She might be bi.

Esther: You can't identify somebody's sexuality by their image.

Rachel: I like that!

((people applaud))

Matt: She does have- errr (.) it's probably for some function.

Esther: But she can be bisexual then (.) we don't know.

Matt: Mhm. But I mean, we made her, so we might have an idea of (.) do we think Josie's bi?

Rachel: Yeah.

Esther: She can be whoever she wants to be.

Thornside, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

Esther, a queer participant, often played the role of 'gender expert', questioning the assumptions around gender and sexuality held by other participants, the workshop facilitators and the youth workers. In the above extract, after asking about the sexuality of the female doll, there is no unanimous answer from the group, with participants suggesting a range of different sexualities ("gay" / "straight" / "bi"). However, Esther took issue with there being any visual identifiers for a sexual identity: "you can't identify somebody's

sexuality by their image”, an idea that apparently resonated with the rest of the group through applause. This was, to me, a rather startling signifier of ‘agreement’, and something that I had not encountered before (or since) in group data collection. I was then required, conversationally, to assert why one makes an inference about a woman carrying a condom (“it’s probably for some function”), and how “we might have an idea” because “we made her”. However, Esther’s reasoning held fast: “we don’t know” / “she can be whoever she wants to be”. Some of my previous research has indicated that (mainly heterosexual, undergraduate) participants were apparently reluctant to ascribe visual identities to LGBT people (Hayfield and Wood, 2019). This was echoed in my present research; however, this refusal of visual indicators was delivered through an inclusive, yet neoliberalist, discourse: “whoever she wants to be”. Due to my research interests, I often questioned participants about whether they thought there was a link between visual identity and sexuality, which was normally met with a level of resistance:

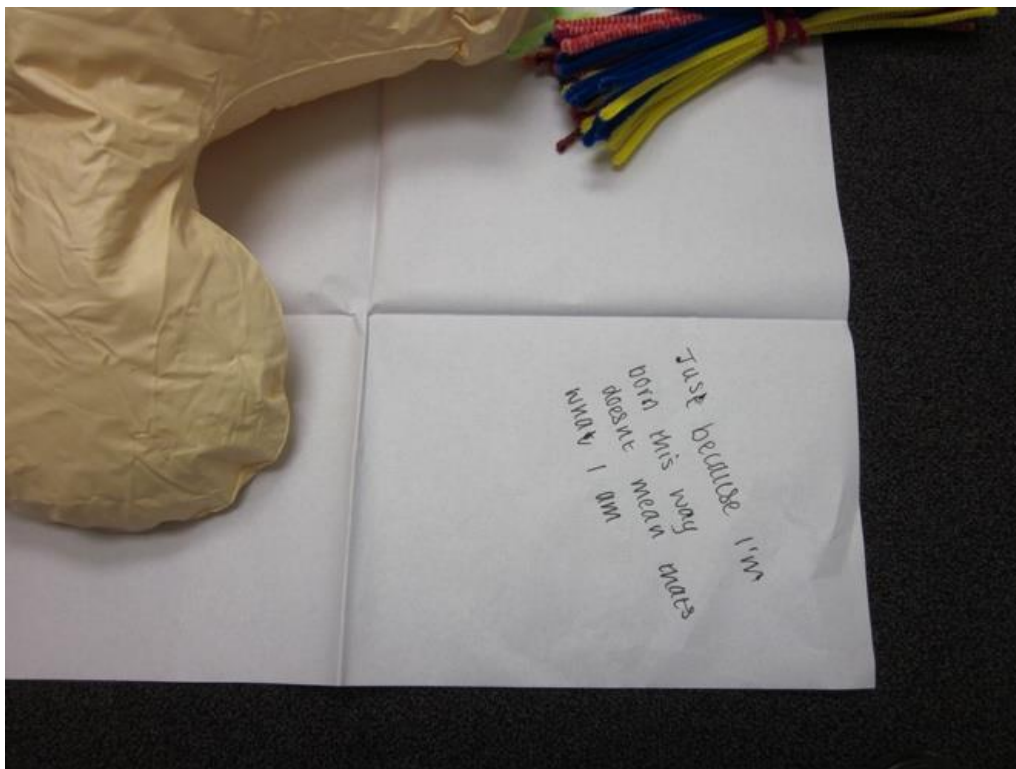


Figure 3.6: Mapping thoughts onto the doll in “Know it” Design Workshops

Matt: So these, like, appearance concerns do they have a link to, like, a sexual identity? Say?

Molly: Well, I think-

Polly: It depends though doesn't it, 'cos I mean you can get, y'know, a girl who, y'know, dressed as a - considering this girl here, would probably be like identified as bein' like heterosexual, but, not always, y'know there is, girls who dress like this an', y'know take hours to get ready in the morning and that, y'know are like lesbians, an', I think, y'know the whole point of like today's society is that, y'know lesbians aren't people with, y'know really short hair and who wear, y'know, baggy jeans an' no bras an' stuff like that so-

Andrew: So you could kind of write as another thought like "I don't dress to define myself" in a way that's like-

Molly: You dress for yourself.

Andrew: Yeah.

Polly: I don't dress to define my sexuality?

Know it, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

The beginning of the workshop with 'Know-it' comprised mostly of participants mapping 'thoughts' around the (female) doll (Figure 3.6), before populating it (her) with physical features. This might be seen a critique of reading identity from visual appearance. The act of mapping 'thoughts' asserted an 'inner' identity for the doll: "Just because I'm born this way doesn't mean that's what I am" (Figure 3.6) / "I don't dress to define myself" (Andrew) / "I don't dress to define my sexuality" (Polly). However, through this act, a visual identity for lesbian women was denied. Previous research with LGBTQ has shown that the construct of the 'typical lesbian', "men's clothes, (baggy) trousers and had short, spikey hair" (Clarke and Turner, 2007) served active and strategic purposes for lesbian and bisexual participants (e.g. subverting normative assumptions of heterosexuality and being recognised by other non-heterosexual women, see Clarke and Spence, 2012). However, the function of Polly's talk, a heterosexual participant, was an almost verbatim counteract: "lesbians aren't people with, y'know really short hair and who wear, y'know, baggy jeans" (emphasis added).

Clarke and Spence (2012) argue that adhering to the 'typical' lesbian (and bisexual) looks can raise questions over individual authenticity, which must be negotiated. However, they also argue that for participants who *didn't* adhere to these 'looks', their authenticity as non-heterosexual women was also challenged. Gay and appearance norms may be becoming

less distinctive than they once were (Clarke & Spence, 2013; Clarke & Smith, 2015; Huxley, Clarke & Halliwell, 2013), which is often attributed to the mainstreaming of gay 'looks', enabled perhaps through improved social and legal equality for LGBT people (Huxley, Clarke & Halliwell, 2013). This discourse was mirrored by participants attending 'Know-it', when discussing Andrew's (a gay participant) sexuality: "They have no problem with it, urm-" (Andrew) / "Well nobody does have a real-" (Polly) / "No, no" (Andrew) / "I don't ((unclear))" (Molly) / "No, not seriously" (Bryony).

However, liberal discourse can be used in a way that supports the privileged position of heterosexuality (Brickell, 2001). For instance, in Clarke's (2016, 2019) work around this in her wearing a gay slogan t-shirt in the classroom, she found that the rhetoric of 'everything's equal now' was used to passionately reject 'overt' signifiers of homosexuality, sanctioning a neoliberal subject who is non-homophobic, yet instilled in heteronormativity. Polly likewise draws on the liberal imperative of historical progress (Billig, 1988), "today's society", which, apparently, denies LGBT people a visual identity. In my research, this was seen perhaps most vividly in Esther's creation of a 'gender fluid' doll, whom she characterised through an absence of any physical attributes.

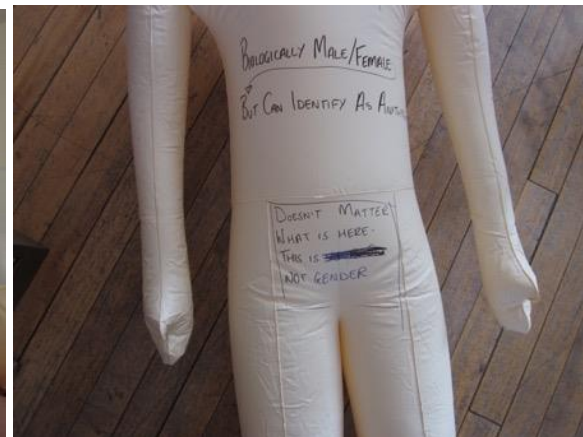
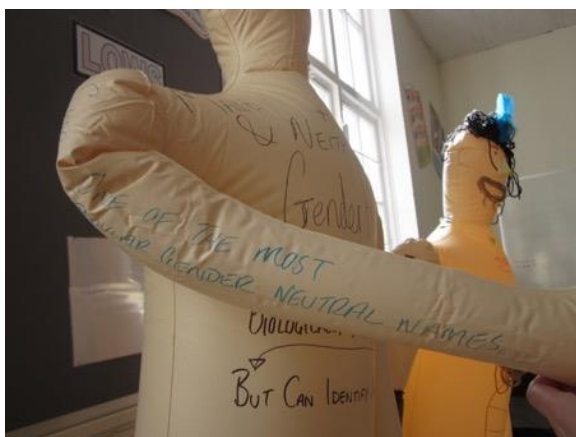


Figure 3.7: Esther's construction of the 'Gender Fluid Doll' in Thornside Workshop

Matt: I'm so glad we've got genderqueer...so are you saying, are they genderqueer, or?

Esther: They're genderfluid.

Matt: Genderfluid.

Esther: Genderqueer and genderfluid are very similar.

Matt: Mmm.

Esther: But genderfluid is when you can chop and change, whereas genderqueer is when you don't really fit into the binaries, so then you turn out to be agender.

Matt: Right, uhuh. So it's, gender, genderfluid, in that-

Esther: In that you can chop and change, like one day you can feel like a man, but you can like biologically be a female and then vice versa.

Matt: Mhm. Fab.

Esther: And sometimes you can feel like you neither so-

Matt: Mhm. Mhm. So and that's, when they're, asexual?

Esther: Agender.

Matt: Agender.

Esther: ((laughs))

Thornside, Design Workshop 1: Blow up Body-Mapping

The genderfluid doll often served as a means for Esther to inform others at the workshop about gender and sexuality. In the above, Esther does this by correcting me as she 'explains' gender fluidity ('genderfluid' to 'genderqueer', 'asexual' to 'agender'). It is increasingly regarded that identifying across the gender spectrum is becoming more widely accepted among young LGBT people (Marsh, 2016), as well as identifying across 'new' sexual identities such as 'pansexual' (Flanders et al. 2016). Despite not actively recruiting LGBT participants, two of my participants listed their sexuality as 'pansexual'. Esther, who identified as 'pan', used her sexual identity and the genderfluid doll to challenge the

behaviour of others in the group: “use different pronouns that you're using” / “Their name is Charlie as it's one of the most popular genderneutral names”. She also used questioning to challenge some more overtly transphobic discourse from other group members. “That one’s a tranny tran-transvestite” (Rachel) / “Oh my God (.) okay” (Matt) / “Do you mean the man? Or do you mean the genderfluid?” (Esther). Although young people did sometimes voice explicitly homophobic or transphobic comments, these were routinely challenged by other group members. Raising ‘trans’ issues was relatively common, for instance in the ‘Know-it’ workshop, before making a doll to be a female, Beth asked “Do we mean woman, cis woman?” I will return to discuss LGBT practices in my second data chapter, ‘Sexual Cultures’.

From a visual identity perspective, however, the genderneutral doll was striking and, to some audiences of my work, disturbing, in the way it lacks any ‘human’ attributes. Esther made her doll simply by writing words, mostly with a black Sharpie pen. On the head: “Your gender is defined here not what you are biologically”, on the chest: “Male + Female & Neither GenderFluid”, on the abdomen: “Biologically Male/Female -> But Can Identify As Anything”, on the arm, and over the genitals “Doesn’t Matter What Is ~~Your Sex~~ Not Gender”. The doll was not characterised apart from on the arms, and these were added later in the workshop: “Charlie – One Of The Most Gender Neutral Names” on the right and “Gender Dysphoria” on the left. When sexual minorities struggle to find a recognised visual identity, for example bisexual people, they may be rendered invisible (Barker & Langdrige, 2008; Monro, 2015). The genderneutral doll was an emphasised version of this with almost no inscribed human identity (other than the name). The rhetoric here was notably essentialist, gender is defined in the ‘head’, and arguably pathologising: “What does that mean, dysphoria?” (Lory) / “Dysphoria means (.) when you feel [inaudible] yourself because you’re not in the right body” (Esther).

This visual data was a stark contrast to the (verbal) neoliberal discourse discussed earlier, e.g. “chop and change” / “whatever you want to be” (Esther). The absence of genitalia can also contrasted to the oversized genitalia in the male dolls (Figure 3.1). Visual data and textual data can be cross-examined to see contradiction, and for me the genderneutral doll was a sober reminder of the pervasive, problematic binary of male/female. An absence of gender was represented here as a pathologic absence of character.

3.7 Conclusions

Adopting an innovative, visual, design method which asked young people to map understandings of sexuality onto inflatable dolls enabled a rich analysis around socio-cultural understandings of the sexual body. As also illustrated in this chapter, these discourses around the sexual body were also prominent in some of the other methods I adopted (namely the Lego building activity, discussed in Chapter 5). I suggest my use of these methods has implications for both social science and HCI research.

The notion of ‘body projects’ is a popular way of thinking about the body as a way of expressing the self, and a source of capital (Gill, Henwood and McLean, 2005). This notion was integral to my analysis of how young people completed this design activity. Through this exercise, bodies were constructed as sites of strict surveillance and control, while simultaneously governed by individuality and autonomy, and in some cases retaliation and rebellion, providing means of self-expression and one’s ‘true’ identity. My workshop format provided a dynamic medium in which to examine these constructions, the inflatable dolls themselves providing a visual expression of bodies, and the workshop transcripts a way of examining how these were constructed and contested between participants. This unusual method prompted enthusiastic engagement from many participants; consider, for example, the plethora of cultural signifiers indicated on the dolls produced by PRONG (Figure 3.1). This provided rich analytic material around the social indicators of appearance, including narratives beyond individual experience (e.g. the “hooker”, “prostitute”, “stripper” narrative in PRONG).

This mode of body-mapping therefore builds upon, and gives extension to, similar work focusing on experiences. For example, Fahs’ (2011, 2012) participants completing a body hair diary expressed experiential accounts of disgust, while my participants discursively positioned women who do not remove their hair as living disorderly lives (i.e. Molly says “Why would they live like that?”). These findings echo discursive work into body hair (i.e. Terry et al. 2017; Li and Braun, 2016) in that they draw on neoliberal notions of free choice (see also Chapter 4), but also expand on this work, in identifying these discourses in notably younger (female) participants. These younger women also reported on a larger diversity of body hair practices than evident in previous work, specifically the policing of eyebrow practices, which might be seen in light of technological trends in popular culture, such as tutorials on *YouTube* (Garcia-Rapp, 2016). This provides an extension to commentaries on

the effort women are required to invest in their bodies (Black and Sharma, 2001; Fahs and Delgado, 2011).

Neoliberalism as a form of individuality was similarly pertinent across a range of bodily practices, such as tattooing and piercings, mirroring Riley and Cahill's (2005) research with participants who modified their own bodies. However, in my research, this autonomy and individuality was speculative, in that this discourse was produced in relation to the *expected* changes these young women *would* make about their bodies. As I shall explore in the following chapters, autonomy and individuality were pertinent ideals across young people's constructions of their gendered and sexual identities.

Analysis of this complex data set presented me with many challenges. Young people's talk focused in two distinct ways: the dolls' (imaginary) narratives, which was favoured more typically by PRONG and Thornside, and of more personal accounts, favoured more typically by Know-it and Brampton. This provides challenges of analysing both accounts of both the dolls' fictionalised narrative, and accounts of young people's own practices. For instance in the Thornside youth group, Danika's narrative of the doll's tattoo is focused on this imaginary character - "Maybe she feels left out. Like, different when she got it", while in the Brampton youth group talk of body modification practices were centred around their own bodies, Gill responds to an enquiry about wanting to have her hips pierced with "I don't have a reason I just want them done!"

I argue it is valuable and worthwhile to consider these unexpected and surprising findings in a Big Q (Kidder and Fine, 1987), inductive manner (see Chapter 2), and these findings predicate and inform later work in my thesis. For instance, the narrative of individuality and autonomy speak to notions of the 'mature sexual adult', and narratives of LGBT appearance practices speak to young people practising enquiry around LGBT matters (see Chapter 4). These discourses also speak to constructions of sexual health (see Chapter 5), consider for example the hair removal device made in Thornside (p. 57), where hair removal was equated to a healthy body. My analysis of these findings also informed the tasks I constructed for the two games developed as a part of my research, also discussed in Chapter 5.

The visual medium of 'blow-up body-mapping' has also led me to consider alternative ways of presenting my research. A key strength of visual methods has been using art to

disseminate research (Johnson, 2011; Riley et al. 2011; Kitzinger and Wood, 2019), and similarly I have used the dolls in different venues to spark conversational accounts of my work.



Figure 3.8: Presenting the dolls as research dissemination

In work with Ko-Le Chen (Chen et al. 2017) I have presented an account of this research in the form of a ‘research fiction’ (Figure 3.8, left). Here the ‘experience’ of a workshop was enacted to a live audience, which finished with a crescendo of peer review comments being played as part of the audio landscape, as an artistic expression of some of the ethical issues I have encountered in my PhD, discussed in Chapter 2. I have also exhibited the dolls, deflated and preserved in plastic sheeting at research seminars and conferences (Figure 3.8, right), which oftentimes had sexual health professionals present, prompting discussions around youth-led constructions of sexual identity and sexual health. Visual accounts of research can be seen to contribute to the agenda of impact in universities more widely (Kitzinger and Wood, 2019), and these exhibitions indicate a way the findings of my research might be communicated more widely.

Chapter 4 Sexual Cultures

As discussed in the previous chapter, physical appearance and body management practices are tied up inescapably in culture. Visual markers, such as clothing practices have associations with social and identity groups (Hall, 1997), such as the LGBT community discussed previously (see: Clarke and Turner, 2007), although these associations may not be straightforward - as I illustrated in the previous chapter, from one participant in particular, gender fluidity was associated with a *lack* of visual identity.

From a social constructionist position, the 'self' is socially and culturally configured, with notions of culture permeating across institutions, sub-national, national and supra-national practices of identities (Besley and Peters, 2007). Although culture can be described as a shared, fixed set of values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and norms of social groups (Samovar et al. 2012), culture is also understood to be flexible, fluid and multiple, a 'liquid' (Bauman, 2013), unpredictable system of customs and ideals which govern social groups.

The definition of the term 'culture' is, therefore, hotly contested, with sometimes incompatible definitions (see: Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952; Jahoda, 2012). In arguing that a cohesive definition of 'culture' is futile, Jahoda (2012) concludes that the use of the word culture "usually points vaguely to some characteristic ways of a behaviour of a category of people" (pp. 300). For the purposes of my analysis, and from a social constructionist standpoint, I use the term sexual cultures to be how young people co-constructed roles, regulations and practices as sexual agents through interaction.

Such a definition of 'sexual culture' can be applied to a wide variety of social groups, and has been examined particularly in relation to transmission of HIV and AIDS in different geographical contexts (e.g. Leclerc-Madlala, 2002; Wood, Lambert and Jewkes, 2007). Parker and colleagues (1991, 2011) identified the need to examine the qualitative dimension of how sexual cultures are defined in relation to HIV/AIDS, with his pioneering work into the sexual cultures of Brazil showing the multiple and diverse sexual scripts which govern gender, sexuality and erotic practices (Parker, 1989; 2009). These include children's involvement in sexual practices that may be alarming to a western view of children and young people's sexuality. This contrasts starkly to the western views of childhood sexuality, outlined in the introduction, pronouncing 'childhood innocence', and that this natured

purity is increasingly 'at threat' by a culture which is becoming increasingly sexualised (Taylor, 2010).

The denial of young people as sexual subjects in many ways prohibits the study of young people's sexual cultures, with Allen (2009) arguing institutions such as schools can mute and regulate young people's sexual subjectivities. Indeed, study of youth culture as a whole remains marginal, due to it being a historically recent social category (Shildrick, 2006). However, academic examinations of youth culture have shown how ritualised subcultures in post-war Britain, including punk culture, the labour market and dance culture largely subsided in the 2000s to individualised notions of youth experience (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). While, as discussed above, digital technology can be seen as 'corrupting' childhood innocence, Buckingham (2015) argues that young people do not engage with these as 'technologies' but as 'cultural forms'. Following Buckingham's argument that we must reconfigure how we consider 'literacy' in a world increasingly dominated by electronic media, I suggest that we must consider conceptions of digital technology to be integrated into how we should consider young people's sexual cultures. I now describe how I examined sexual cultures in my research using timelines as a design method.

4.1 Collaborative Timeline Workshop



Figure 4.1: Timeline Activity

Timelines have been increasingly used in longitudinal research, typically in conjunction with one-on-one interviews, seen to identify both noteworthy events and changes that have happened in individuals' lives, and projections of future events (Adriansen, 2012; Bagnoli, 2009; Deacon, 2006; Kolar et al. 2015). This method exists as part of a wider plethora of

“graphic elicitation diagrams” (Bagnoli, 2009) posing that arts-based methods present distinct potentials for gaining knowledge (Prosser and Loxley, 2009). Timelines are often used to examine topics where ‘timeliness’ is considered pivotal, particularly on topics that are considered ‘sensitive’, such as suicide attempts (Rimkeviciene, 2016) and sexual histories (Goldenberg, 2015). Across these uses of timelines as a method, it has been argued that visual timespans allow for participants to actively identify relevant points of interest, allowing for more comprehensive accounts of individual life histories. However, in re-imaging this method as a group activity, my focus was rather different, instead using collective notions of timeliness to structure a conversation around sexual development.

I produced ‘domain cards’ which related to where young people experienced aspects of their sexuality. This approach mirrors researchers who have successfully used ‘Card Sorting’ as a way of structuring discussions in group settings. Lucero et al. (2016) discuss the virtues of using playing cards as a design method, suggesting that the tangibility of playing cards enables effective structuring of discussions around relevant ideas and concepts. For example, Lucero and Arrasvuori (2010) have devised ‘PLEX Cards’, designed to structure conversations around the 22 categories identified in the ‘Playful Experiences Framework’ (PLEX; Korhonen et al. 2009). Lucero and Arrasvuori (2010) also suggest using a combination of “inspiration cards” and “domain cards” in workshop settings to explore new ‘solutions’ to design problems.

My approach was less specific than this, as I was not attempting to situate my findings in a pre-existing framework. However, I used the concept of ‘domain cards’ to identify potential areas of discussion which may (or may not) inform how young people situate their sexual identities. This approach resembles Louisa Allen’s (2008) research, which similarly used focus groups to identify young people’s interests and needs in school-based sexuality education. She presented young people with a set of cards comprising of topics relating to sex and sexuality, and asked her participants to (collectively) sort them into piles relating to how well these topics were covered in their own sexuality education, and what they wanted their sexuality education to cover. This collaborative sorting exercise allowed for further questioning and elaboration on relevant topics. In a similar manner, I expected that the collaborative mapping of a timeline would result in debate and discussion around where young people had learnt about sex.

I produced seven initial domain cards, informed by previous work in this area (Allen, 2008; Hirst, 2004; Bay-Cheng, Livingstone and Fava, 2011). These were a 'starting point' for conversations, as well as producing blank cards for participants to suggest their own sources. The seven pre-produced cards were 'Friends', 'Mobiles', 'Online Videos', 'Parents', 'Personal Experience', 'Pornography', 'Social Media' and 'Television'. Participants were presented with a large timeline (Figure 4.1) printed on two sheets of A2 card. The activity was presented to young people as collectively charting where young people had learnt about sex and sexuality. I then used the timeline, and the notion of 'where young people learn about sex' as the focus for the discussion-based session.

My analysis in this chapter is based around three thematic areas which examine three broad subject positions. In the first, 'mature sexual adults', young people positioned themselves as active agents and knowers about sex. In the second, 'judges of sexuality', young people exercised judgement over correct/incorrect forms of sexual activity. Finally, in the 'enquirers of sexuality' young people exercised intrigue around various, unknown forms of sexuality. In exploring how young people framed their sexual cultures, both digitally and non-digitally, I argue that young people used digital technology as a social construct to navigate their sexual identities. This chapter predominantly draws on data from the workshops with these timelines, but I also draw on data from the body-mapping method (discussed in Chapter 3) and design activities using Lego (discussed in Chapter 5) when this data spoke to notions of young people's sexual cultures.

4.2 Mature Sexual Adults

Digital technology was key in young people's talk around how they encountered sexuality. Participants recognised the role of social media in finding relationships, enabling interactions with and around romantic others, the prevalence of sexting amongst young people, access to pornography, and the role of the internet in finding information about sex and sexuality. These areas will all be discussed further throughout this chapter, but key to my analytic approach is considering how their talk about these technologies served a discursive function.

In occupying roles as 'mature sexual adults', the young people in my research often minimised the influence of digital technology, relegating sexualised technology use as something 'others', or their younger selves, used to occupy an *immature* sexual identity. In

the following, young people from 'Know-it' framed social media use as enabling the 'young relationship':

Andrew: For me like, social media for me, was, the way it kind of, developed my understanding of sex was kind of, I would, it-it kind of, enabled, young relationships? More? Like because you'd go and you'd talk on *Facebook* all the time, *MSN* as well.

Molly: *MSN* was a big one for me.

Andrew: Back in the day, *MSN* was where it was at.

Molly: I used to have my boyfriend's name at the start of mine.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly.

Molly: Like with little hearts.

Andrew: Yeah we'd used it, d'you remember, d'you remember when I- on *Facebook* like, really a long time ago you used to have, like, a description box about you?

Molly: Ohhh yeah!

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Participants often framed technology with a sense of nostalgia. For Andrew, *MSN* was used "back in the day", and elsewhere Esther reminisced "when I was younger it was like a (.) awesome Motorola flip phone". Nostalgia as a discursive resource is often seen to yearn for the "good life", a notion of looking back fondly to a time before technology's interference in everyday life (Higgs, Light and Strong, 2010). It was notable, therefore, that in my research young people also used nostalgia as a resource in their talk, but their point of reference was 'old' technologies of yesteryear: "flip phone" / "*MSN*" / "*Facebook* like a really long time ago". In the above, young people used these 'old' technologies to reminisce collectively about the 'young' relationship. Acts of remembering ("d'you remember, d'you remember" Andrew / "Ohh yeah!" Molly) were used to emphasise that these young people are seasoned users of social media, and in particular, *Facebook* ("a long time ago" Andrew).

While emphasising how well accustomed they were to digital technologies, particularly social media and its importance in developing a sexual identity, participants also highlighted the apparent immaturity of engaging with social media to assert a sexual identity. We can see this indicated in the previous quotes, when Molly "used" to have her boyfriend's name

at the start of her *MSN* name, “with little hearts”, an immature sexual agent. A reflection upon sexual immaturity was used to assert themselves as mature sexual adults:

Andrew: It does enable the young relationships, and it like, makes them really public, and it makes them really, in the eyes of people, and it's kind of a way people start, developing relationships, and then like, when you actually get into proper relationships, you generally don't actually put it on *Facebook*, like-

Molly: Yeah I-

Andrew: Like most people don't actually say "in a relationship with X, Y and Z", it feels like a really young thing.

Molly: I don't see why you need to, I don't see-

Bryony: Like ((unclear))

Molly: Like, I've not made it *Facebook*-official with my boyfriend, like, I don't see why I should.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Here, Andrew constructs social media as akin to a ‘starter pack’ for enabling the ‘young’ relationship. Social media is where people “start developing relationships”, which he contrasts to “proper relationships”, and Molly and Andrew co-define these as *not* being on *Facebook*. This mirrors the neoliberal discourse discussed in Chapter 3. The legitimacy of these young people’s “proper” relationships would be undermined by being made “*Facebook*-official”, an expectation that the mature, neoliberal sexual agent should be able to resist (“I don’t see why I should” Molly). *Facebook* interactions were often used to delegitimise the immature sexual agent, particularly in the group of young people from Know-it. Bryony emphasises that what characterises these interactions is “the fact that it isn’t sexually developed”, Molly criticises “couples put pictures of them like kissing”, and Andrew mocks “people in year seven or year eight would put like ((laugh)) ‘relationship status - it's complicated’ ((general laughter)) And it's like, how complicated can it be?”

Andrew: But then also, if you, if you if you had, like, ((laugh)) if they'd had sex, everyone would have been like "Woah!"

Molly: Oh my God, yeah!

Andrew: You had to, like, publicise the fact you were in a relationship, 'cos you had to show you were sexually developed, just not that sexually developed.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Social media interactions, distinctly public in nature, put these exchanges up for interrogation, simultaneously delegitimising sexual agency. I will explore these interrogations further in my second theme (see: *The Judges of Sexuality*). However, most relevant for young people navigating their sexuality as mature sexual agents is how they used the category of the (younger) immature sexual 'other' to assert their current identity of being sexually developed. Positioning theory proposes that individuals' discursive positions are negotiated in relation to 'others' (Davies and Harre, 1990), and the immature sexual other posed a comparison for young people to carry out 'identity work' (Dickerson, 2000), identifying what they are 'not' to define what they 'are' (Clarke and Turner, 2007):

Andrew: It's like (.) you kind of, you have, like, boasting when you're seven and eight, and then it goes away for, like, ten years ((laugh)) and then it comes back.

Hetty: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah it, like, comes back, like, I think it's come back no:w.

Andrew: Yeah, it's really, it's prevalent now I think.

Molly: Mmm.

Bryony: Like "Look at this girl I got with last night".

Molly: Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah yeah now, like, back then it was like, "Oh yeah, I do all of this, look at me" and now it's actually like "I do do all of this."

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Andrew uses a notably young category (seven and eight) to position his status as a mature sexual adult. Although participants often stated that they didn't 'publicise' their relationships, i.e. "I've not made it *Facebook*-official with my boyfriend" (Molly), here the current "boasting" of young people mirrors that of their younger selves, only this time it is 'real': "actually, like, 'I do do all of this'" (Andrew, emphasis added). The immature sexual

self is characterised by “boasting” for attention (“look at me”), with Andrew’s speech act positioning their younger selves as lacking sexuality until they become sexually active. In Andrew’s account, the sexually mature subject “actually” has sex, which underpins his sexual authority. Previous research has indicated that young men occupy identities as ‘sexual experts’ in their talk about sexual activity (Holland et al. 1998; Allen, 2005; Pascoe, 2005; Hilton, 2007). However, in my research, I found that participants of both genders, and in particular the group from ‘Know-it’, exercised a position of sexual ‘knowers’, asserting young people’s sexual identity through being sexually active. Here, my participants discussed being sexually active while living with parents:

Polly: But like, what’s that, like, they’re so like oblivious and then I think, like sometimes, like, urm, parents don’t realise how like, honestly, like careful ((laugh)) some teenagers are.

Andrew: Yeah.

Polly: Y’know when they’re doing it like upstairs, when their Mam’s in the house and stuff.

Molly: ((laugh))

Madeline: Mmm mmm.

Molly: I think a lot of the time I think parents just, kind of, want to assume that nothing’s going on.

Polly: Yeah.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

The conversational context of teenagers having sex in the family home posed an opportunity for young people to assert the sexual autonomy of teenagers. As I found in my previous research (Wood et al. 2018), adults often construct young people as non-knowers about sexuality, in need of guidance and education. In the above extract, however, the tables are turned, it is young people who are constructing adults as “oblivious” to teenagers’ sex lives, they “want to assume that nothing’s going on”. This is the precise opposite of the mainstream rhetoric of childhood sexuality outlined in Chapter 1; here

young people talk of protecting vulnerable parents from their sexualities, 'carefully' navigating their sexual activity around their parents.

Likewise, Andrew recounts his friend who "sat down with her Mum and was like, 'I wanna talk to you about sex' and she said 'Oh are you thinking about, like, starting to have sex?' and she was like 'No, I've been having sex for a year and a half', using reported speech to add legitimacy to Andrew's account. Overwhelmingly, the account presented is that young people *know what they're doing*. Related to notions of autonomy and rebellion discussed in the previous chapter, young people spoke about their sexuality as something that existed distinctly from their parents', or other adults', ideas of what they are (or should be) doing.

The design workshops, which also had two workshop facilitators and at least one youth worker present, provided an opportunity to see adults' and young people's, often conflating, constructions of childhood sexuality. In the following, we can see how an interaction plays out between the workshop facilitators, youth workers and young people on the content of the music video to Nicki Minaj's *Anaconda*:

Matt: ((laughs)) I mean it's pretty, in my view it's pretty explicit.

Esther: Yeah, their butts are a bit too big.

Matt: And it's kind of, kids of all age watching videos like that.

Sarah: Probably.

Matt: It's not like something that you start watching, like, when you're older teenagers.

Brian: I mean, if we, pulled that in now, we could be watching one of those videos, in the next five minutes.

Esther: Mhm.

Brian: Couldn't we?

Esther: Mhm.

Brian: And that's twenty four hours a day, television, so that's, that's, instead of children coming down to put the telly on on a morning and it's *Teletubbies*.

Steph: *Teletubbies*!

Brian: They're turning it on and it's *Nicki Minaj* (pause) at four years old.

Esther: And that's why when you go to bed you pick a certain channel.

Brian: Yeah, but you know it happens.

Brampton, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

In this portion of talk, both Brian and I (in our roles of workshop facilitator and youth worker respectively) position young people as vulnerable (Taylor, 2010). Matt (me) expresses concern at the availability of explicit music videos to younger people (“kids of all age”), and Brian refers to a time when children watched *Teletubbies* on the television rather than *Nicki Minaj*, referring to very young children (“four years old”) to emphasise his point. This is an example of the ‘history of concern’ surrounding new forms of media corrupting childhood innocence (Buckingham, 2005). Buckingham argues that each subsequent generation refers to a halcyon, but hypothetical, ‘golden age’ before which children were entirely untouched by media ‘sexualisation’.

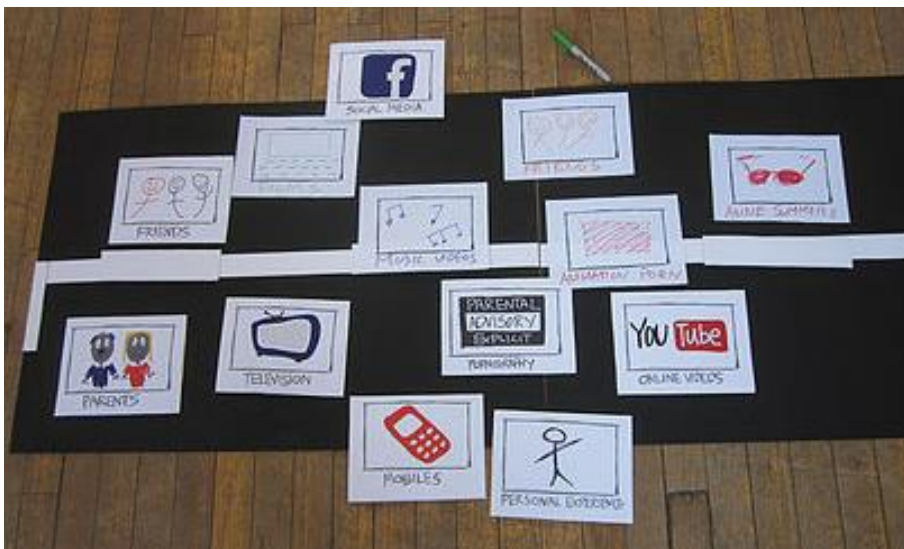


Figure 4.2: Final layout of the timeline made by participants at Brampton

Brian commonly repeats similar discourse. Later in the workshop Brian uses the timeline (Figure 4.2) to assert how young people are being exposed to a dangerous amount of sexual knowledge from an under-regulated and over-sexualised media (Harrison and Hillier, 1999). In a long portion of talk, Brian states that “in our experience in the youth service” he would “at this current time...probably tip that end up (timeline) and put everythin' about (.) two or three years this way”. He uses this as a means of communicating the sexualisation of young children: “Young people of ten, eleven, who get the most modern technology” so that

“suddenly, everything that's up that end [at an older age], is now available (.) at a younger age, and people are accessing it and finding out about it”. He compares this to the past, where young people apparently “found out about something in a film, or might have sneaked up and watched something late on TV, an' friends might've told them things”. This mirrors Taylor’s (2010) argument that, historically, every new form of media posed an increasing threat to the notion of childhood innocence.

In the previous extract, we can see how young people presented elements of resistance to this discourse. Participants only briefly interjected ‘agreement’ such as Sarah (“Probably”), Steph makes light of Brian’s example (“*Teletubbies!*”), and Esther was most prominent in challenging Brian’s example, shifting responsibility to parents: “That's why when you go to bed you pick a certain channel”. In the abovementioned timeline metaphor, Esther is also most vocal in challenging Brian, questioning the shift of the timeline two or three years earlier: “So do you believe you learnt from your parents about sex at two years old?” As I will now discuss, my participants both supported and resisted the notion of childhood innocence; however, both positions served to assert young people as mature sexual adults:

Brian: One of, one of the lessons that we have to try an' we have with the-the age range down to young to younger people (.) is like *Snapchat* and that people have this, like this safe selfie campaign all the rest of it, we ‘ave this, umm, well people have this image that, they do something it's on *Snapchat* for ten seconds and then disappears and it's never to be seen again.

Rachel: Isn't that why there's posters all over school?

Esther: Screenshot!

Brian: But the reality is-

Rachel: Mhm.

Esther: They stay in the cloud

Brian: It's out there for ever (.) the reality of anybody sendin' photographs, whatever it is, whether it's a happy smiley face or something that's less (.) appropriate.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

The concerns expressed by Brian echo the anxieties raised on behalf of young people engaging with sexting, branded a 'risky' activity prevalent amongst youths, much like alcohol abuse or unprotected sex (Benotsch et al. 2013; Lenhart, 2009), subject to legal sanctions, and personal and professional stigmatisation (Mitchell et al. 2012). In my previous research, I have found that adults' perceptions of sexting are often presented in exaggerated form (Wood et al. 2018), and we can see how both Brian and Esther do this in the above extract "It's out there forever" / "they stay in the cloud". These are not accurate understandings of what happens to explicit sexual images (see: Ringrose et al. 2012); rather, I suggest these utterances serve different conversational functions for these agents. Brian indicates the 'faulty' beliefs of young people, assigning blame to young people for their misunderstandings. This is a framing which assumes the developmental limitations of youth (see: Gabriel, 2014). However, Esther also rehearses this rhetoric ("they stay in the cloud"), emphasising she is not a 'passive cultural dupe' (see Chapter 3), she is asserting that she is both aware and conscious of these arguments. This is further underlined by her pre-empting Brian's response ("Screenshot!"), and likewise, Rachel communicates that these dangers are expressed readily to young people: "Isn't that why there's posters all over school?"

To these ends, young people, particularly from Thornside, often rehearsed common negative rhetoric around digital technology and sexuality: "It's everywhere" (Rachel), "there's more porn on the Internet than anything else" (Esther), "I reckon porn is too easy to get a hold of" (Danika). However, alongside this discourse, participants also presented such 'dangerous' interactions with technology simply as mundane aspects of navigating their sexuality digitally, as mature sexual adults. This was particularly the case with young people's talk about their encounters with pornography:

Lory: There was this link right, and I just clicked on it an' I was, like, let's just go through *Facebook*, and there was a link, so I clicked on it, and then it was, like, on the corner it had like porn and stuff and I was like (yuck).

Rachel: That's what I hate about *Primewire*, there's always like some sort of animation porn on the side.

Steph: Yeah.

Rachel: An' I had to, like, block it out.

Both Lory and Rachel talked about pornography with disgust but, crucially, it was something to navigate *around* as young people accustomed to digital sexual cultures. Lory spoke about how her encounter with pornography was unintentional, commonly reported by participants, and for Rachel incessant pornographic images (“always”) is what she “hates” about her interaction with *Primewire*. For these young women, pornography was something prevalent, prominent, but something to overcome – “(Yuck)” (Lory) / “I had to, like, block it out” (Rachel).

It is widely acknowledged that Internet has changed young people’s relationship with pornography, and this has been written about from a wide variety of perspectives. This ranges from feminist concern at the more ‘explicit’ and ‘perverse’ levels of sexual content, particularly the subordination of women (Barron and Kimmel, 2000; Dines and Jensen, 2004; Dworkin, 1979, 1999; Fisher and Barak, 2001), with most research in this area focused on the risks and dangers of young people accessing pornography (see: Flood, 2009). However, young people have also been seen as “literate and critical consumers” of sexualised media, it providing both a means of ‘doing’ identity, and a place to speak from (Buckingham and Bragg, 2003; 2004). In occupying a position as ‘mature sexual adults’, the young people in my research displayed ‘being accustomed’ to Internet pornography, but also a maintained criticality about the medium:

Danika: I reckon porn is too easy to get a hold of, it's meant to be, like, seventeen, eighteen, but anyone could just like click on it and just go through.

Matt: Yeah.

Lory: I know you can even get onto it at school.

Steph: Yeah you can.

Esther: Wha:t?

Lory: You can.

Steph: Yeah.

Lory: There's people who go onto it at school, they do get obviously taken in.

Rachel: (Yeah)

Lory: And they get taken off the computers, but you can get onto it at school.

Danika: Yeah but what saddo goes on porn at school? The g-

Lory: The ones that are tryin' to make fun-

Danika: Wha?

Lory: (name) and (name)

Danika: Oww!

Brian: We don't need names.

Lory: No 'cos it's, like, when they're together they're like, stupid, and they were just tryin' to make a joke out of it.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Danika emphasises concern around young people's access to pornography, reproducing a discourse around risk and danger. We can see agreement (Edwards, 2005) here from Lory and Steph, which forms a part of the young people's co-construction of meaning (Wilkinson, 1998) in this group. Collectively, we see the young people make the case for the abundance of pornography, and how this is problematised by group members. Esther exercises a sense of disbelief ("What?"), and with Danika's utterance of "What saddo goes on porn at school?", the young porn consumers are delegitimised ("they're, like, stupid"). In this portion of talk, 'Young people's access to pornography' was used as a discursive resource for participants to de-legitimise young people's sexual identities.

However, this talk also demonstrates a literacy around pornography, young people 'know' you can get onto pornography at school. Displaying a level of literacy was important in young people exercising a position as mature sexual adults. While in the above Esther communicated disdain at the availability of porn in a school environment, elsewhere during the session she educated the group about animation porn: "it's like Tenki, Japanese-style porn", and in other groups the prevalence of pornography on *Tumblr* was highlighted as an educational medium, as I will discuss later. To these ends, disdain towards pornography was often presented alongside literacy about pornography, and becoming accustomed to the medium as a part of growing up:

Matt: Yeah, I remember being pretty horrified the first time I watched por- or saw anything like that, I don't know if-

Madeline: ((laughs))

Molly: I think, I can't remember who it was but someone was telling me, the first time, the first time they watched it they were, like, absolutely disgu:sted.

Andrew: That's me, this, this may have been me, like-

Molly: I can't, I can't remember who it was, but apparently they watched it and they were just, like-

Hetty: Yeah.

Molly: That is disgu:sting.

Hetty: Yeah. Yeah, I definitely remember stumbling across porn and being like "OHHHH MY GOD! This is the wo:rst thing to exist!" And then, like, probably a few years later, I saw it again and I was like "Oh!" ((laugh)) "Oh!" ((laugh))

Matt: ((laugh))

Hetty: It's not, not horrific, it's not as-

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Through various conversational tactics in the above Andrew, Hetty and myself all frame our first experiences with pornography as somehow traumatic - "pretty horrified" (Matt), "that's me" (Andrew), "this is the wo:rst thing to exist" (Hetty). It is worth noting that all three of us occupied identities as non-heterosexual, while for Molly (a heterosexual agent), it was a "friend" who was "disgusted" by porn (which Andrew then 'claimed'). As discussed earlier, this is again constructed as a "stumbling upon" pornography by Hetty, indicating the mundane nature of encountering porn. However, Hetty also identifies becoming acclimatised to pornography "a few years later", a part of her developing a sexual maturity.

Pornography was only spoken about directly in two participant groups (Thornside and Know-it), and it was not common for participants to talk about these encounters directly. However, this did happen occasionally. At one point at Thornside, Esther asked the group directly "Let's be honest here, who here has watched porn?" where a minority of participants raised their hands, and during a discussion of girls' engagement with pornography with 'Know-it' Polly recounted "Like my ex-boyfriend like we did watch it once, not like to get ideas for, but literally like to laugh at it kind of thing". Asserting engagement

with pornography required a (discursive) disassociation from it in order to maintain these young people's sexual identities. Polly's experience watching pornography with her ex-partner is validated through dismissing engagement as for a "laugh", and my participants did not readily 'own up' to watching porn. Becoming accustomed to, and having familiarity with, pornography were used as ways of asserting a sexual identity, but only under certain terms, and non-heterosexual identities appeared to be, in part, legitimised through displaying a dislike to the medium.

It is important to note that all participants in this phase of the research identified as female, apart from Andrew who identified as a gay man. An accustomed yet critical engagement with the topic of pornography, as seen here, can be contrasted to Allen (2007), who found that young men used engagement with pornography as an assertion of their sexual identity. My participants did, however, report on young men's engagement with pornography. This can be seen above, where participants from Thornside reported on (male) pupils who engaged with pornography at school, who were, in turn, de-legitimised from having a 'mature' sexual identity. However, Andrew identified boys' engagement with porn with young people 'owning' technology:

Andrew: 'Cos I think lots of boys, start kind of watching porn once they get their *iPhone*, like, because at that point, there is no parental restriction on it, whereas like, I know a lot of people when they were younger would have like parental restrictions on their computer, so they maybe couldn't watch porn, but then, like, I know that was certainly the case with a lot of my friends, but then you got like your first *iPhone*, you had your own Internet, and then (.) you could- and that was when it started, really.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Access to pornography, as a 'rite of passage', was therefore associated with ownership and control over one's technological environment. Access to pornography is a lack of "parental restriction", an overcoming of previous regulation and control over young people's sexualities. Liberated (male) young people, with their "own Internet", are apparently free to encounter the world of pornography. In my previous research, I found that sexual health workers framed young people's free access to technology as having "frightening" consequences for young people's sexualities (Wood et al. 2018). However, I argue here that

young people's autonomy and independence are crucial for them in maintaining a 'genuine' sexual identity (see Chapter 3). The neoliberal agent, although problematic, is prominent in constructions of young people's sexualities (Bay-Cheng and Elisero-Arras, 2008; Bay-Cheng, Livingston and Fava, 2011) and this intersected with young people's reported use of digital technologies:

Esther: In cog, in cognito, like that's what you can do, on your laptop as well you can change the settings so that no one can know, what you've been looking at.

Sarah: I do on my iPod (pause) but not like-

((laughter))

Esther: Right then!

Sarah: No but, in the, it's my personal stuff I don't like me mam an' dad lookin' at that.

Chrissy: Yeah, I know what you mean.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Here, we see indication that admitting pornography consumption could compromise Sarah's position within this group setting. Sarah, in turn, disputes this and, as previously discussed, a disengagement with pornography was common for my female participants (e.g. "I've never really watched porn" Lory). Through this, however, Sarah asserts her autonomy: "It's my personal stuff", and that it is important to maintain an independence from parents: "I don't like me mam an' dad lookin' at that." As discussed in Chapter 3, and also seen here, autonomy and independence from parental units and other 'authorities' was a powerful tactic for young people in asserting the neoliberal sexual agent. This suggests that attempts to limit and control young people's sexualities, as is common in discussing childhood sexuality (Scott, 2005; Thomson, 1993; Thorogood, 1992), go against principles pivotal to asserting young people's 'authentic' sexual identities.

As mentioned previously, exercising ambivalence around pornography consumption poses a marked contrast to previous research with young men, where it is argued that voiced engagement with porn strengthens a masculine identity (Allen, 2006). However, through group settings with young women, this nuanced relationship with pornography asserted

their maturity as sexual agents, with boys, in turn, positioned as immature (“they’re, like, stupid” Lory). In the following, boys’ engagement with pornography is de-legitimised, through being reconfigured as a status-building activity:

Andrew: But I think that is, that is the same kind of thing as, but also when you're saying boys in year seven-

Bryony: Yeah-

Andrew: -watch it, like it was kind of this thing where one person would find it and go "Oh my God, I've watched porn!"

Molly: Yeah ((laugh)).

Andrew: But then we wouldn't actually really watch porn.

Bryony: Just like that.

((laughter))

Andrew: Just like that.

((laughter))

Andrew: Um and it be, or people would tell people they'd watched porn, as a kind of social thing.

Matt: Mmm.

Hetty: Yeah, it's like, for the status, if you're a boy and you watch porn, you're like, kinda cool-

((laughter))

Hetty: -at a younger age, obviously.

((unclear))

Molly: It's watching porn and get a girlfriend.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Collectively, Andrew, Hetty and Molly construct the young (“year seven”) teenage boy as an immature sexual agent, his presentation of pornography consumption “Oh my God, I’ve

watched porn” hearsay, and not reflecting a “reality”. This gives a different take on Allen’s (2007) findings: young men’s engagement with pornography configured as an assertion of sexual identity. This presentation is “for the status”, and apparently not a reflection on what is ‘actually happening’. Younger men’s sexual identities are granted but, from the perspective of my participants, relegated as an immature identity, emphasised here again through reflection upon the ‘younger’ sexual other. These young people acknowledged the social purposes such assertions hold, going some way to challenge widespread panic at young men accessing pornographic content.

While some participants took a more ‘analytic’ approach in asserting themselves as ‘mature sexual adults’, particularly in Know-it and Thornside, in other groups young people asserted their development in different ways. In the fieldwork conducted with the youth service ‘PRONG’, there were two participants for Workshops 2 and 3 - Roxy and Julia - who knew each other well, which gave a rather different social dynamic to the setting. While these participants less readily discussed the intricacies of their own sexual encounters, Roxy recounted her social life of ‘going out’, and her knowledge of the ‘scene’:

Roxy: ‘Cos I go out clubbing nearly every night.

Julia: See she's-

Matt: Uh huh, well that's, y'know-

Roxy: It's not, like, well nearly eighteen, [month], on [day] of [month].

Matt: Mmm.

Julia: Remember that (.) there's straight, like, there's The Dog, there's Easy Street, umm, there's Powerhouse-

Roxy: There's Easy Street, Switch, Secrets, Powerhouse, The Dog, The Dog and Parrot, Gossip-

Julia: See, you know all of ‘em.

Matt: ((laughs)) Rusty’s?

Roxy: That one, aye, but there's another one, it's terrible all the clubs in town, then you've got the straight end that's Empress, Tup Tup, House of Smith, ummm-

Julia: I think (Brew) is one as well.

Roxy: Brew Dog (.) it's like, the best one's in the day, until like, nine ten o'clock, an' then for, like, it will have, like, half an hour, to clear out an' make it like a dance bar thing, an' then it'll be a bar from, like, whatever-

Matt: Mmm.

Roxy: Probably like one or something.

Matt: Mmm, mmm.

Julia: Some clubs, in town, don't shut until four o'clock in the morning.

Roxy: I know.

PRONG, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

The social dynamic of two (main) conversational agents gives an opportunity to see how positionality is used to assert identity. In these dynamics, Roxy is positioned as the more experienced. Roxy recounts her experiential knowledge of 'going out', an 'adult' activity, and in reporting these knowledges and experiences as an underage teenager, she presents herself as 'doing adult'. Julia also attempts to assert herself as a 'knower' of the scene, giving a list of nightclubs and bars, however this is quickly overridden by Roxy's more 'comprehensive' list. Within this, Roxy presents literacy in both gay and straight cultures ("the straight end"), gives assessment over these places ("it's terrible all the clubs in town"), and a 'knowing' of how these venues operate ("it will have like half an hour, to clear out an' make it like a dance bar"). However, in this small group, Roxy definitively positions herself as the 'knower', with the trivia about opening times provided by Julia at the end of the extract brushed off with an abrupt "I know" – Roxy is the expert in this domain.

Direct experience of sexual activity was not spoken about directly in this group of young people, however when the topic was (indirectly) brought up, these two participants skilfully navigated *around* the topic. During the Lego building workshop, as part of the 'warm up' activities I asked young people to build a representation "something you did last night". This was met with laughter from both participants, and a comment of "ayyee Matt" from Roxy:



Figure 4.3: Model of 'What I did last night' from Julia (PRONG Design Workshop 3: Lego)

When asked about what her model represented, Roxy replied only that “it’s a bed” and “I’m in it”. However, the ‘unsaid’ of what Roxy ‘did last night’ became a running joke for the rest of the workshop. When discussing ‘the reasons’ people have sex, Julia commented “It’s probably for pleasure or you wanna child” (Matt: “Mmhmm”) “or if you’re absolutely drunk an’ you can’t remember anything”, which was followed by this exchange:

Roxy: DON'T LOOK AT ME, you keep that quiet!

Julia: I um- I didn't say anything.

Roxy: I'm a good girl when I'm drunk.

Julia: Are ya?

Matt: ((laugh))

Julia: Mmm, not what I heard (.) considerin' you can't even remember-

Matt: We all do things when we're drunk, I guess.

Roxy: I don't!

And again, later in the workshop:

Julia: You can't say you've never done it.

Roxy: I've never had sex, me.

Julia: I believe that (.) so (.) much.

PRONG, Design Workshop 3: Lego

The interactions between Roxy and Julia construct Roxy as sexually active in the realm of 'going out'. Roxy enacts 'being innocent' through her 'adult' activities: "I'm a good girl when I'm drunk", however she also plays up to the role of 'hiding something': "DON'T LOOK AT ME, you keep that quiet!" In this way, a denial of sexual activity ("I've never had sex me" / "I don't") became a means of asserting her sexual identity as a sexually active young person. Although sex while intoxicated is often seen as an unsafe, dangerous practice, particularly for young women, something to be overcome through an agenda of public health (see Chapter 5), here we can see the drunken sexual experience as forming a part of young people's identity work. Directly after tasking participants to make a representation of 'what they did last night', I then asked participants to make a representation of an emotion or feeling they are experiencing:



Figure 4.4: Model of 'an emotion I'm feeling at the moment' from Roxy (PRONG Design Workshop 3: Lego)

Roxy's explanation for what she made was simply that she's "on top of the world". This model featured the same ambiguous (male) figurine which featured in Roxy's bed in the previous task. From a discursive psychology approach (see Chapter 2), omissions can be of interactional interest (Billig, 2003), and here it is notable that Roxy does not elaborate on this event, it is not put on the table for discussion. We might see this as an example of Roxy managing the interactions of the workshop, a deliberate use of constructive ambiguity to place this topic as off limits.

From a social constructionist standpoint, it is problematic to inscribe meaning into these models beyond what is 'there' – we cannot, nor are we concerned with, saying whether this figurine represents a sexual partner, herself, or indeed whether she 'actually' had a drunken sexual experience the previous night. However, I would suggest this data forms a narrative which problematises dominant discourses posing young people as 'at risk'. The 'risky' activity of intoxicated sex was used as a means of asserting Roxy herself as a mature sexual adult, a sexual 'knower' – a position readily occupied by young people through a range of interactions to proclaim their sexual identities.

4.3 The Judges of Sexuality

As we have seen previously, in asserting their maturity as sexual agents, young people positioned their younger selves and 'others' as immature, through legitimising and de-legitimising sexual agency. In this theme, 'The Judges of Sexuality', I will examine how my participants used various tactics to cast a form of judgement over sexual identity and sexual practice. As 'mature sexual adults', and in the context of these design workshops, young people collectively formed a 'jury' of sexuality, forming a model around the correct way to conduct a (mature) sexual relationship, what they are (and are not) entitled to know about other people's sexual relationships, and judgements over what were classed as 'good' and 'bad' sex. I argue that through this, a heterosexist model of sex and relationships prevailed.

With the group of young people from 'Know-it', towards the end of the session participants started talking about seeing people 'get with' each other in various 'public' spaces, and how interpretations of this have gone from "Awww, that's so cute" to "Oh God, PDA, it's like-" (Andrew):

Matt: What's PDA, sorry?

Andrew: Um-

Molly: Public display-

Bryony: ((in overlap)) Public display of affection.

Hetty: ((in overlap)) Public display of affection.

Andrew: And it's, like, that's not cool, you don't-

Bryony: Get outside!

Andrew: You're not supposed to do that.

Bryony: Get out of my sight!

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

In playing the role of someone naive about young people's sexualities ("sorry?"), I ask the group what they mean by 'PDA', which they collectively define. The blanket judgement of these young people is to dismiss the practice, with 'Public Displays of Affection' presented as a taken-for-granted, monolithic category. In this portion of talk, young people as the jurors of sexuality relegate sexuality as something that should not be seen, with multiple directive statements: "not cool" / "get outside" / "get out of my sight!" 'Public' spaces are seen to provide boundaries of sexual citizenship (Weeks, 1998), and through this discussion of how 'PDA' was constituted by these young people, we can see how these young people dictated bounded notions heterosexualisation (Hubbard, 2001):

Molly: But it depends on what kind of person you are though, some people are fine with PDA, and some people aren't, like-

Andrew: Yeah.

Molly: Like, suddenly I'm like, "No!"

Bryony: If it's sort of sort of an affectionate little thing, when you are fully like making out ((laugh)) in the common room-

Molly: That's not-

Bryony: While I am trying to work, I do not, I don't wanna see it, like, I'm working here I'm sorry - it's fine but do it somewhere else.

Andrew: But I think it, becomes much more individual, once you get to, like-

Hetty: No, definitely.

Andrew: Like, our age.

Bryony: Yeah, when you start realising who's wrong.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

School spaces have been examined as a key site where young people's sexualities are played out (Allen, 2008; Epstein and Johnson, 1998). In Allen's (2008) research using photo-diary and photo-elicitation, where participants took photographs of places that embodied sexuality in a school environment, she found the regulated nature of schooling (see: Paechter, 2004) forced young people's sexual cultures to 'unofficial' and 'informal' spaces, such as bike sheds and locker rooms. In the above, the 'common room' was presented as a regulated space, and through Bryony's speech act she partakes in this governance: "like, I'm working here I'm sorry" (Bryony). Displays of sexual affection should be done "somewhere else", places which are not subject to the same regulation. Bryony further provides forms of (hetero)sexuality that are acceptable to be displayed in these public spaces, they may be "affectionate" and "little", and not "fully like making out." The common room only allows tightly bounded conditions of (hetero)sexuality.

As discussed in my first theme, the publicised relationship was constructed as an immature version of sexuality, one that 'mature' young people were to overcome in their development as 'mature sexual adults'. Individual preference, conveniently happening at "our age", was a preferred version of sexuality, again contrasted to the immaturity of their younger years, defined later by Polly as a time where "You need to tell people, you need to show people". However, this maturity also gives young people authority in becoming 'judges' of sexuality, they have reached a time where they "start realising who's wrong" (Bryony), and can make reasoned judgements of what is and is not acceptable: "Suddenly I'm like 'No!'" (Molly). Participants therefore identified carefully negotiated, age related boundaries over how young people should practice their sexualities. The following exchange happened during a discussion of how their (immature) younger selves conducted their relationships through social media:

Bryony: You were *Facebook*-official before you actually went on a date

Andrew: But then also, if you if you if you had, like, ((laugh)) if they'd had sex, everyone would have been like "Woah!"

Molly: Oh my God, yeah!

Andrew: You had to like, publicise the fact you were in a relationship, 'cos you had to show you were sexually developed, just not that sexually developed.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

These young people, therefore, collectively dictated clear boundaries within which the 'young relationship' could operate. Young (immature) relationships privilege the 'virtual' over the 'physical', 'publicised' and not 'realised', with the utterance "Woah!" used as an indicator of crossing a boundary of how sexuality should be appropriately conducted. The final line of dialogue from Andrew in this extract is particularly revealing, young people are seen as 'walking the tightrope' of sexuality, which should not be deviated from in order to conduct oneself appropriately as a sexual agent. The carefully trodden path of navigating one's sexuality was, however, far from straightforward. Participants identified that different standards applied across the course of being a young person, particularly once they had reached 'maturity' as a sexual adult:

Polly: But like, a lot of the time now though, you don't, like, get with your boyfriend in the common room, or like show people, it's kind of just, like, people just assume kind of thing, like a lot of people, like there's like a couple who I go to school with who have been going out for about two years now, and everyone kind of just, like, "Oh yeah, they must be like, y'know having sex, that's fine, they stay over at each other's houses or whatever" and then we actually found out that, they weren't, and that was probably, more weird-

Molly: Yeah.

Polly: Than finding out, like, they were-

Molly: Mmm.

Polly: And it was kind of, like, woah like-

Andrew: And that's how-

Polly: They sleep in the same bed! Y'know?

Andrew: And-

Polly: They go to each other's houses and-

Andrew: Yeah.

Polly: Their parents aren't there, like, is there something wrong? Like should they, like, wait until marriage? ((laugh))

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Polly repeats assertions that people 'our age' are mature sexual adults, as demonstrated in my first theme. As mature sexual adults, you "don't...get with your boyfriend in the common room", and displaying one's sexuality should not be necessary, there is an unsaid acceptance that couples are sexually active. The jury of sexuality is still alive and well, yet as Polly describes, this is an assumption-led endeavour. In Polly's account of a couple at her school, she constructs the assumption of this young couple having sex as 'widespread': "everyone" had made this assumption (an extreme case formulation, Pomerantz, 1986). Polly also emphasises that it is acceptable to be sexually active, young people are "fine" with the (unsaid) assumption that their peers having sex. However, this story departs from this established 'sexual script' (Simon and Gangon, 1986). Polly uses the collective "we" in "finding out" that this young couple "weren't" having sex. The young people's jury of sexuality collectively made a discovery which departed from the accepted norm. Polly mirrors the previous extract with her utterance "Woah"; however, this time the boundary crossed was young people *not* having sex. Polly exercises disbelief, "They sleep in the same bed" / "they go to each other's houses", grasping at a reason for this deviation, mocking the idea they might not be having sex for religious reasons. Young people identified there being taken-for-granted rules around how one may conduct a sexual identity; however, how and where these rules applied was not straightforward.

One layer of complexity that young people identified was gendered differences in how young people played out their sexual identities. My participants were mostly young women, however they also spoke about and reflected upon *their interpretation* of young men's sexual cultures. Participants were, largely, disparaging about how men presented their sexual identities, which presented more complexities around the 'rules' of conducting oneself as a sexual agent:

Andrew: Someone will overhear you, but like I I find that quite an annoying, but kind of a 'lad culture.'

Hetty: Yeah.

Molly: It's really, it's really awful because, there's so much pressure nowadays, like urm, just for boys like "Oh like, have you had sex with her yet?"

Bryony: Mm.

Molly: And stuff like that and like, like i:ts SO unfair like because it's-it's your private information.

Bryony: Mmm.

Molly: And you can choose, like, to tell, people but people, like, pressure, like especially in school people are always like, pressuring boys, like "Oh, you haven't had sex with her, that's a bit strange isn't it, y'know, she went round to yours in the day why didn't you have sex with her?" and stuff like that.

Andrew: Yeah, that was a thing, ok, same person. ((laugh))

Molly: ((laugh)) Yeah.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

'Laddism' can be seen as part of the 'crisis of masculinity', a response to the 'family man' role developed in post-war conditions (Chinn, 2006). It is described as founded upon "drinking, football and fucking" (Edwards, 1997, p.83), 'having a laugh', objectifying women and being 'politically incorrect' (Francis, 1999). Lad culture has been conceptualised by young women as a group or 'pack' mentality, which particularly dominates social activities (Phipps and Young, 2013). However, the presentation of 'lad culture' as a monolithic category is problematic, as what it constitutes is dependent on context (Beasley, 2008). To these ends, in the above, Molly constructs 'lad culture' as young men's conversations around their sexual activity, the "awful" and "unfair" nature of sharing this "private" information. However, as we have seen in the above, Polly speculates on her friends' sex lives with some similarity to the rhetoric Molly criticises: "that's a bit strange isn't it " (Molly) / " is there something wrong?" (Polly)

It has been suggested that women may also participate in 'lad culture' (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007) to varying degrees, which we could put down as a possible reason for this similarity, however, I suggest this presents an opportunity to examine how 'lad culture' is co-constructed by group members. From a discursive perspective, we can see some key differences in how these two 'speculations' on others' sex lives were formulated, particularly through the use of pronouns (Van Dijk, 1993). Polly repeatedly uses the collective "they" to talk about her friends' sex lives: "they must be" / "they stay" / "they were" / "they weren't" / "they sleep" / "they go". In contrast, Molly uses singular pronouns ("you" and "her"): "have you had sex with her yet" / "you haven't had sex with her" / "why didn't you have sex with her?" Polly's construction of sex is therefore implicitly collective, whilst in Molly's construction sex is a directive act, something 'done to' a woman. Molly's account draws on hegemonic masculinity (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2012), positioning men as the active 'do-ers' of sex. The concept of "lad culture" was also addressed by these participants directly in a discussion of "the *LADbible*":

Molly: The *LADbible* is a big thing

Bryony: Ohhh no, an' they always like things on the *LADbible*, I see 'em it's, like, I don't wanna see!

Molly: The *LAD*, the *LADbible*'s this like big page on *Facebook*.

Bryony: Sooo sexist (...) I just see people liking it and then I instantly have the worst, like-

Molly: Some of it's funny and some of it's-

Bryony: Yeah, some of it's funny but then you see some of the other stuff and it's so:: sexist, and so:: bad.

Andrew: Mmm.

Bryony: So I just have a, like a-a-, like it's not that I don't talk to people who I've seen like things on there, I'm just, like (.) I judge you for that.

Hetty: I li- I like them less.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

The discourse of *Facebook* groups such as ‘The *LADbible*’ and ‘*UNILAD*’ has come under heavy criticism both inside and outside of academia for condoning rape (Sheriff, 2012), with some research showing that the language often could not be differentiated from that used by convicted sex offenders (Horvath and Hegarty, 2012). In the above, Bryony takes the role of the most vocal opponent to the ‘lad bible’, “I don’t wanna see!” / “sooo sexist”, making repeated exaggerated form ‘extreme case formulations’ (Pomerantz, 1986): “they *always* like things” / “I *instantly* have the *worst*” (emphasis added). However, members of this group here also showed varying degrees of resistance: “Some of it’s funny” (Molly), which Bryony affirms to a certain degree, and Hetty amends Bryony’s line “I judge you for that” to, “I like them less”, a tactic of minimisation (Edwards and Potter, 1992). Irony and humour can be seen as a way of minimising negative aspects of lad culture (Beynon, 2002), which can be interpreted as a “knowing irony and self-reflexivity”, or a way to detract attention from the problematic nature of ‘lad culture’ (Korobov, 2009; Mooney, 2008). Previous research has shown how young women regard ‘lad culture’ with differing degrees of seriousness, and we can see how these young women practised their “judgement” in relation to lad culture in slightly different ways.

As seen in the previous chapter, these young women’s judgement assessments of young men’s sexual cultures were generally critical, as can be seen in Julia and Roxy’s talk attending the youth service ‘PRONG’:

Julia: It could be like your friends like, acting big an' that, like and it's mostly boys who do that, 'cos girls will feel embarrassed, boys are just like "Oh yeah, I had sex last night" an' then, like so and so acts big, and then with their friends. Like, "I've done it an' all that" an' then, like, it would go back to the girl and they're feeling insecure about themselves, and then everyone will call 'er a slag or summin', because she's done it an' that sort of , it's mostly the girls who get blamed an' that, an' then she'll probably go to the nurse an' that, and nurses is one as well.

PRONG, Design Workshop 2: Timelines



Figure 4.5: Adding Nurses to the Timeline in PRONG

The card “Nurses” was then added to the timeline based on this discussion. Julia constructs a chasm of difference between men and women’s talk about sex. “Boys” are “acting big an’ that” with their directive discourse. She goes on to outline this hypothetical scenario where boys “go into detail” are “acting like a big shot”, “are a bit mean about it and don’t really understand...other people’s feelings”. She goes on to describe women as “not the victims but the prey” and boys “like the carnivore”, again drawing heavily on discourses of hegemonic masculinity (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2012). Previous research around ‘lad culture’ has suggested that it is a pervasive and consuming practice which has a negative impact on young women (Phipps and Young, 2013). Although not labelled as ‘lad culture’, Julia’s account constructs a sort of war between young men and women in their sexual cultures, illustrated vividly by Julia’s ‘carnivore and prey’ example. Although the label ‘victim’ is refuted, young women are constructed as vulnerable: in her account, it is girls who “feel embarrassed”, “insecure” and “get blamed”, relying on institutional support (“go to the nurse an’ that”).

This highlights the well-established ‘double standard’ of sexuality for men and women, which has been seen to permeate across young people’s sexual cultures – as Jackson and Cram (2003) describe “an active, desiring sexuality is positively regarded in men, but denigrated and regulated by negative labelling in women’ (p. 113). To these ends, even sex in a heteronormative relationship could be classed as transgressive by young people as the ‘judges’ of sexuality. Andrew reports on an assessment of his friends’ sexual activity:

Andrew: Urm, his girlfriend went over to his house, like a weekend ago, and then he came on a Monday, an- like my:, a group of two other friends were both sat down next to him and were, like, "So did you have sex?" and I was, like, "That was their second date!"

((laughter))

Andrew: Like, I don't think they did-

Bryony: ((laugh))

Andrew: But then he was like, "Oh but we did do X Y and Z" and I was like (.) "Oh God!" ((laugh))

Bryony: ((laugh))

Andrew: Why do you have to sa:y that!

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Andrew sets this scenario in heteronormative territory, this encounter happened with "his girlfriend", so we might assume sexual activity in this context should be constructed as non-transgressive. However, it is time which demarks the 'judgement' of this activity: "that was their second date". It is not enough for (hetero)sex to occur in an apparently monogamous relationship, it must also be long-term and established. Although this does highlight the heteronormative dimension of these assessments of young people's sexuality, the judgements also serve to resist the abovementioned 'lad culture'. Andrew's objection: "Oh God!" / "why did you have to sa:y that!" occupies the moral high ground, and is used as a tactic to delegitimise apparently obnoxious male (hetero)sexualities. The affordances of digital technology are also intersecting in these young people's evaluative assessments:

Andrew: I think I get this more probably because I'm a boy, but I have, like, some kind of group chats on *Facebook* which are just, all boys, an' then you end up with kind of, them sending things which are, like, about having sex, and about their experiences of having sex and I'm like "I know ((laugh)) that you're a virgin."

((laughter))

Andrew: What are you doing? ((laugh)) And they'll be, like, "When your girlfriend does, like, se:xy strip tease for you" and I'm, like, "That's never happened to you-"

((laughter))

Andrew: I know everything that's happened to you, none of that's happened.

Molly: Ye:ah.

Hetty: I mean-

Madeline: Do you think maybe they do do all of that?

Andrew: S- well some.

Bryony: Not all of them.

Andrew: Well, as I say, some of them, I don't, and I message them privately and I'm like "What are you doin'?"

Bryony: ((laughs))

Madeline: Mhm.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

While the discourse of 'lad culture' is often seen as pervasive and harmful to young women (Phipps and Young, 2013), here Andrew uses his position as a 'judge' of sexuality, and as a mature sexual adult, to delegitimise this as an immature version of sexuality. He can shrug off these comments, speaking from a position of authority: "I know ((laugh)) that you're a virgin", using an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) – "I know everything that's happened to you, none of that's happened" and this de-legitimacy is emphasised by the subsequent laughter from the group. It is also notable that the public nature of these digital interactions appears to de-legitimise them, this is a "group chat" which "ends up" with young men "sending things", which in this scenario is 'laughed off' by group members as ridiculous. Andrew reports to "message them privately", an apparently more legitimate way to challenge this discourse. Constructions of these interactions with digital technology were seen to de-legitimise forms of sexuality, playing a role in how these young people 'judged' these sexual cultures:

Andrew: But some of them do:, and like they will, like, one of our friends posted in a group chat like "Oh I got with this girl on Saturday", and he posted this picture of her like, in a bikini, and I was like ((sigh)) "Oh dear!"

((laughter))

Polly: Out of all of the pictures-

Hetty: Yeah-

Polly: Out of ((unclear)) you'd choose the bikini.

Andrew: Yeah, exactly, it was like three months back that he had to scro:ll on her *Facebook* to get that picture as well.

Hetty: It's not just that either, it's not just like, "I got with this girl" but "I want you to know, that I got with this girl-"

Andrew: Yeah yeah yeah.

Hetty: And I- and I want you to think that she's hot so that you respect me for-

Polly: Yeah.

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Facebook here therefore becomes a means by which to assess these young men's sexual interactions. The selection of a 'revealing' picture evaluates the immaturity of this interaction, which in this group results in a collective judgement of disapproval "Oh dear!" (Andrew). The assumption is that young people on social media will have many photographs – "Out of all of the pictures" (Polly) – which makes this selection grounds for judgement. Timeliness is also provided as a measure of authenticity, providing a more recent picture would be a more valid expression than one posted "like three months back". It is notable that here a digital interaction is used as an evaluative assessment, "he had to scro:ll on her *Facebook* to get that picture". In asserting a sexual identity, the labour involved with 'scrolling' is dubious, a 'conscious' display of sexuality for social purposes: "I want you to know that I got with this girl" (Hetty). However, the effort involved in finding out that this young man "had to scro:ll" is not subject to the same scrutiny. Exercising judgement as a young sexual agent was presented as a prominent and legitimate way to operate these young people's sexual agency.

I contend these judgements serve a range of social purposes. As I have argued, these judgement calls can serve as resistance to 'lad culture', a notion that my participants were critical of, using positionality of maturity/immaturity to legitimise/delegitimise sexual

identities. However, these judgements also served a moral purpose, reflecting cultural norms around categorising and labelling sexualities, for example the social classification of 'sluts'/'slags.' Participants often distinguished between 'good' and 'bad' sex in their judgements of sexual cultures, which in turn cast moral assessments over certain forms of sexuality:

Esther: In my opinion, sex shouldn't really be that much of a public thing.

Matt: But then sex is really public as it is, y'know we've got, we were talking about music videos, social media an', that kind of thing.

Steph: Sex should just be kept like, say-

Esther: Sex should be a romantic connection between two people who love each other very, very much.

Brian: ((laughs))

Steph: Well said!

(everyone claps)

Matt: But should it?

Chrissy: No. (laughs)

Esther: Unless somebody really likes sex and then just has sex.

Matt: So yeah, what if someone goes out and has a one night stand with someone they like the look of?

Lory: Sometimes people who do that, like, get upset, it's like, wait - if you think about it, you could end up with a child outta that because you're drunk.

Esther: Just make them aware that they are your rebound, just make them aware.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

In exercising their judgement about sexuality, in this extract participants reproduce many societal norms about sex and sexuality. Esther's assertion that sex should be "not public" reflects cultural anxieties about public sex (Leap, 1999), and the heteronormative, heterosexual construction of a sexual relationship is presented as gold standard "a romantic

connection between two people who love each other very, very much” (Esther), an idea that clearly resonated with the rest of the group. When challenged, casual sex is disregarded (“somebody (who) really likes sex and then just has sex”) as emotionally damaging (“people who do that like get upset”), potentially dangerous (“you could end up with a child outta that”) which extends to intoxication (“you’re drunk”), apparently a “rebound” to the monogamous, heterosexist relationship. It should be noted, however, that Chrissy, an older participant (19), resisted this discourse “No (laughs)”, but this perspective was not made possible within the context of this group.

It is worth noting that in working with the sexual health service for this research, this overriding collective discourse bears resemblance to rejections of casual sex from sexual health workers, constructing this as ‘risky’ or ‘dangerous’ (Wood et al. 2018). These arguably problematic constructions of risk in sexual activity will be discussed further in my final data chapter, where I focus upon the notion of ‘sexual health’.

These judgements emphasise notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sex, as Rubin (1984) describes, the “good charmed circle” and the “bad outer limits” sexual hierarchy of acceptable and unacceptable sex. This hierarchy is seen to change in accordance with different times and groups (Barker, 2016), so my data provides an opportunity to see how the ‘sexual hierarchy’ applied to these participants:

Steph: Oh my God (unclear), it's the worst thing I've watched y'know.

Matt: What was that?

Steph: *Fifty Shades of Granny*.

Matt: Ohh.

((laughter))

Steph: Have you seen it? It's a proper documentary in America, and it's, like, ninety year old women, going with, I would say, thirty year old men, an- like they go in bushes and stuff, and, like, do stuff, they film it an' everything and I'm like "Oh my God!"

Esther: I guess love is love!

Steph: I'm, like, that's not right!

Chrissy: It's horrible how they're still sexually active!

Steph: That is just disgusting!

Brian: What, there's a time limit on it is there?

Steph: Aye! (laughs)

(laughter)

Steph: I think there's a certain age, where you just stop.

Brian: When you get, when you get a bit older, do you think you'll think the same?

Steph: Well ninety odd, aye.

Brian: ((laughs)) (unclear)

Sal: ((laughs))

Steph: I don't reckon I'll like it (unclear) unless sex is something, goes a bit longer.

Danika: I wouldn't be so active at that age.

Brian: Why not? Why not?

Lory: Could break a hip!

Brian: It's not just for young people is it?

Steph: One likes, toys an' whips an' stuff (sigh)

Lory: I know that would be hard, like, whipping a ninety year old, I mean how would you (feel)?

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

In this extract, these young people mention many of the 'outer limits' of Rubin's notion of "bad, abnormal, unnatural, damned sexuality" (Rubin, 1984, p. 202). The sex young people describe is cross-generational: "Ninety year old women, going with, I would say thirty year old men", in public spaces: "bushes and stuff", pornographic: "film it an' everything", with manufactured objects: "toys", and sadomasochistic in nature: "whips". Rubin argues that cross-generational encounters are viewed amongst "unmodulated horrors incapable of involving affection, love, free choice, kindness, or transcendence" (p. 203), which we can

see reflected in Lory's talk: "that would be hard like, whipping a ninety year old". Yet any sex involving older agents is also included here as in the 'outer limits' of sexuality; according to these young people older adults should not be sexually active: "horrible" / "disgusting" / "could break a hip", and they were not able to reflect on themselves as older sexual agents "I wouldn't be so active at that age".

Young people clearly defined a normality for sexual encounters: later, Esther defines 'normal' and 'weird' sex: "normal is pretty much just sex, with two people, and the weird is when you start bringing more people into it or bringing toys". Through this position of sexual judgement, participants often exercised moral conservatism around sexual encounters. However, through examining young people's accounts from a different perspective, as 'enquirers', we can also see how this extended to curiosity around non-mainstream sexual encounters, which I shall examine in my final theme.

4.4 Enquirers of Sexuality

Although the 'assessments' provided in the 'judges' of sexuality served a range of purposes, I propose that participants largely exercised a 'moral conservatism' (Jackson and Weatherall, 2010) around aspects of sex and sexuality. This was also a primarily a position featured in the group of young people from 'Know-it', an older group of middle class participants. Alongside this, however, participants also positioned themselves as curious enquirers of sexuality. Enquiries about sexuality were seen to operate both digitally and non-digitally, demonstrated particularly vividly in the visual and textual data from 'blow-up body-mapping'. Participants often drew on 'non-mainstream' sexual practices, situated in the outer 'bad' limits of sexuality, (Rubin, 1984) in their crafting of the dolls:



Figure 4.6: Attaching a whip to the male doll (Thornside Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping)

Dacey: He's got a whip now.

Abigail (Youth Worker): So we're going for bondage, we've opened a can of worms.

Dacey: There's his whip.

Ursa: Oh, my God!

Dacey: Given the idea of *Fifty Shades* (.) and now the whip.

Roxy: Okay, whatever floats your boat.

Teresa (Youth Worker): So have you watched the movie?

Abigail: I haven't.

Dacey: I have (.) read the books as well.

((laughs))

Teresa: I thought it would be like an 18 plus.

Dacey: It is at the cinema but it's all over the Internet now.

PRONG, Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping

Abigail's comment of having "opened a can of worms" with bringing up the topic of "bondage" reflects feminist debates in BDSM culture, which tend to be dichotomised to 'sex

positive' perspectives which emphasise the free choices of those engaged with BDSM practices (Barker, 2005; Ritchie and Barker, 2005), and the radical perspective which sees these practices as reproducing male violence and oppression (Jeffreys, 1990, 1996, 2002; Russell, 1982).

Although BDSM is one of the most demonised forms of consensual sexuality (Barker et al. 2007), it is a largely misunderstood practice. Defined as "the exchange of some form of power or pain, often, but not exclusively, in a sexual context" (Barker et al. 2007), and listed as a 'paraphilia' in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (Charline and Pental, 2005), critical work with BDSM practitioners has challenged misunderstandings around BDSM. Taylor and Usher (2001) argue that these power exchanges are largely contrived and symbolic and, although involving acts which might be considered painful or humiliating, in BDSM communities consent is a central tenet of BDSM relations, and the purpose of these activities is for sexual arousal for all participants of these encounters.

Fifty Shades of Grey as a cultural representation of BDSM was used as a reference point by my participants. *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and similar popular depictions of BDSM relationships such as the film *Secretary* have been argued as problematic (Barrett, 2007; Belmont, 2012; Downing, 2013; Noonan, 2010; Weiss, 2006). Specifically, it has been argued that these mediums have 'mainstreamed' BDSM culture, using the titillating 'wrongness' of (light) BDSM sex to prop up conventional scripts of heteronormativity. In my workshops, *Fifty Shades of Grey* had recently been released in the cinema and was referenced frequently by participants. We might consider these readings of 'non-mainstream' sexual practice to play a role in reproducing problematic ideals surrounding sex and sexuality, and this was seen particularly vividly through expressions of sexuality as violence:



Figure 4.7: Drawing a black eye on the female doll in PRONG Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping

Matt: Has she been bruised? (.) So do you think she's had good experiences (.) from her-

Julia: No, because some men don't wanna pay her an' they punch her in the face.

Abigail: So she gets a black eye?

Julia: Yeah.

PRONG, Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping

In drawing on *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the nuance of BDSM practices was not present in young people's accounts; rather, the narrative young people collectively drew upon was sexuality as violence. It was not uncommon for young people to draw on violent depictions in their crafting of the dolls, for example in the workshop with young people from Thornside, young people drew on a narrative of self-harm in their crafting of the male doll ("he wants to cut himself" Mary), which they depicted with red lines on the doll's arm. Violence against women is not uncommon in (normally adult) discourses of sexuality (Heise, 2007), and from a DP perspective I cannot make any inferences about what was happening in these young women's lives for violence to be drawn on in this activity (although I did hear informally from the youth workers that this activity did prompt them to follow up on the theme of sexual violence in subsequent sessions outside of my fieldwork). For the purposes of my analysis, we can see how violence against women was a cultural resource that was available and used by young people in the broad task of "plotting our ideas of sex and sexuality onto

the dolls". For the young people from PRONG, the narrative of violence was also presented alongside a narrative of sex work:

Matt: Mhm. So he's got a whip, so he likes, kind of bondage and things. Does she like that as well? 'Cos she's got a bruised eye.

Dacey: She's gonna like that.

Julia: She's being paid for it, so-

Dacey: And she's gotta like it-

Julia: Or she'll not get paid.

Dacey: Or she'll not get pleasure either.

Abigail (Youth Worker): Okay, interesting.

PRONG, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

The radical feminist perspective on 'prostitution' (a contested term, see: Connelly and Sanders, 2016) is that it is an act of sexual violence and abuse against women (Jeffreys, 1995). With these groups of young people, it is noteworthy that participants from PRONG drew on this violent narrative in conjunction with talking about sex work. Unlike the third-wave feminist perspective on sex work, which straightforwardly considers sex as a legitimate job, participants from PRONG draw on a narrative of submission, a woman trapped by the exchange of sex for money as a form of exploitation, mirroring a Marxist perspective on sex work (see Van der Veen, 2001). It was notable that this account came from PRONG, a group of working class participants, and here the trappings of consumerism ("being paid") were (indirectly) highlighted through a (fictional) narrative. This can be contrasted to a discussion about 'prostitution' from the group of young people from 'Know-it', where Maisie highlights being paid for sexual services as potentially lucrative:

Maisie: They paid like, a prostitute, three hundred pound to bath him, put him in a onesie, and read him a bedtime story.

Verity (Youth Worker): Nothing else?

Maisie: Nothing, just that.

Cath: That's so: weird.

Maisie: I'd put (.) like three hundred pound for putting him in a onesie.

Verity: You can almost guarantee that's all they'd ask for, Maisie.

Maisie: True!

Chloe (Youth Worker): ((laughs)) Yeah, don't start thinking!

Verity: Don't (.)

((laughter))

Chloe: Stick at (shop) for now Maisie! ((laugh))

Maisie: ((laugh))

Chloe: Let's just stick with (unclear)

Know-it, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

In the above, a key distinction between youth workers' and young people's perspectives on sex work plays out. Maisie asserts the reasonableness of receiving a fee for merely "putting him in a onesie" which, mirroring the 'liberal feminist' and sex radical position (Prasad, 1999), confirms the exchange of money for this act as a (surprisingly lucrative) exchange of services. However, aspects of sex work can be hidden through the social production of sex work as a simply a legitimate form of work (Weatherall and Priestley, 2001, see also: Weatherall and Walton, 1999), and this was highlighted through the youth workers' discourse, implying ulterior motives ("You can almost guarantee that's all they'd ask for, Maisie"), and delegitimising it as a form of work Maisie may consider. The subsequent roles of youth worker and young person as a "knower" and "naive" are also highlighted in Verity's and Maisie's exchange early in this extract. Viewing this extract as a whole, we can see Verity's comment of "Nothing else?" as steeped in irony, whilst Maisie's comment of "Nothing, just that" is an assertion of reasonableness about the act in question.

It is notable that this positioning of youth worker as 'knower' and young person as 'naïve' runs at odds with the favoured positioning of young people as 'mature sexual adults'. It has been argued that over-protective, risk-averse cultures are, in turn, damaging to young people (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009). This is particularly evident in young people's exposure to online risk. It has been argued that encountering online risk is common for young people, and inevitably only increases with the expansion of young people's online

communications (Livingston and Helsper, 2007). As enquires of sexuality, the young people in my research reported encountering online risk, however they positioned themselves as having strategies to cope with this:

Julia: But (.) I think it's, like (.) all (.) I don't think it's, like, young boys but I think, like, older men targeting young girls.

Matt: Mmm.

Julia: So like, you get, you get really, shouldn't trust people on the Internet an' that, an then like they're sending pictures, an' they're pretending to be other people-

Matt: Mmm.

Abigail (Youth Worker): Grooming.

Julia: Yeah.

Matt: Mmm.

Julia: One (thing I did once) like *Facetime* before an' then my dad's sittin' in the front, an' 'e stared at them an' then I never went on again (.) scared them off.

Know-it, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

This extract is notable for how it is young people who exercise caution around Internet relations and sexuality, and the dangers particularly for young women: “older men targeting young girls” / “shouldn't trust people on the Internet an' that” (Julia). Julia presents this as knowledge that she has direct experience of, through her experience on *Facetime*. In this extract, she distances herself from her old behaviour: “never went on again”. Julia goes on to indirectly report an experience: “They're sort of talking to us like, like, callin' us cute an' all that, I find that weird”. It has been suggested that the frequency of young people’s exposure to online risks is fairly high (Stakrud and Livingstone, 2009); however, we can see how Julia tempers these instances with a level of criticality, predatory online behaviour is labelled as “weird”, and people on the Internet shouldn’t be trusted.

Stakrud and Livingstone (2009) refute the label of ‘powerless victim’ in regard to young people’s exposure to online risk, arguing a majority of young people adopt positive strategies to mitigate against this. However, as the authors argue, these strategies often exclude adult involvement. In the interaction between Roxy and Julia in WEYES, Roxy tells

off Julia for having people she doesn't know on *Facebook*: Roxy: I think you should start taking them (off) / Roxy: "You can adjust your privacy settings an' stuff" Julia: "I don't know how to do that" Roxy: "I'll show you how to do it". Staksrud and Livingstone (2011) also suggest 'help from friends' is a key strategy of 'coping' with online risk, and draws parallels with peer-led sex education, as I will discuss later.

Young people's engagement with sexual acts which might be considered risky or deviant were common throughout the workshops, and were expressed in a variety of different ways. For example, in the 'blow up body-mapping' workshop with the group of young people from Thornside, at one point near the end of the workshop participants placed the dolls into the following position:

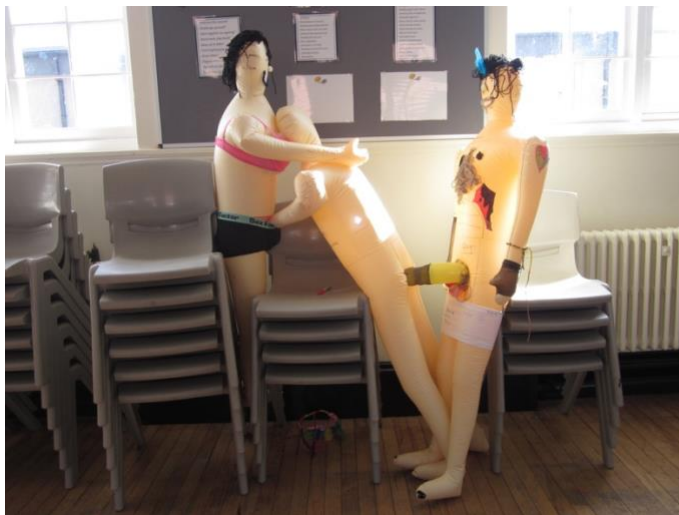


Figure 4.8: Positioning the dolls in Thornside, Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping

Esther: What are you doing to Charlie? If Jeffrey's a homosexual, don't you think that they'll be doing anal instead of (.) that?

Danika: Turn Charlie around (.) there you are!

Matt: So having anal sex, are they?

Steph: Yep, and Josie's watching.

Matt: You can take them out of the chairs if you want.

Sarah: Stick 'em in the same one.

((laughter))

Esther: I'm afraid (.) why is Josie just watching?

((laughter))

Chrissy: Live gay porn.

Thornside, Design Workshop 1: Blow-up body-mapping

My participants, particularly from Thornside, displayed a willingness to engage with the “outer limits” (Rubin, 1984) of sexuality. These were sometimes presented as displays of obscenity to the group. When I asked whether the dolls were having anal sex, Steph’s reply of “Yep, and Josie’s watching” adds further layers of apparent deviance to the sexual act being displayed. Research into young men’s sexual cultures has shown that a ‘showing off’ of sexual knowledge (Holland et al. 1998; Allen, 2005; Pascoe, 2005; Hilton, 2007), and ‘pushing the boundaries’, can be used as a display of sexual agency; however, I found that in this workshop (exclusively comprised of young women), these displays of sexual ‘deviance’ were similarly used as an expression of young people’s knowledge of sexuality. Although in this case the sexual act was depicted somewhat playfully, participants also expressed a curiosity, and shared knowledge around a wide variety of sexual acts.

A lengthy exchange in this group around the practice of fisting (“This man (.) put his two fists up his bum bum” Lory) was met with a variety of responses from the rest of the group, from resistance (“Eu::h!” Lory / “I don’t even care! I don’t, [holds ears] nu:: nu:: nu::” Esther) to speculation from others in the group (“I wonder how a fist-“ Danika / “imagine how bigger shit he’d do” Rachel / “It would be really hard” Lory / to dismay “I can’t see why you would want to put a fist up someone” Chrissy / “Why would you want your hand, up somebody’s anus?”). In our roles as workshop facilitators/youth leaders, we interjected with this discussion (“You could certainly do yourself a lot of damage” Brian / “I mean medical, people, wouldn’t like... advocate it, ‘cos you can just rip” Matt), which appeared necessary when discussing these practices. However, this discussion also resulted in knowledge-sharing practices between young people (“You get prepared for anal sex, fisting can be weird stuff and it might just happen” Esther). Exchange of information between young people was used as a way of asserting sexual knowledge, but was also an innocuous way of learning about sex. Previous research has suggested that learning between peers is a preferable form of sex education for young people (Mellanby et al. 2001), and in my data we can see examples of how young people could share knowledge as a form of sex education. Here Esther educates the group around women’s masturbation:

Esther: -you go to search for, whatever, but um, I told them and they were like,
"How do you masturbate then do you get a dildo?" like-

Steph: No!

Esther: -well you could! But at the same time (.) there's other things (.) and then
they were like, like "what" an' I went (.) n-

Steph: Not saying.

Esther:-like some people actually use fruit for some bizarre reason.

? ((laughs))

Matt: ((laugh))

Danika: Really?

Esther: Yep.

((chuckles))

Esther: Well, you don't want to go up to your mum and be like "Here, can you buy
me a dildo?"

?: ((snorts))

Lory: Get us a cucumber!

((laughter))

Danika: I'll have a banana or a cucumber for Christmas please.

((laughter))

Lory: That would rot after a while!

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Teaching around matters of sexual pleasure is often highlighted as an area missing from young people's sex education (Fine and McClelland, 2006), particularly in areas such as masturbation, which is often considered taboo (Lewis and Knijn, 2001). However, in this context of the design workshop, Esther could address the topic of masturbation on a peer to peer level. Participants could joke around the topic ("I'll have banana or a cucumber for

Christmas please” Danika / “That would rot after a while” Lory), yet this was an exchange of information that would be difficult to address with the (male) workshop facilitator and youth worker, indicating a knowledge exchange around the topic of sexual pleasure, with some participants indicating that this was new information to them (“Really?” Danika). Also notable was how young people’s sexuality was highlighted as something distinct and separate from conversations they would have with their parents (“Well, you don’t want to go up to your mum and be like ‘Here, can you buy me a dildo?’” Esther), as I will elaborate in the next chapter. Peer to peer knowledge exchange around sex and sexuality was an area I explored with the designs developed as an outcome of these workshops, as discussed in the next section. However, participants also highlighted use of digital technology as a means of acquiring and sharing sexual knowledge. This was emphasised particularly by non-heterosexual participants; a way of acquiring non-mainstream sexual knowledge:

Hetty: *Tumblr’s* very good for something like that, I use *Tumblr* a lot for learning more about things, urm-

Molly: I would probably agree with you.

Hetty: It’s probably, probably where I learnt, most about sexualities and stuff, urm-

Molly: *Tumblr’s* an interesting one about, there’s like-

Polly: Like you can find anything-

Molly: Communities around, particularly around sexual minorities.

Hetty: Yeah.

Molly: And that kind of thing.

Hetty: There’s a lot of that.

Polly: There’s a lot of like, y’know, like fetish blogs and stuff like that as well.

Hetty: Really? I don’t, I don’t venture to that side. ((laugh))

Polly: Well y’know I’m not like big on stuff like that but, like there is like a lot of stuff.

Madeline: Mhm.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Hetty presents herself as a 'seasoned *Tumblr* user', and later gives a lengthy description of *Tumblr* to Madeline, one of the workshop facilitators who enquired around the purpose of the platform. It has been suggested that *Tumblr* provides a unique culture distinct from other social networking sites, an 'always on' experience which users participate in frequently throughout the day (Hillman, Procyk and Neustaedter, 2014), a concept Hetty later mirrors in her discourse "I am on *Tumblr*, more than I am off *Tumblr*". *Tumblr* as a medium has begun to be tentatively explored by sexuality scholars, particularly for the proliferation of queer content (see: Cho, 2015), however it remains an underexplored area. In the above, Hetty highlights the importance of the platform for her in acquiring sexual knowledge, and the relevance of the platform is highlighted in the group's shared cultural knowledge around it. It is notable that notions of 'good and bad' sex discussed earlier are also present in this extract. In contrast to participants from Thornside, who were forthcoming in discussing alternative sexual practices such as BDSM, group sex or fisting (in the abstract), these older and middle class participants were eager to distance themselves from notions of fetish "I don't venture to that side" / I'm not big on stuff like that". Nevertheless, *Tumblr* as a (somewhat) 'new' digital platform was emphasised as a fruitful and plentiful source of sexual knowledge for the curious young person ("Like you can find anything" Polly - another extreme case formulation, Pomerantz, 1986).

Participants emphasised 'self-discovery' as a pertinent mode of educating oneself, highlighted through new modes of media such as *Tumblr*, but also through more established media. As seen in the group from Thornside, Esther, another non-heterosexual participant points out to the group the value of *Youtube* as a benevolent mode of self-education: "There's Youtubers who are homosexual, queer who talk about it [sex] but they talk about it in a nice manner". These participants also often used cultural references from television shows to illustrate their knowledge about LGBT issues: "Did anyone watch *Glee*?" (Sal) / "Does nobody watch *Hollyoaks*?" (Chrissy) before describing an LGBT based storyline: "He's singing and stuff and he ends up as Monique, and he goes as a girl" (Sal) "He left Nigeria because his family obviously wouldn't accept that he was gay" (Chrissy). These participants presented knowledge from TV shows and media as cultural capital around LGBT issues.

Overall, therefore, I argue there was a sense of curiosity exercised by participants around sexuality, and for some this extended particularly into areas that went far beyond the discourse of heterosexualisation seen in the previous position, the 'judges' of sexuality. The

notion of judging 'good and bad' sex was still pertinent, as seen through participants from 'Know-it' discussing fetish, and discussion of 'taboo' sexual practice was also somewhat raucous; however, participants displayed a willingness to engage. This was seen particularly through discussion of LGBT issues, where digital media was identified as a means by which young people could educate *themselves* on such matters. These notions of sharing knowledge also broadened discussions into sexual pleasure, a topic often missing from sexual health education, which I will discuss further in the next chapter where I extend my exploration to consider young people's sexual health.

4.5 Conclusions

Through my analysis, I have shown how many young people positioned themselves as 'mature sexual adults', 'knowers' of sexuality, giving themselves a status of maturity when compared to their younger selves. This underpinned their position as 'judges of sexuality', demarking lines of correct and incorrect ways for young people to conduct a sexual identity. However, while young people often occupied a moral conservatism as 'sexual judges', particularly around the 'bad' outer limits of sexuality (Rubin, 1984), the position of 'enquirers of sexuality' appeared to be a more productive position. Here, young people exercised curiosity around a range of sexual practices, shared knowledges between one another and highlighted self-expression through digital media as a way of educating oneself, particularly around LGBT matters.

Digital technology, and specifically digital media, was a means of exploration and discovery for the sexual enquirer. Although young people identified risks in their encounters with digital technology, these encounters were often an opportunity for participants to share strategies for navigating these online risks. This information also became "knowledges" that young people shared with one another in these workshop settings. Use of digital technology resonated across my three themes. Young people's management of their relationships across social media became a means of forming evaluative judgements over the appropriate way to conduct a (heteronormative) relationship, and the public nature of using social media appeared to delegitimise the 'mature' sexual agent. Participants often identified clear boundaries in how young people should conduct themselves (as 'mature sexual adults'), however this was often contradictory and changed over space and time. Therefore, the notion of young people's sexual cultures was unpredictable and, at times, contradictory, reflecting notions of culture as 'liquid' or flowing (Bauman, 2013).

The notion of young people as ‘mature sexual adults’ was salient across my data as a whole. This, in part, reflects the findings of Allen (2006, 2009) who found that the young people in New Zealand who participated in her research actively positioned themselves as legitimate sexual subjects. Emphasising young people’s sexual agency is often used as a counter argument against the restrictive model of sex education, which identifies young people as ‘at risk’ (Taylor, 2010), preferably non-sexual (Monk, 2001) and emphasises the dangers – rather than the pleasures – of sex. However, through my analysis I found that young people in this UK context also rehearsed this restrictive rhetoric, particularly about those younger than themselves. For many of my participants, relegating apparently immature sexual identities became a way of positioning themselves as mature, and asserting their autonomy.

Participants therefore identified a self-sustaining discourse, as people who could look after themselves and who had developed their own strategies for dealing with risk (e.g. pornography) or problematic cultures (e.g. lad culture), independent from parental authorities. Mirroring ideals of independence, individuality and autonomy discussed in Chapter 3, my findings go to support the notion of young people as ‘resourceful participants’ rather than ‘powerless victims’ regarding threat of online ‘risks’ (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009). However, with a dominating neoliberal discourse, conservative and heteronormative models of sexual relations were normalised, rehearsing ideas that restrictive sex education serves a political purpose of social control, surveillance and regulation (Scott, 2005; Thorogood, 2000). This was seen particularly in the theme ‘Judges of Sexuality’, where young people’s evaluative assessments of sexual activities often relegated activities to Rubin’s (1984) ‘bad outer limits’ of sexuality, and bounded notions of heterosexuality prevailed.

However, when the ‘Judges of Sexuality’ were reframed to be ‘enquirers’ of sexuality, focus was less on the “rights and wrongs” of sexual conduct, and more on exploring different facets of sex and sexuality in a playful manner. From this position participants, often critically, explored many areas existing outside a heteronormative framing of sex and relationships. Participants identified apparently ‘risky’ activities they had engaged with, but this was framed as a learning experience rather than deviance. New and established digital media was identified as a way of gaining access to, and sharing insight around, sex and sexuality, and this sharing was often witnessed in the workshops themselves. This included information around LGBT issues and also featured talk of sexual pleasure, an area that has

been identified as chronically missing from young people's sexuality education (Allen, 2004; Fine and McClelland, 2006). Therefore, as my project progressed to consider the implications for sexual health, I sought to build on and utilise this position of young people as 'enquirers of sexuality'.

Chapter 5 Sexual Health

In this final data chapter, I examine constructions of and implications for sexual health. Critical and discursive qualitative approaches have been applied to sexual health, and specifically 'risky' sexual behaviour, as part of the growing recognition of their socio-structural underpinnings (Chan and Reidpath, 2003). For instance, heteronormativity (Kitzinger, 2005), hegemonic masculinity and the 'male sex drive discourse' (Hollway, 1984) have been seen to underpin accountability around STI transmission (McVittie, McKinlay and Ranjbar, 2016); and the social negotiation of condom use, and its interception with one's sexual identity, has repeatedly been identified as a barrier to condom use (Flood, 2003; Khan, 2004; Willig, 1995). Similar discourses are seen to govern interactions in sex education (Lewis and Knijn, 2003), with critical scholars/activists arguing for a permissive rather than restrictive approach to promote young people's sexual health, pointing towards a 'missing discourse of desire' and 'discourse of erotics', and this alternative orientation speaks strongly to the WHO definition of sexual health, which states:

"Sexual health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It 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."

WHO (2006), emphasis added

A productive tactic to examining discourse around sexual health has been the examination of lay accounts (Braun, 2008; Pawluch, Cain and Gillett, 2000). These "result from the complex interaction of individual, cultural, social and political factors" (Hughner and Klein, 2004, p.396). These can both echo (Shaw, 2002) and resist (Hodgetts, Bolam and Stephens, 2005) expert discourse, and ultimately tell us much about how sexual health is accounted for, constructed and contextualised (Braun, 2008).

In this chapter, I focus on the three Lego workshops and subsequent nine gameplay workshops where young people played two different games which addressed topics of sexual health. I suggest this offered an opportunity to examine these lay accounts in relation to 'expert' discourse, with both young people and youth workers present in these sessions. In this final data chapter, I will discuss how these workshops informed a development of two 'interventions' around a broad agenda of sexual health and I will discuss how these

interventions had varying degrees of success. To these ends, I suggest participants' use of these interventions provided an additional tool to unpack conflicting constructions of sexual health by these agents, which I argue gives insight around the provision of sexual health and sex education for young people. In acknowledging the socio-structural underpinnings of sexual health, I will relate my findings to my previous discussions of 'sexual bodies' and 'sexual cultures', which I suggest are invariably tied up in (lay) constructions of sexual health.

5.1 Lego Workshop



Figure 5.1: Lego Workshops – handfuls of Lego left (Brampton), and participant creation (Julie from PRONG), right

The final design method I employed in the initial phase of my research required young people to complete a series of design tasks using Lego blocks. This mirrored the 'Lego Serious Play' Methodology (<https://www.lego.com/en-gb/seriousplay>), which was devised for use in organisations to "enhance innovation and business performance". In this methodology, they propose taking workshop participants through "skill building" activities with Lego bricks, before presenting participants with 'design challenges' around the topic of the workshop. As such, this final workshop proceeded through the 'three basic phases' of this methodology, posing a building 'challenge' to participants, giving participants an opportunity to build a response, and then sharing the meaning and story assigned to their model verbally in a 'show and tell' period.

In adapting this methodology for social research purposes, my approach builds on other researchers who have repurposed 'Lego Serious Play', for example in the collective

redesigning of website requirements (Cantoni et al. 2009) and as a tool in higher education for promoting team building in software engineering (Kurkovsky, 2015). Most relevant for my research, David Gauntlett (2007, 2011) has made extensive use of Lego in exploring notions of identity. He suggests that in presenting participants with a building activity, meanings and sentiments may be inscribed on objects themselves. He suggests that in taking time to make and explain an artefact, an 'embodied' approach to self-expression is enabled. Gauntlett's approach differs from my own epistemology, in that he asserts more 'truthful' findings can be gained through getting participants to 'make something', by making the brain work in a different way (Gauntlett, 2008). However, Gauntlett also argues that visual methods allow different kinds of information to be communicated, particularly around intangible, abstract concepts (Gauntlett, 2007), which I anticipated could be very relevant for the study of young people's sexual identities.

Participants were given a small bag of Lego (Figure 5.1 left). Taking advice from colleagues who had previously used Lego in design workshops, each bag contained a large handful of Lego bricks, and I made sure each bag contained a mixture of standard Lego blocks, 'interesting' pieces (such as doors, hoses etc.) and (parts of) mini-figures. Following the 'Lego Serious Play' methodology, the first set of tasks were to familiarise participants with using Lego in literal and abstract ways (e.g. "build a tower with a magical property" / "build a representation of something you did last night" / "build something that represents an emotion you're feeling at the moment"). I then asked participants to build specifically around sexual health education ("make a representation for a conversation you've had about sex" / "build a device to support a conversation about sex" / "build a device to support sexual health for young people"). Participants were given a choice of different scenarios to design around, which were presented on cards: friends, teachers, peers, Internet communication, parents and family. Finally, I asked young people to incorporate a 'magical' element into the object they had made, giving them a choice of teleportation, speed, anti-gravity, mind reading or time travel, again presented on domain cards.

The concept of incorporating a 'magical element' was based in part on Kristina Anderson's (2014, 2019) 'Magic Machine' format. Anderson's 'Magic Machine' workshops use participatory arts practice to "allow users to imagine future technologies in accordance with their own concerns through the making of speculative objects" (Anderson, 2014, p. 627). Anderson argues that posing technology as 'magic' is a helpful resource for helping

participants imagine technologies that go beyond current understandings of what digital technology may or may not be able to achieve.

5.2 Gameplay Workshops

The second phase of my research was conducted as a series of three workshops with youth groups “PRONG” and “Know-it” (which I label Workshops 4, 5 and 6 for clarity). In Workshop 4, I asked young people to play the game ‘Talk about Sex’, a mobile based game which prompted face-to-face interactions about topics of sex and sexuality. Workshop 5 was conducted one year later, where young people played an adapted version of the game and were asked to provide their own suggestions. This format was mirrored for Workshop 6, held in the following year, this time around a card game, and asking young people to provide their own suggestions.

In discussing the application of ‘Focus Groups’ as a method, Erminia Colucci (2007) suggests various activity orientated ‘exercises’ that can be used to further exploit the interactional qualities of group data collection. Within this, she suggests various game-based approaches, such as storytelling and role-playing, which have the potential to create distinct and surprising forms of interaction. In Interaction Design, Slegers et al. (2015) suggest that the familiar nature of games provide a ‘common ground’ for sharing and discussing, and a ‘safe space’ for sharing experiences.

In the context of the well-known push to consider wider issues of ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyment’ as objectives for HCI rather than simply usability (Blythe and Monk, 2018), many works have used humour, games and play as a resource for exploring ‘serious’ or societally meaningful topics. “Serious games” (Michael and Chen, 2005) and “gamification” (Deterding et al. 2011) use gameplay principles to engage players on “serious” topics or meaningful activities. This has included treatment of diabetes (Thompson et al. 2008), games seeking to encourage ‘healthy eating’ (Pollak et al. 2010) and physical exercise (Consolvo et al. 2006). This application of serious gaming towards a specific health context has included sex education. Clarke et al. (2012) and Arnab et al. (2013) demonstrate their pedagogically serious game ‘PR:EPARe’ as an intervention to increase awareness, discussion, and psychological preparedness for issues around sexual coercion. While these researchers took an explicit agenda of quantitatively improving ‘sexual health’, here I was looking to *qualitatively* foster discussions around sex and sexuality.

This relates to critical agendas from sexuality studies. Leanore Tiefer (2004) suggests that the construction of sex as an inbuilt biological entity has resulted in most cultures simply not talking to young people about sex, with a “history of silence and embarrassment”, based on the assumption that nature will simply ‘take its course’. Walker (2004) suggests that young people in particular have desires to talk about sex with their elders, yet often find they are not able to have open and frank conversations about sex and sexuality, due to all parties (be it parents, schools or siblings) offsetting responsibility for these conversations to others. She argues that the result is that these required conversations simply do not happen.

The games designed therefore serve a dual purpose. For my thesis, fostering face-to-face interactions about sex and sexuality was a means of collecting qualitative data, to further understand young people’s constructions of sexuality and gender, and how these intercept with digital technology. However, facilitating these conversations is also arguably desirable in and of itself, countering Tiefer’s (2004) notion of a “history of silence and embarrassment”, as I will discuss.

In my analysis, I first discuss how young people constructed notions of sexual health through the Lego building activity, and consider how they approached designing devices to address sexual health, drawing on digital technology as a social construct, discussed earlier (see Chapter 4). Then, I describe how this led to the development of two games to discuss sexual health, where I consider what were successful and unsuccessful design strategies in this area. The first half of my analysis uses data from the (predominantly female) participants who engaged in the first phase of my research, whilst the second half engages with a broader range of 32 participants (19 male, 22 female) attending one-off workshops playing and evaluating the developed games.

5.3 Serious, Irrelevant and Boring

Time and again, young people highlighted how they had been unsatisfied with the information they had received about sex, in a variety of different contexts. My participants disregarded and diminished sources of sex education through a variety of strategies and, in so doing, reflected the positions identified in the previous chapter. The following interaction occurred between youth worker (Brian) and young people in reference to the timelining activity, where participants were tasked with identifying sources of sex education:

Brian: What about PHSE at school that you get? 'Cos obviously school's not on there in terms of, information given.

Esther: Ours had no information.

Danika: I was tellin' them information!

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Through discourse, participants were therefore eager to dismiss the influence of school on their knowledge about sex. Esther uses an extreme case formulation (ECF, Pomerantz, 1986, see Chapter 2) in stating that there was “no” relevant information at all about sex and sexuality, and Danika builds on this to state the exact opposite was true – that she was more well informed than her school. This is Danika positioning herself as a ‘mature sexual adult’ (discussed previously), someone who understands and knows about sexuality, and this is positioned over and above anything provided in a schooling context. This was an idea expressed commonly by my participants, and brief exchanges between participants often worked to achieve similar aims. For example, in the workshop with Brampton, a discussion about school ‘wellbeing’ days concluded with Gill saying “You get like, the basic stuff, an’ it’s (.) not-“ / Debbie: “-anything really”. School-based sex education was, therefore, casually dismissed as irrelevant and not providing anything of substance, as Esther continued “Well, I got shown how a baby kangaroo’s born, an elephant and a hippo, I was like how does this affect me? (Danika (Laugh)) I’m not gunna give birth to a kangaroo or a hippo.”

These accounts reflect previous research into young people’s experiences of sex education, particularly in other social contexts such as the US (Fine and McClelland, 2006) and New Zealand (Allen, 2004) around young people’s disdain towards school-based sexual health education (see also: Vance; 1984; Tolman; 1994; Irvine, 2004; Ingham, 2005; Allen, 2007; Beasley, 2008; Schalet, 2011; Hirst, 2013). My participants specified how these interactions with adults were identified as unhelpful, particularly when this extended to conversations about sex they have with their parents. Parental support has often been identified as helping to provide more comprehensive sex education (Walker, 2004) and quantitative research in this area has identified that more frequent conversations about sex and sexuality with parents results in better sexual health outcomes (Martino et al. 2008). My (qualitative) research identifies how young people described successful or unsuccessful conversations about sexual health with their parents:

Freya: I remember my Mam tellin' me (.) that my body was gonna change, because obviously bein' a nurse you're not like "Oh, watch this video."

Polly: I was talkin' to my sister and me- obviously my cousin's a year younger about that stuff, an' she's a teacher so it's like "Right, girls" - we always get told off when we get that-

Freya: She was like "Right, girls" an' you're like "Oh, here we go" sittin' there an'-

Polly: Like, CRINGE!

Know-it, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

In the above extract, Polly and Freya share their meaning-making. The utterance "Right, girls" is repeated by both group members as a familiar trope, culturally loaded to imply a 'telling off' or lecture. There is an implied sense of dread in Freya's talk – "Oh, here we go", and is emphasised by Polly's exclamation of "CRINGE!" Participants often drew on similar notions when recounting having conversations with their parents. In the same workshop Bryony recounts a story about her mother giving her a book: "sat me down and just went, 'if there's anything you want to' like in a really cliched way", and in Thornside participant Danika made a model of "me Mam givin' us the chat", where she described it as "the most awkward situ-, it was a very awkward situation, I was just sat there really quiet". Conversations with parents are, therefore, constructed to be vapid, tedious and unwanted.

My participants identified having conversations about sex with three distinct groups of adults, 'parents', 'teachers' and 'youth workers'. These groups of adults were talked about in different ways, although all these conversations were identified as having the potential to be problematic. Participants often referred to the personal characteristics of teachers, frequently referring to their age. Molly states: "if it's like a- a young teacher who, you feel like they might understand you", although young teachers were not always constructed so positively, as this may speak to inexperience: "teachers who are literally coming in as like NQTs like erm, at twenty one, probably still, aren't educated on it". However, 'older' teachers were, on the whole, referred to as people they would not like to talk to about sex, with Molly using extreme case formulations (ECFs) (Pomerantz, 1986): "it sounds awful but an older male teacher and talk about sex, it would be the worst possible thing like that I could ever do", and Gill in reference to an 'older' health and social care teacher: "I wouldn't dare talk to him about it".

For almost all participants, young people identified 'youth workers' (YW) as a resource for their learnings about sex. This must be considered in the context of my fieldwork, taking place at youth centres, where interactions with YWs were a weekly occurrence. However, as detailed in previous chapters, these interactions were far from straightforward and, as I will describe later in this chapter, introducing a sexual health 'intervention' within these sessions complicated these interactions even further. Participants were quick to identify YWs as 'easy' people to talk to when the youth workers also present: "Debbie: Just go to Kay (YW) / Gill: Yeah, go to Kay" / "Matt: Are there people that you can speak openly to about- / Esther: Brian (YW)". This was perhaps most vividly illustrated when youth worker Abigail entered the session during the timeline session with PRONG, where participants were eager to tell the YW (Abigail) that they had put the youth centre (PRONG) on the timeline: "Julia: PRONG is on there. / Abigail: Why, thank you! / Matt: ((laugh)) / Roxy: We thought of yer".

Yet despite this apparent keenness to affirm the work of the sexual health service, young people did, occasionally and gently, point towards problems and anxieties around interactions with YWs. In Thornside, the identification of 'Brian' as someone they could speak openly to about sex was problematised by other members of the group:

Matt: Uhh huh, are there people that you can speak openly to about-

Esther: Brian.

((Laughter))

Lory: Naw, naw, Brian gets embarrassed.

Brian: I get embarrassed?

Lory: Yeah.

Sal: You do, at some points.

(unclear)

Esther: There's kind of things where you just go "Well umm, urr, uhhh".

Sal: You don't know how to explain it, so you just-

Esther: So you try to think of how to word it.

Brian: Ye:ah?

Teresa: ((laughs))

Brian: I'm wondering what they're talkin' about.

((laughter))

Esther: Well, when I first told you like, about gender fluid and gender queer, you were kind of like "These are things?"

Brian: No no, more about the terminology (.) not, not the like (ideas-that)

Esther: Yeah, like, the sex ed, like, God knows, there have been times (at) the younger years and I'm just kinda sitting there and asking questions in the days that you used to be in the office and you would, kind of just not talk about it.

Brian: What just, isn't public, some of, some of the conversations can't be in public because they're personalised somewhat.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

This is the most direct example from my data of a youth leader being challenged in their approach to sex education. Lory interrupts the narrative of Brian being someone to speak openly to with the notion of “embarrassment”, in turn undermining him as a figure of openness. Brian is required, in talk, to respond to, and indeed deny, these accusations: “I’m wondering what they’re talkin’ about” / “No no, more about the terminology (.) not, not the like (ideas-that)”. This displays, in part, the problematic nature of challenging a youth worker’s approach to topics of sex and sexuality. That young people identify a wide range of nuanced issues in having conversations with adults goes to suggest there may be perspectives that this data does not make us privy to; although, as I will go on to detail later, this was alluded to more subtly by other groups. This is particularly relevant for LGBTQ issues, where queer young people have expressed exclusion from the heteronormative regimes of sex and sexuality education (Fisher, 2009). It is particularly relevant that Brian identifies that “personalised” conversations around LGBTQ issues “can’t be public”, in justifying the statements from young people. This was again evident when Danika recounted an interaction that occurred in a classroom:

Danika: Yeah, like that's what I just said about the, one of the students in, my year seven or eight class? I think it was year seven, asked, how do, lesbians have sex?

Brian: Right, yeah-

Danika: And it was on like a post-it note, and Miss read it out and she was like (.) aye, and she had to take the person outside and explain it.

Brian: Hm-

Danika: And then, I don't know if she was getting round to stuff but then she was, like, "No she's just answering my question."

Brian: So that's, that's probably, like, a good example of how, the teacher dealt with it that time, whereas, just shutting the question down and not answering it, or being embarrassed and leaving it, probably a poor way that's been, dealt with, so and we'll probably have every permutation between good and bad, in every scenario, unfortunately.

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

Here we can see how LGBTQ topics are, discursively, constructed as 'separate' from mainstream sex education, with different 'rules' applying. From the literature, we know that this is not uncommon when talking about LGBTQ issues, constructed as 'other' and happening 'somewhere else' than the mainstream classroom (Fisher, 2009). Danika provides a literal example of this, reporting a teacher who physically took a student out of the lesson to (apparently) describe lesbian sex. Through this scenario, a student who asks a question around lesbian sex is apparently fortunate enough to become privy to this information, in turn making such information unavailable to the rest of the class. Brian (explicitly) praises this approach as a "good example" of how" a "teacher dealt with it", the signifier "it" referring to inquiries around lesbian sex, a situation that departs from the heteronormative standard of sex education.

As alluded to by both Freya and Esther near the start of this chapter, the "sex-ed video" was a familiar trope used by young people in framing their sex and sexuality and education. This was further elaborated on by Rachel:

Rachel: My mam records everything for us it's, like (.) I don't really wanna watch it.

Matt/Brian: (laughs)

Matt: You don't wanna watch it?

Rachel: No.

Matt: No.

Rachel: Like everything on TV about sex she's just like, records it, and goes "There you go dear."

Esther: *Embarrassing Bodies* is great.

Rachel: I'm like: "Mam, I don't wanna watch this stuff, I already know about it."

Thornside, Design Workshop 2: Timelines

This paints an amusing picture of her mother recording "everything" (an ECF, Pomerantz, 1986) for her on television, to the bemusement of Rachel ("I don't really wanna watch it" / "I don't wanna watch this stuff"). The justification Rachel provides here, however, is again around the position of a 'mature sexual adult', Rachel states she "already know(s) about it", making the narrative structure of her mother's repetitive video recording appear all the more farcical.

Young people regularly mocked the idea of being educated via a 'sex-ed resource'. This was very often done through the discursive strategy of performing reported speech (Holt, 1996) of parents, which is seen to add discursive weight to accounts. Rachel does this for her mother: "There you go dear", Freya: "Oh, watch this video" (in previous quote), and Esther does the same, reporting a conversation with her father: "I just had them put on the Dean Martin song *The Birds and the Bees* and my dad was like 'That will explain everything' so I was like 'Bees get with birds?' And he was like 'No!' and I was like, "But that's what the song says".

Therefore, many participants gave a sense of being left to find their own answers around sex. This was illustrated particularly vividly when, during the Lego workshop with young people from Brampton, I asked them to make a representation of a conversation they had about sex. My participant Debbie resisted this task, and instead made a representation of a solitary teenager:

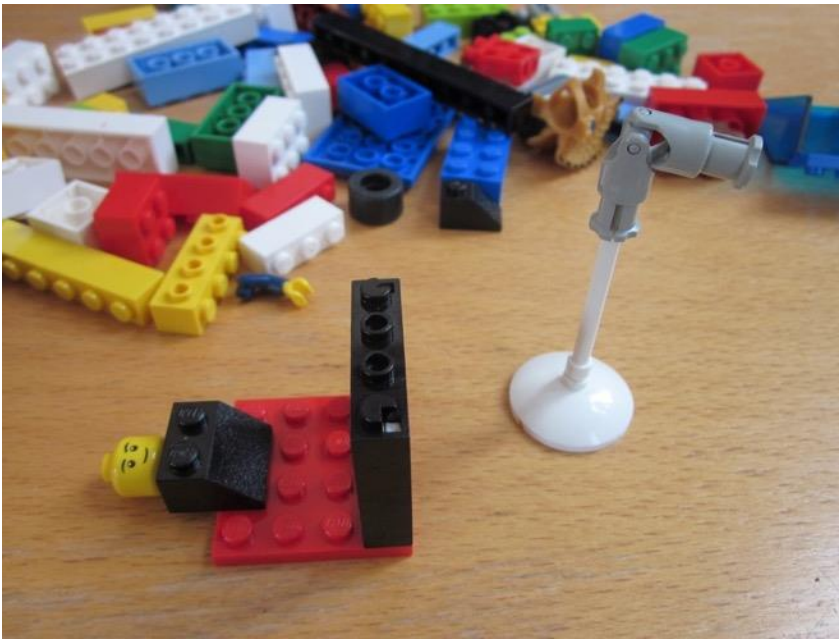


Figure 5.2: 'A Conversation about Sex' made by Debbie, Brampton Design Workshop 3, Lego

Debbie: Uhh, it's a bedroom.

Matt: It's a bedroom?

Debbie: Yes, well, in a way, because, sorry, because a lot of teenagers just sit in their bedroom-

Matt: Mmm-

Debbie: An' like, just shut themselves away, and don't ask questions about anything like this, and a lot of the time they just do it themselves, like they do their own research?

Hetty: Urm, so like I'd always like just (.) I dunno: I'd find out on my o:wn, I-like, the Internet, is a good resource.

Brampton, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Here, Debbie and Hetty co-construct multiple statements of independence: "do it themselves" / "their own" / "on my o:wn". This relates to ideas of autonomy and independence, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, a position favoured particularly by members of *Brampton*. However, alongside this, the above extract and Lego artefact draw heavily on the cultural notion of the socially isolated teen, who has willingly "shut themselves away" from the (problematic) influence of adults. The image painted is one of defeat, they "just sit

in their bedroom”, “*just* shut themselves away” (emphasis added), with no apparent will to engage. The idea of young people doing “their own research” was common across my dataset, and “the Internet” identified a common way of doing this. In Know-it, Andrew states he “found *Yahoo Answers* was like (Hetty: Yeah) a bi:g part of my life”, although in contrast to the above states: “It’s not like a good resource, but then you don’t really get told what good resources are”. In PRONG, both Julia: “*Google* will give you some answers like”, and Roxy: “it would come up on Wikipedia”, identify similar strategies to self-educating about sex. Although opinions on the value of these resources differed, here young people’s talk leaves us with the overarching sense of young people being left to themselves to learn about sex.

However, participants also juxtaposed serious and difficult conversations with more everyday, light-hearted conversations around sex and sexuality. Polly, a participant from ‘Know-it’, summarised this explicitly:

Matt: Umm (.) yeah, is it, again is it a conversation you wanna have with your parents? About (.) sex, or is it not really, is it something that’s really, avoided?

Molly: (quite serious one)

Polly: Nothing like, full on.

Molly: Yeah.

Polly: I think like, y’know like what we were talking about last week, like those little ‘open’ conversations, are probably (.) better than the long, serious conversations.

Know-it, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Through the utterance “Nothing like, full on”, Polly succinctly refers to the discomfiting nature of “long, serious conversations”, described as “CRINGE!” earlier in this chapter, an idea which resonated with the rest of the group. The group from ‘Know-it’ in particular offered many examples of “those little ‘open’ conversations” (Polly). For example, Bryony refers to “a really offhand comment” with her father, where “we were standing up in the living room, I was sitting watching TV, he was like ‘Yeah B at some point, you will start liking guys, or girls, and that’s okay, and that’s cool’ and then walked out and had a cup of tea, I was like ‘Oh, okay that’s quite cool, yeah yeah’”. Participants often littered these examples with everyday details – e.g. “the living room”, “sitting watching TV”, “a cup of tea”, adding a

mundane and humanising aspect to these accounts of positive interactions. Polly did the same, when making a model representing a conversation she had about sex:

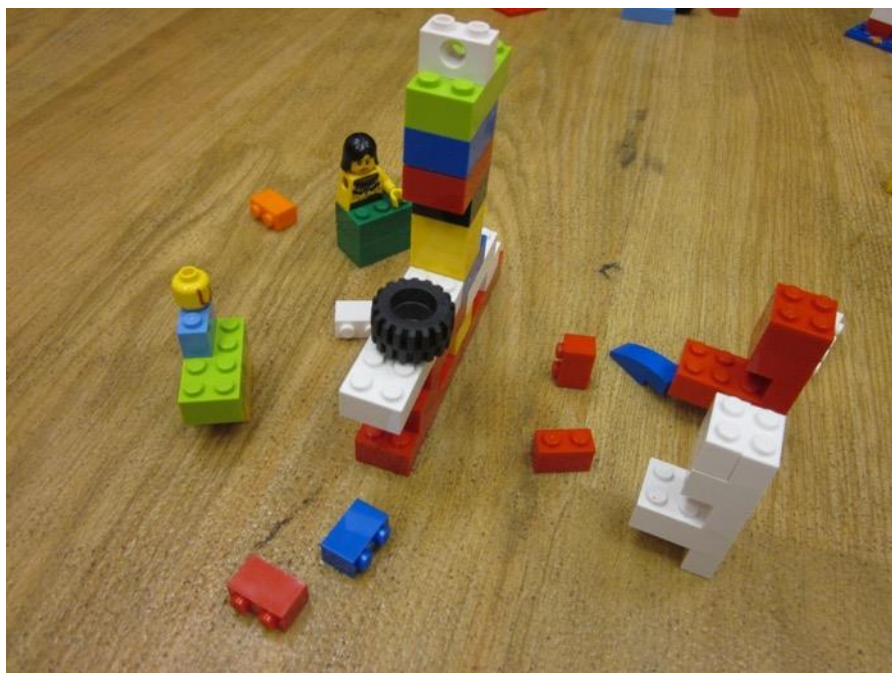


Figure 5.3: 'A Conversation about Sex' made by Polly, Know-it Workshop 3, Lego

Polly: Urm, mine's kind of, like, the setting in my house or- I've got my living room here with my kitchen, here's the door, and urm this is my Mam like washin' the dishes or something like that, and me, sitting watching the telly, and urm, about eight months ago tellin' my Mam that, urm, I was gunna get my implant taken out and that I was gunna, go (.) on the Pill 'cos I didn't like the implant anymore, and stuff like that and, urm, she kind of, like, y'know took it quite naturally and then the conversation was just a natural conversation like, any other one, urm in like y'know was kind of like calm about it like "Oh okay that's fine."

Madeline: Mhm.

Polly: Just like make sure you do something, I don't want to get you pregnant or anything like that, so-

Know-it, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Polly's account is also notably banal, "in my house", "I've got my living room here with my kitchen", "washin' the dishes or something like that", "sitting watching the telly". Polly highlights this as a "natural conversation", and highlighted reassurance "kind of, like, calm

about it". Both Polly and Bryony emphasised this sense of relief through reported speech (Holt, 1996) – "oh okay that's fine" (Polly) "oh, okay that's quite cool, yeah yeah" (Bryony). The content of these reported conversations were nevertheless 'serious', "I don't want you pregnant", and relate to LGBT issues "you will start liking guys, or girls, and that's okay, and that's cool", but the way these 'positive' conversations were framed was notably lighter in tone.

Participants identified many problems with sex education, and by extension, conversations about sex with adults. Young people diminished the importance of sex education at school, with it undermining their status as mature sexual adults. Here, young people argued a lack of relevant information, and teachers were subject to young people as 'judges' of sexuality discussed previously - adults' personal characteristics were fragile to the jury and verdict of young people. And, while in the context of the youth group settings youth leaders were painted in a more positive light, interactions between youth leaders and young people were in no way straightforward, with youth leaders occupying a great deal of power within this context. However, more 'lightweight' conversations between young people and parents in particular appeared to show more promise. Whilst participants identified "full-on" (Polly) conversations with parents as difficult or unwanted: "Like, CRINGE!" (Polly), young people identified the mundane and humanising aspects which made these conversations more approachable.

5.4 Designing a Response

This premise set the scene for the design task we set young people at the end of phase 1 of the design workshops. Here, participants imagined, through Lego, devices that could assist with sexual health, or make conversations about sex with adults easier to have. Here, traditional modes of sexual health (outlined in Chapter 1) as restriction, prevention and control were rehearsed and reproduced, yet the status of this 'expert' discourse was not straightforward. Young people's 'lay beliefs' (see above) both echoed (Shaw, 2002) and resisted (Hodgetts, Bolam and Stephens, 2005) this 'expert' discourse. Young people also used the Lego bricks in a variety of different creative ways, providing different lenses in which to consider the area of young people's sexual health. As an example of how traditional ideas of sexual health were explored, in the PRONG Lego Workshop Julia made reimagined sexual health distribution through the Lego as a vehicle – Julia: "Mine's a car":



Figure 5.4: The Sexual Health Car, PRONG Design Workshop 3, Lego

Julia: It's like, if friends need, like help, it's got like, protect- like protection on it-

Matt: Uh huh, ohh okay.

Julia: It's got stuff that they need, like, condoms an' all.

Roxy: Like a dispenser.

Matt: I like it, so it's got condoms in there, has it got anything else in there?

Julia: It's go(t) ummm-

Roxy: Lady-

Julia: Lady stuff.

PRONG, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Here, the narrative that Julia and Roxy draw on is one of traditional sexual health, which was common across the workshops. For example, in the Thornside workshop, Chrissy drew on a 'restrictive' narrative in a Lego creation: "This is Brian telling us that if you have sex that's what'll happen en' it's sad, and you'll die". Whilst this reproduced 'expert' discourses of sexual health (Shaw, 2002), it simultaneously spoke in resistance to them (Hodgetts, Bolam and Stephens, 2005) – with the ECF (Pomerantz, 1986) of "it's sad, and you'll die". In a more subtle way, in the above, Julia and Roxy draw on culturally available models of

sexual health, and refer to traditional objects of sexual health – “condoms” (“an’ all”) and “Lady stuff” - this was also reimagined through the medium of the Lego. The condom “dispenser” here is reimagined to be a vehicle driven by Julia – “An’ it’s, who’s driving the car?” (Matt) / “Me” (Julia). The medium of the Lego appeared to give participants permission to be ‘silly’, which Blythe and colleagues (Blythe et al. 2016) offer as a strategy for thinking about ‘anti-solutionist’ designs, specifically within Design Workshop scenarios. Here, the ‘expert’ discourse of sexual health made it difficult to depart from a ‘solutionist’ framing. However, I suggest that giving permission to participants not to be serious was a helpful approach to this topic, both in doing research and developing possible sex education outcomes/technologies.

For instance, the Lego workshop I facilitated with the group from Thornside was a large group (10 participants), meaning the building activities were more chaotic than in other sessions. This meant that, for the purposes of an analysis, the physical artefacts in particular were more disparate. Despite this, through (somewhat disorderly) bravado, participants drew on a range of discourses which were rich and meaningful to analyse. In approaching one group to ask what they’d made, these participants jumped straight into their explanation: “Sally: That’s a willy. / Steph: ((laughs)) /Matt: ((laughs)) wait a sec, wait wait wai- / Steph: ((laughs))”

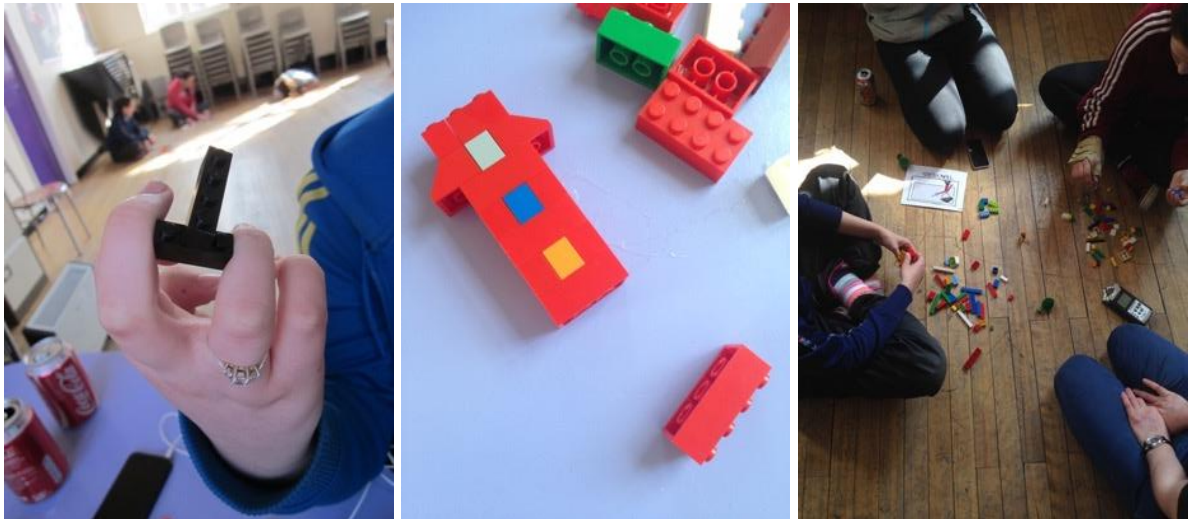


Figure 5.5: A range of building activities and outcomes from Thornside, Design Workshop 3, Lego. ‘A willy’ (Left), ‘A box’ (Middle) and ‘Chlamydia’ (Right)

Sally: And that’s - vagina or a condom, whatever you want-

Matt: A vagina or a condom?

Sally: Yeah, it's more like it would be a vagina isn't it?

Lory: Naw it's gonna be a box.

Matt: It's quite a big condom.

Sally: Would you put boxes on your (w)illy?

Matt: So how is that umm, promoting sexual health?

Sally: 'Cos like, you need protection.

Steph: Be safe than sorry (...) take the red bit off an' we'll do the pin prick.

Sally: Actually no, this can just be a vagina, it shows ya how to do it.

Matt: Oh, so it's showing (.) someone how sex works?

Sally: Yeah.

Steph: I thought my razer was stupid.

Thornside, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Through this extract there is a sense of young people piecing together a narrative about sexual health through the various objects that had been made, which left participants grappling at a narrative of sexual health – the ‘box’ participants made was a “vagina or a condom, whatever you want”. In turn, young people were rehearsing traditional sexual health scripts “you need protection” or “be safe than sorry”, and, simultaneously, an educational message “it shows ya how to do it”. However, what made this data vibrant was the interplay between young people, young people made space for silliness e.g. “we’ll do the pin prick”, and through this playful environment teasing between young people was permitted: “I thought my razer was stupid”. Therefore, although the ‘serious’ topics of sexual health were covered from a position generally thought of as ‘restrictive’ sexual health, typically argued in the critical literature as an unhelpful approach in sex education (Epstein and Johnson, 1994), here young people engaged with topics of “plumbing and prevention” (Lenskyj, 1990) in a playful, non-serious manner. This happened many times across the workshops with Thornside: “Matt: Umm, what does that represent? / Lory: Chlamydia” (Figure 5.5, right) / “Chrissy: we'll take Brian's head off, an' that could be a crab. Weh weh weh!”

Through playful interactions, young people also self-directed these conversations, and this extended to topics relating to LGBTQ issues. LGBTQ matters have typically been excluded, or at best been at the fringes of sexual health provision and sexual health education (Allen, 2015). As shown earlier, when LGBTQ topics were discussed by youth leaders these matters were often situated as 'other', and there were indications that this may also happen in schooling settings. However, the disorderly interactions occurring through young people's engagement with this design activity seemed to avoid this institutional heterosexism, enabling LGBTQ matters to be discussed alongside traditional scripts of sexual health:

Lory: Actually do you know what it is, like, no-one's doing lesbian ones; I'm gonna do a lesbian one.

Matt: ((laugh)) do a lesbian one.

Steph: Ya need ya two boxes-

Lory: That can just be a finger.

Steph: ((laugh))

Lory: There ya go, that can just be a finger.

Thornside, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Due to the rather unstructured setting of this workshop in particular, Lory was able to incorporate a discourse of lesbian sex in an off-handed manner "I'm gonna do a lesbian one". Through this, Lory indirectly produced a critique and challenge of the heteronormative discourse in the workshop "no-one's doing lesbian ones", and this was approached casually, and with humour, "ya need ya two boxes". These young people 'easily' flip the interpretation of these objects to be relevant to lesbian sex "that can *just* be a finger" (emphasis added) – and, in doing so, treat the topic with the same casual and playful approach as heterosex and traditional scripts of sexual health. Akin to the 'enquirers of sexuality' discussed in the previous chapter, young people were able to openly discuss topics sex education has notoriously steered clear of.

This 'silliness' was not as resonant across all of the groups I engaged with. The group from Know-it, who favoured the 'mature sexual adults' position (as discussed previously), presented ideas which reflected this. Through this, the 'technology as saviour' discourse

(Morosov, 2013; see also: Blythe et al. 2016) was made all the more resonant. Molly provided a prime example of this, using the Lego interpretively to represent a young person being constrained, which through her narrative were flung open to when her 'new technology' "comes along":

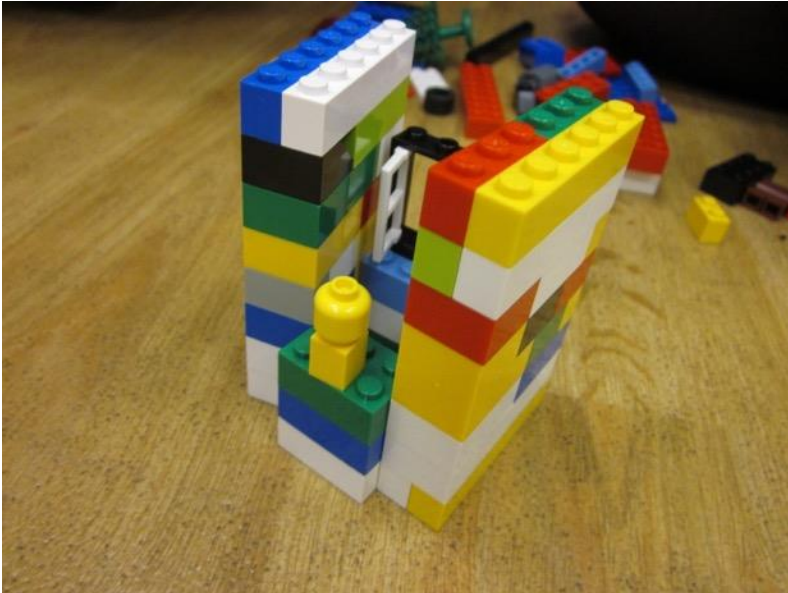


Figure 5.6: 'The New Craze App' made by Molly, Know-It Design Workshop 3, Lego

Molly: This is just a normal teenager for the moment who has, well maybe they're confused about their sexuality, confused about lots of things, but they have in general a really good awareness of erm, like, terms like, about different sexualities, about different genders, things like that, and erm, and about sexual health, and then at the moment, the reason I've got these two big walls, is if you were really constrained by this, especially online, like a lot of people don't understand, a lot of people don't have awareness, but then this new technology comes along [moves Lego 'walls' outwards], which basically erm, is like, it's basically kind of something, which, everyone has, it's like a new craze on their iPhone or on their laptop, and it's, it basically has, history and facts an' things about, so many different terms like, gay people, straight people, genders, sexual health, and it just makes like an entire population aware of so many things, and it also makes people more accepting because they now know, like loads against, not loads against gay rights, but like, those with gay rights, like gay marriage legalised and things like that, an' you think, well y'know that's, it's becoming acceptable, an' things like that it makes people change their views on gay people like, the proportion of how many people are gay or

straight or the proportion of how many people like, get a sexual disease or- an' like help with things like that, not just like "I'm about to" y'know what I mean, a- an' this now makes the person feel, a lot more open an' like people talk about it on the Internet now because, it's something that everyone has and everyone knows about an' that person feels much less constraint and much less of an outsider for knowing the things in the first place.

Know-It, Design Workshop 3: Lego

Molly's description of her App is notable for how it has little coherence. She highlights how it's a "new craze", "kind of something, which everyone has" either "on their iPhone or on their laptop" although any details about what this would actually involve are sparse. She highlights the quantity of things this "technology" will cover, "so many different terms" (and again, it is notable she specifically highlights LGBT issues specifically here). The vision for this technology is certainly ambitious, "it makes like an entire population aware of so many things, and it also makes people more accepting". Notable in this design, however, is how it builds on the position of young people as 'mature sexual adults', 'experts' in sexuality (discussed previously). In this imagined scenario, a young person's extensive knowledge about these topics are physically represented as the walls of constraint, making the young person feel an "outsider" for having sexual knowledge. This is a fitting example of a discourse of "technology as saviour" (Morosov, 2013). Although this does reflect the task we presented to participants, asking them to make something to help with the 'problem' of young people's sexual health, it is notable how in Molly's case this is taken to the extreme. The technology is in no way defined, other than it will be universally 'good' and, perhaps more interestingly, the purpose of this technology is to affirm an individual's sexual knowledge, rather than actually 'inform' them.

We provided a range of stimuli (detailed in the Methodology) for young people to design devices to have conversations around sexuality. One of these was providing a range of 'superpowers' that young people could incorporate into a piece of technology. Hetty, from Know-it, used the premise of anti-gravity to build on the idea of light-weight conversations discussed previously:

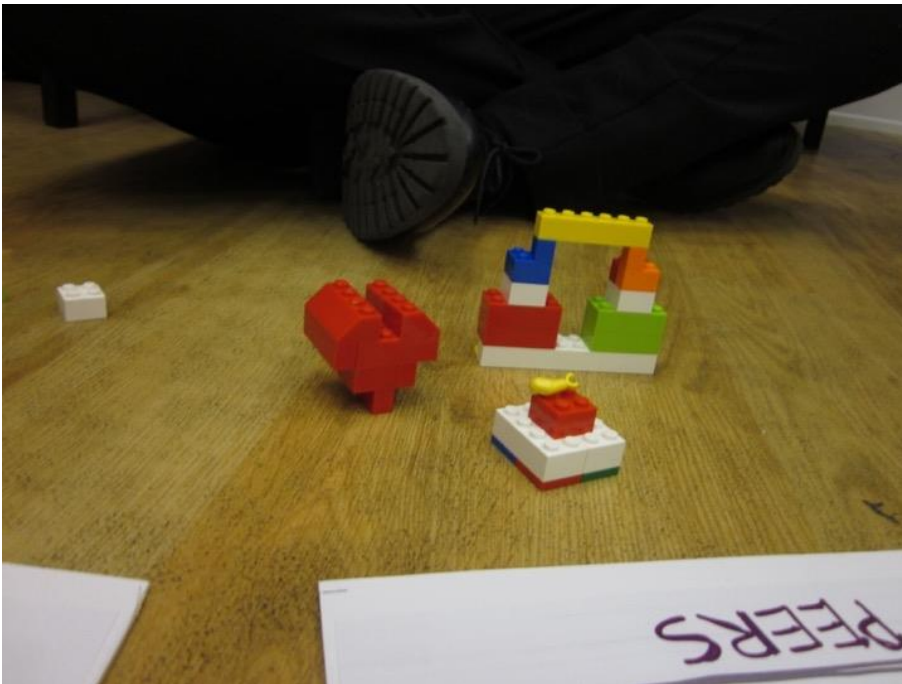


Figure 5.7: 'The Anti-Gravity Button' made by Hetty, Know-It Design Workshop 3, Lego

Hetty: Ok, I interpreted anti-gravity in a kind of, not that you literally fly away but, you make the situation less (.) serious.

Madeline: Mhm.

Hetty: Erm, and that applied both to this, and to the kind of parent conversation, so this is the anti-gravity button-

Madeline: Ok.

Hetty: So, it's like, when you press the button, either, either the person that you're speaking to, or the person that you're trying to reassure, like, or whatever, like, so either the parent could push this or, the-the child or the person that, you're asking, or the person that's being asked, could press it to kind of, pause the conversation, an' this is a heart, an' kind of show that everything's all right, umm, so yeah, err so it's sort of like, umm, if a child was, like, really panicked, about, y'know err, maybe having sex for the first time, or erm, that they had already had sex and they felt, like, it was dreadful, or, y'know, their own kind of, worries or, stuff like that, someone could press the anti-gravity button and pause, they have to, like stop and chill for a little bit, and, it-it kind of gives that person a chance to realise, that everything's okay.

In this imaginative example, the ‘super power’ developed was abstract, a ‘feeling’, making a “situation less (.) serious”. This relates to ideas explored earlier in this chapter, where young people expressed disdain about long and serious conversations about sex. In some ways, this design can be contrasted to Molly’s, in that there is no information provision or transformation of society envisaged through the introduction of a piece of technology. Despite this, the outcomes of both designs are very similar. Hetty explicitly uses the idea of creating “reassurance” as a tool for helping in sexual health, showing a young person that “everything’s all right”, and likewise, the intention of Molly’s design was to make a young person feel less constraint. It was notable, therefore, that in these designs apparent ‘anxieties’ about sex were put to the fore.

The notion of ‘feelings’ was resonant across the devices these participants made in this Lego workshop. Later in this session, Molly incorporated the idea of teleportation into our design so that it “doesn't give people like a written awareness it also give people like a real, like, experience of it”, and Hetty makes “a- brain sharing device” if young people “are going through and if they're experiencing similar things to me, but equally I'm afraid to just strike up conversation”, a device enabling young people to share experiences “so maybe you don't feel quite as (.) alone as you might”. These designs were notable for how they departed from traditional scripts of sexual health, of prevention and disease, and rather concentrated on the notion of lived and felt experience in delivering a sexual health intervention.

Know-it and Thornside therefore represented two quite different approaches to young people designing devices around sexual health, which broadly represent themes discussed in the previous chapter. ‘Know-it’, favouring a position of ‘mature sexual adults’, produced more ‘solution focused’ designs, often concentrating on the ‘lived experience’ of sex and sexuality, although these largely spoke to discourses of solutionism. This was nevertheless present in the designs produced by Thornside (and also present at PRONG), where a more traditional framing of sexual health prevailed, although this was often wrapped in a discourse of casual ‘silliness’, akin to the ‘enquirers of sexuality’. At times this enabled discussion around topics typically shunned by sexual health, particularly LGBTQ issues, an idea that participants across my workshops were keen to explore (as ‘enquirers of sexuality’). In developing a sexual health ‘intervention’ for these groups of young people, I therefore built on this idea of playful and casual conversations around sex and sexuality,

through the development of games for sexual health education. A board game was an idea that was explicitly developed in the Thornside Lego workshop, where young people opted to work as a group to develop a 'sexual health intervention':



Figure 5.8: Sexual Health Game made in Thornside

Lory: If you were with all your friends it's like a board game kind of thing, an' you say, like, this bit that you would take that out an' like it would have a bit of information about, like, each kind of disease, like, health risks an' stuff for sex.

Chrissy: An' how to stay safe.

Matt: Right.

Lory: 'Cept we don't know that.

Chrissy: Don't - Probably jus- condom, a- tha:'d (.) probably be it.

Matt: So it's-

Lory: Condom.

Mary: Use a condom.

Chrissy: ((laugh))

Matt: So it's a board game people play together.

Lory: Ye:ah.

Esther: Sure. ((laugh))

Matt: Is there like, you pick up a ca:rd an-d?

Chrissy: We 'aven't gone that far we just know that it's got information on each bit.

Matt: Yeah but it's -

Chrissy: Something happens.

Matt: Almost the (.) chlamydia gremlin is like one of those figures that -

Lory: Yeah-

Chrissy: Aw yeah-

Matt: - you take round the board.

Chrissy: Yeah.

Esther: We've made a new monopoly, guys!

Chrissy: We definitely have.

Lory: Sexopoloy.

Chrissy: ((laughs)) That's so good, well done, Lory!

Matt: ((in overlap)) Sexopoly.

Chrissy: ((in overlap)) Sexopoly ((laughs))

Thornside, Design Workshop 3: Lego

The above extract presents how a process of 'co-design' (Sanders, Brandt and Binder, 2010) played out in the workshop, through discourse. Lory suggests, tentatively, that their (group) Lego creation is "a board game kind of thing", which young people wrap in a discourse of traditional sexual health delivery: "information about, like, each kind of disease, like, health risks an' stuff" (Lory) / "An' how to stay safe" (Chrissy). In my role as a facilitator, I in turn offer up suggestions/additions to their design (e.g. "the (.) chlamydia gremlin is like one of those figures that-") which young people in turn take up, terming their creation "Sexopoly", an idea which other group members were affirmative towards ("That's so good, well done Lory!").

Therefore, developing prototype 'game based' interventions appeared to be a promising way to extend my line of enquiry into how young people's sexuality played out within these

youth group settings, and to provide insight around designing digital technologies to deliver sex education and sexual health information. This prompted the second phase of my fieldwork, where I conducted play sessions with young people from Thornside, Know-it and PRONG with two games I developed off the back of the first phase of my fieldwork. In contrast to the concentrated series of three sessions in phase 1, these sessions were conducted as one-off sessions. I established a good working relationship particularly with Know-it and PRONG, and continued meeting with these groups across a period of two years. During this period, young people left, joined and moved between some of these groups, resulting in a wider and more diverse set of participants (41 participants, 19 male, 22 female). There was some crossover between these participants and young people participating in phase 1 of my research.

5.5 Games for Talking about Sex

Being based in a HCI lab, there is some expectation that our findings go to inform the design of a piece of technology. As discussed in Chapter 2, implications for design as a blanket requirement for qualitative research in HCI has been critiqued, however I acknowledge that developing technologies is a disciplinary requirement to a certain degree. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, the relationship I had with the public health authorities necessitated some forms of scalable digital output. I helped deliver this, but in academic venues I have problematised this deployment (Wood et al. 2018), and as such I do not discuss it here, as it was antithetical to the youth-centred approach taken in this fieldwork (see also: ‘The Case of Joel’ in Chapter 2).

In light of this, I wished to develop a form of design response which stemmed from my fieldwork. My collaborations with trained designers (e.g. Gatehouse et al. 2018) have meant I am very cautious of calling myself ‘a designer’. As a social psychologist and qualitative researcher, the most interesting aspect of my fieldwork was the rich and complex interactions in these workshops, providing abundant opportunities for analysis. I saw the development of responses as an opportunity to further explore the role of digital technology for a broad agenda of sexual health.

One of the most ‘actionable’ designs provided by participants at the end of phase 1 was ‘sexopoly’, discussed previously. The premise, as described by the young people, bears similarities to a “serious game” (Michael and Chen, 2005), discussed previously, which when applied to the broad area of health are games to ‘make people healthier’ (Grimes et al.

2010). However, this agenda does not correspond with the broad, critical definition of sexual health discussed earlier. Engaging further with scholarly work around gaming, I found Soute et al.'s (2010) notion of 'head-up games' (HUGs) games to fit more cohesively with the agenda of generating discussions around sex and sexuality. HUGs "encourage social interaction, simulate physical activity and support adaptable rules, creating a fun experience" (Soute et al. 2010: p.437). Such a premise would allow for an adaptable premise, capable of generating qualitative data, and have the critical health objective of responding to the "history of silence and embarrassment" (Tiefer, 2004) around sex.

Designing the responses included playing co-located, mobile and social off-the-shelf games, and inviting colleagues to participate in playtesting with low fidelity prototypes (Figure 5.11). Through iterative discussion of early analyses of my data with my supervisor and a games designer we developed a premise for a digital, mobile, co-located game called 'Talk About Sex', and later I developed the premise for a card game given the working title 'Cards Against Virginitiy'. These games were presented to participants in gameplay sessions, where participants were invited to play, reflect on, and contribute to, these games. I now discuss each of the games in turn.

5.5.1 Talk about Sex



Figure 5.9: Screenshots from the game 'Talk About Sex'

'Talk About Sex' is a multiplayer game, developed for iOS, designed initially for young people to play together. Using a peer-to-peer network over Wi-Fi or Bluetooth on players' devices, the game begins by instructing all players to turn their phones face down. After a three second pause, one player's phone vibrates and makes a short sound, indicating that it is their turn. Once they turn their phone face up, it presents the player with a task presented in Figure 5.10. To progress, all must return their phone face down where the process is repeated with the next player. This continues until all tasks have been played through.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write the name of your first kiss 2. Blow a kiss to another player 3. Read out loud this paragraph: <i>Alexis brought me close to their neck, and I smiled as I took in the smell of their sweet aroma, once more. I let out a contented sigh as my thoughts irrevocably slipped to my Skye. What would they make of our blossoming relationship?</i> 4. Mark on Google Maps where you've had a 'moment' 5. Take a photo of a body part 6. Hold your phone and draw a love heart in the air 7. Get everyone to leave the room then describe poignant or daring intimate moment to another player 8. Draw a body part 9. Use google image search to find a photo of a romantic location 10. Shout a pet or slang name for a body part 11. Wink at one of the other players 12. Choose a friend(s) – then place your phones in your pockets and swing together to an imaginary beat 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Sing, hum or whistle your best sexy theme tune 14. Stop playing the game. Return in 1 minute (timed) 15. Choose a song from your mobile that you associate with someone or romance 16. Draw some tickly bits on your phone 17. Simulate a massage with your phone 18. Draw something to do with sex, intimacy or sexuality NOW and quickly 19. Swap phones with another player and don't give it back to them until the end of the game 20. Take someone else's phone and record a private message for them 21. Take a selfie on someone else's phone 22. Hold hands with another player clasping the phone and swing your arms together 23. Shine the light to illuminate a part of your body 24. Write a message to someone important in your life
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Figure 5.10: List of Tasks 'Talk about Sex' played through

Figure 5.9 shows screenshots of how these tasks were presented to players. In a series of 'play sessions' with these groups, we asked participants to play through 24 tasks (Figure 5.10), generated by us, as a set. After this had happened, participants wrote their own suggestions for tasks the game could play through, and participants often opted to play through these suggestions as well. A full list of participant-generated tasks is provided in Appendix E. In later sessions, a curated set of participant-generated tasks were developed as a package for participants to play through.

After playing the game, young people were asked about their opinions on the game. These discussions were largely unstructured. Although aspects of this guide were used in these post-game discussions, the most productive conversations came about from self-directed discussions, which often varied in scope between groups.

5.5.2 Cards Against Virginty



Figure 5.11: The deck from 'Cards Against Virginity' (left) and Play Testing with colleagues (right)

To combat some of the challenges in 'Talk about Sex' (discussed next), I developed a variation of the game, based on the popular card game 'Cards Against Humanity', where players 'filled in the blank' in response to a series of scenarios, with players taking it in turns to decide the best answers. In this final stage of the research, I took this game format and adapted the scenarios to be around sex, sexuality and sexual health (Figure 5.11). These scenarios were around imaginary characters, which brought the conversations away from personal experience, which proved problematic in 'Talk about Sex'. A card game also circumvented problems around network connectivity I had encountered introducing digital technology into youth group settings. Card-based activities have been demonstrated as productive ways of generating conversations, both in Interaction Design (Lucero and Arrasvuori, 2010) and the social sciences (Allen, 2003) as discussed in Chapter 2.

This relates to my previous work in the story completion method (SCM), where participants are asked to complete a 'story stem' around a particular topic (Clarke et al. 2017; Hayfield and Wood, 2019; Wood, Wood and Balaam, 2017). Traditionally this has been used in a quantitative paradigm (see Clarke et al. 2017 for a discussion of this); however, following Kitzinger and Powell (1995), as 'the story completion research group' (see: Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017) we have been exploring it as a *qualitative* method. In this application of the method, participants are asked to 'fill in the blanks' by completing a deliberately ambiguous story stem, and researchers analyse the meaning-making that occurs through the stories participants generate. Participants also regularly report that these are enjoyable studies to participate in (Clarke et al. 2017). I proposed that 'filling in the blanks' on a range of scenarios in this game-style format would be an interesting application of this idea, both analytically and as an activity relating to sexual health for young people.

I drew up a set of 50 cards (see Appendix D, also Figure 5.11) which I initially play-tested with colleagues (Figure 5.11, right). Many of these tasks drew on the same or similar wording, as participants in generating tasks for 'Talk about Sex'. For instance, I adapted "Your ideal first time" to "For their first time, Omar and Hector have ____ sex", and "Name something you regret" to "Rory regrets ____". The use of names gave suggestion to LGBT issues (in addition to heterosex), which many participants brought up in my fieldwork, for instance: "To show her girlfriend she loved her, Sara ____", and through the use of gender-

neutral names such as “Casey thinks it’s not okay to _____”. In this way, alongside tasks which attempted to approach sexual pleasure (i.e. “Malan loves it when _____”) I also included tasks relating to more traditional ideas of sexual health (i.e. “Lennon is at the sexual health clinic for _____”).

At their request, I ran through the game with three youth workers a week prior to running a final workshop with young people from PRONG, including the abovementioned worker Joel, and Abigail from the previous workshops. This time, workers were enthusiastic for me to use the game in a workshop with young people – “I’m surprised no-one’s thought of it before” (Joel, meeting fieldnotes). I did not publicly call the game ‘Cards against VirginitY’, as Abigail commented “I don’t think you’d get away with that” (meeting fieldnotes); however, I will refer to it as such hereafter for ease of reference.

The basic rules were presented to participants as follows. One player begins as ‘The Card Czar’, who reads out the first ‘fill-in-the-blank’ phrase from the pack. The remaining players fill in the blank by writing their answer on a sheet of paper and passing it, face down, to the Card Czar. The Card Czar shuffles the answers, and shares each card combination with the group, by re-reading the scenario before presenting each answer. They then pick the ‘best answer’, who received the point for that round. After the round, a new player becomes the Card Czar, where the process is repeated. After playing the game with my pre-prepared scenarios, I asked young people to generate their own tasks for the game. If time permitted, participant-generated tasks were also played through by the group and were used to structure a group discussion about the game. I conducted gameplay sessions of ‘Cards Against VirginitY’ with two groups of young people from Know-it and PRONG in the final year of my fieldwork.

5.6 Playing ‘Talk about Sex’

Playing my first game, ‘Talk about Sex’, with different groups of young people had varying degrees of success. It was hoped that this game would utilise the abovementioned ‘playfulness’ for young people to have conversations around sex, sexuality and sexual health. It was especially well received by younger groups, for example in Thornside: “I really enjoyed it / I’d like to do it again” (Grace), and a group of young men from PRONG: “Honestly I’m still shocked they sat down that long” (Kate, YW). Esther from Thornside also commented, “This would be brilliant ‘cos we have like free periods where we basically should be doing work but instead we get games on our phones that everyone can play”.

With Esther framing this game as ‘not’ education (i.e. they “should be doing work” in the periods they would play a mobile game like this), the game was constructed as separate and distinct from ‘sex education’ in its traditional sense. Much of the gameplay was lively, such as participants collectively shouting slang names for body parts in response to (10), or enthusiastically running out of the room for task (7). For the purposes of this analysis, however, interactions during the gameplay were shallow, particularly in comparison to the rich workshop data, in that they were more around the interactional elements of the game itself (e.g. turn taking). Moreover, in unpacking the implications for how young people constructed understandings of sexual health, it was far more meaningful to look at young people’s interactions *around* the gameplay, particularly when these interactions resulted in conversational conflicts between young people and youth workers, and when young people were more critical of the game.

5.7 Undermining the ‘Mature Sexual Adult’

A major criticism which was levied at the game was that it “was not talking about sex”: “The app’s called Talk About Sex but it’s not (.) you’re not really talking about it?” (Molly, Know-it) / “Every single one I got, wasn’t really talking about sex” (Esther, Thornside). However, tasks which asked young people to refer to personal experience were, simultaneously exclusionary: “[name] hasn’t had her first kiss (.) it’s quite a big thing for her” (Hannah, Know-it, task 1)”, particularly in reference to the (seemingly ambiguous) word “moment” (task 4, 7): “I’ve not had any of them” (Dana, Thornside) “I don’t really have one” (Grace, Thornside) “I haven’t, so (.)” (Alfie, Thornside). Asking about personal experiences undermined young people’s autonomy as ‘mature sexual adults’; however, this was also the case in the opposite direction, with the interpretation that tasks were “not talking about sex”.

One of the few ways young people were able to exercise their position as a ‘mature sexual adult’ through play of ‘talk about sex’ was through *resisting* tasks. For example, when playing a participant-suggested task “Give a player your unlocked phone”, Dale from PRONG responded “I’m not giving someone my unlocked phone, sorry”. Through refusing this task, Dale could exercise a position of autonomy, which would not be accessible to him if he had simply completed the task as prescribed. Likewise, in ‘Know-it’, as the game progressed, players began to ‘pass’ on increasing tasks, such as task 12: “Do you wanna skip that one?” (Polly) “Aye” (Molly), task 21: “Just Pretend” (Molly), task 24: “Later” (Molly).

In this way, the group 'Know-it' communicated in various ways that they were 'too mature' for 'talk about sex': "I just think that I wouldn't play it, because (.) I just think I'm a bit old". In response to the game's request for people to leave the room in task 7, Freya asked "Do we really have to leave the room?": "Who wants to stay?" (Molly) "I'll stay, I'm too tired to move" (Freya). Players from Know-it also responded to other tasks with similar indifference, e.g. task 19: "Who wants me phone?" (Hannah) "I'd give you mine but it's on charge" (Freya), and task 7: "Do I need to tell you one?" (Freya) "If you fancy it" (Hannah). It is notable to relate this to the Lego activity, where 'Know-it' favoured more 'mature' designs over the 'silliness' favoured at 'Thornside'. While Thornside were more enthusiastic about the game, for 'Know-it' a 'silly' game seemingly undermined a position of 'mature sexual adults', with young people maintaining their autonomy through resistance to / a rejection of the game.

This deadlock presented a direct challenge for me. I wanted to retain a focus on playful interactions, as a key take-home from my earlier fieldwork were opportunities for self-directed playful exploration. However, this was not particularly evident in the data of young people playing this game, and in some cases such 'childishness' undermined young people's agency as 'mature sexual adults'. Moreover, in this setting, youth workers occupied a great deal of power (see Chapter 2), giving authority over what was and was not allowed. This is what I sought to address in deploying the adaption of this game, 'Cards Against Virginity'.

5.8 Affirming the 'Mature Sexual Adult'

Playing 'Cards Against Virginity' with Know-it and PRONG set a very different tone with these youth groups. While through analysis I saw 'Talk About Sex' often undermining the notion of the 'mature sexual adult' (Chapter 4), the alternative premise of 'Cards Against Virginity' often *affirmed* this notion. An example of this was witnessed early on with 'Know-It', when they were discussing the 'rules of the game', which became a negotiated rather than dictated activity:

Chloe: So is the idea to make it like as funny as possible or as realistic as possible or-
(.) ?

Matt: It's sort of- it's the best answer.

Verity: Oh, best answer.

Matt: So it's (.) however you interpret that.

Chloe: Oh-kay.

Matt: ((laughs))

Matt: And you're going to decide on the best-

Cath: The best answer.

Maisie: Okay.

Chloe: Ohh okay.

Maisie: But I just judge it on how I want?

Matt: However you want.

Know It, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Chloe, a youth leader in the group, subtly asks around the 'purpose' of the game, and she gets this conversational work 'done' by embedding this in two options over how responses could be drawn up – "as funny as possible or as realistic as possible or- (.) ?" Ending a sentence with "or- (.) ?" has often been looked at in conversation analysis for how it can soften such propositions (Schegloff, 2007), although later Chloe does ask more directly – "So ho:w, how could this be used as an education tool?" However, in the above extract, I manage this conversational turn by offering an ambiguous statement – "It's sort of, the best answer", deferring this interpretation onto Maisie. In turn, this speaks to the position of the "judges of sexuality", discussed in the previous chapter, where young people often gave, through discourse, judgement calls over different forms of and practices around sexuality. After this 'rule' was established, it became a resource for talking around the game. For instance, at one point youth leader Verity commented "Verity: ((whispers)) Gotta write something funny" to which Maisie responded "I might not be judging it on funniness, don't worry Verity". This example is striking in that it is Maisie, a young person, who gives (conversational) reassurance to Verity, a youth worker. Through giving guidance that was both narrowly constrained: "it's the best answer", open to interpretation: "however you interpret that", and judged by the player: "I just judge it on how I want" (Maisie), the hierarchy between young people and youth leaders was visibly levelled, particularly in comparison to the conversation conflicts occurring between young people and youth workers in 'Talk about Sex'.

'Rules' were often used as a point of common negotiation between players. Play researchers Salen and Zimmerman (2004) suggest that 'rules of play' may be broken down into 'Operational, Constitutive and Implicit' rules, which set out the conditions for which a game can be played. I suggest that players used cultural meanings around the implicit (or unwritten) rules around "etiquette" and "good sportsmanship" (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 130) as a discursive resource to construct 'fair gameplay'. With PRONG for example, at one point Cat comments: "Oh no, no I knew what I could have put, ohh man!" to which Dale responds "No, that's what everyone does when they play cards". Likewise, negotiation around occurred when Robert picked a card he wasn't happy with:

Robert: Oh that's rubbish!

Cat: You can't put it back!

Matt: If you find a rubbish one, ok, you can have one pass.

Cat: During the whole game.

Matt: I've changed the (.) changed the rules.

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In a similar vein to Dale in the previous example, Cat exclaims an 'Implicit Rule' or convention around playing cards, that is, that one cannot put a card back once it has been chosen. 'Implicit Rules' are permitted to change contextually (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004), and as a facilitator I 'gave permission' for the 'breaking' of this rule, for the purposes of data collection. However, what was interesting was this was co-constructed to still be tightly constrained "ok, you can have one pass" (Matt) / "during the whole game" (Cat), and that a level of negotiation was permitted *between* players (although this did also involve me), rather than rule-setting being administered through the youth workers. This can be contrasted to 'The Case of Joel', discussed previously, where 'rules' for interaction were dictated by him.

Through the constraints of the game, players also expressed sentiments of self-affirmation, specifically Cat: "Ahh! I'm so funny!" / "Mine is so good" / "I love it" / "I'm gonna be great all the way through this, I love games like this (.) ohh it's my turn". I suggest that the premise of the game, facilitating an even hierarchy between youth leaders and young people, made this kind of self-affirmation discourse possible. Moreover, youth leaders'

contributions to, and comments around, gameplay also served to even this hierarchy. The following occurred in response to a card written by a young person: “It’s all fun and games until _____”:

Matt: It's all fun an' games until you end up dead.

Cath: ((laughter))

Chloe: ((laughter))

Maisie: ((laughter))

Chloe: Great!

(...)

Cath: I like the dead one.

Maisie: I like the dead one.

Verity: That was me, I don't know why I wrote it.

Chloe: Ahhh ((laughs))

Maisie: ((laughs)).

Verity: It was the time pressure.

Chloe: ((laughs))

Maisie: I love that one.

Matt: It brings out the-

Chloe: It followed on quite nicely.

Verity: It's you who puts those sorts of things in me head, write things like that.

Maisie: I liked that.

Know It, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

In the above, Verity, the most ‘senior’ youth worker in the room gave a somewhat ‘edgy’ answer to the question, resulting in much hilarity from the group. It is noteworthy that Maisie ‘upgrades’ her assessment of the answer, from “I like the dead one” (line 8) to “I *love*

that one” (line 14), after it is disclosed that Verity wrote the suggestion. In amongst this, with her role as a sexual health worker, Verity is required to go through a variety of disclaimers, accounting for and justifying this answer, “I don’t know why I wrote it” / “It was the time pressure” / “It’s you who puts those sorts of things in me head”. With Verity’s implied sense that such an answer is inappropriate for someone in apparent authority, however, this goes to conversationally diminish the boundaries between roles of young person and youth leader.

This levelling between young people and youth leaders was also seen in PRONG. In this group, Abigail was the primary youth leader, who gave various interjections which served to break down these boundaries. Perhaps most strikingly, Cat comments on the answer Dale is writing: “A nose? A nose”, to which Abigail adds: “Dale, don’t be boring”. This can be compared the ‘The case of Joel’ in ‘Talk about Sex’ discussed previously, where young people accused the youth leader’s suggestions of being “boring” – only this time the roles are reversed. Abigail also gave implied encouragement to more risqué answers. For example:

Gareth: [To show her girlfriend she loved her, Sara] whipped out the sex toys, oi oi!
((laughs))

Abigail: ((laughs))

((more laughter))

Abigail: The oi oi, I like that, oi oi!

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Abigail’s interjections with this game also served to level this hierarchy and, as indicated in the above, went to facilitate and encourage a more ‘progressive’ sex education discourse, as I will discuss in the next section. However, what is also notable is the manner in which Abigail does this. Abigail ‘joins in’ with the bravado of the group, repeating the colloquial expression “oi oi” twice, and actively affirming this (“I like that”). Again, we can contrast this directly to play of Talk About Sex, where Joel undermines a colloquial expression (“Yo-Lo”) with a ‘better’ piece of life advice (“I’d say don’t drink too much”).

Of course, Joel and Abigail are different conversation agents, which one might put down to different traits or approaches from a different analytic perspective (as I will discuss in more

detail in the next chapter). However, from an interactional perspective, it is meaningful to note the alternative interactions that were made possible through play of 'Cards Against VirginitY'. In both PRONG and Know-It, there was evidence of lessening boundaries between young people and youth workers, which I suggest went to acknowledge young people as 'mature sexual adults' over and above how interactions were facilitated in 'Talk About Sex'. To go further, I suggest play of this game also allowed the development of a 'discourse of desire' (Fine and McClelland, 2006), which was also facilitated through interactions with youth workers, as I elaborate on below.

5.9 Being 'Filthy'

Maisie: I've got such a dirty mind I'm trying to really censor it.

Matt: ((laugh)) you don't have to.

Verity: Yeah (.) go for it Maisie.

Know It, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Notions of having a "dirty" or "filthy" mind (in the above, such that it requires censorship) were common across these two groups. In the above, this statement is similarly a positioning of the 'mature sexual adult', in that Maisie as a well-versed sexual agent has "such a dirty mind" which she "really" tries to "censor" for the rest of the group. As I shall explore in this section, I argue that the notions of "dirt" and "filth" were important discursive constructs in having upfront discussions specifically around sexual pleasure. However, also notable in the above extract was the subsequent encouragement from me ("you don't have to") and Verity ("Yeah (.) go for it Maisie"). The framing of this game facilitated support for more explicit suggestions from me as a facilitator and Verity as a sexual health worker. This was particularly vividly illustrated in PRONG where, as indicated previously, Abigail was seen to be supportive of the colloquial language present in young people's interactions when the idea of 'sex toys' were (discursively) introduced through gameplay. Abigail also provided many of her own risqué suggestions, which were met with enthusiasm from the rest of the group:

Abigail: When they reached sixty Betty an' Mike joined a swingers club.

((laughter))

Cat: When they reached sixty Betty and Mike went rock climbing in a Spiderman suit
(.) umm, I like Abigail's.

Matt: Was that yours?

Abigail: Bring on the swingers!

Hailey: 'Casey thinks _____ is not okay'.

Abigail: Umm, I'm going to go, be peed on during sex.

((laughter))

Abigail: I'm good at this game.

Ethan: Well you're the sexual health worker, that's why.

Abigail: So what? I'm sure youse [are] all, filthy.

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

In both instances, Abigail makes the 'winning' suggestion for the round, referring to swinging culture in the former and urolagnia (i.e. water sports). As discussed in the previous chapter, as enquirers of sexuality, young people were often willing to explore areas in the 'bad outer limits' of sexuality (Rubin, 1984), also alluded to in the abovementioned reference to sex toys. Through 'Cards Against Virginity', Abigail is a contributor to this discourse ("Bring on the swingers!"), the implied 'rules of play' (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004) permitting her to support it.

In response to an accusation that her repeated 'wins' were down to her being a sexual health worker, Abigail actively diminishes her status through talk – "So what?" – with the offhand suggestion "I'm sure youse [are] all, filthy". This proposition is carefully framed not to be accusatory, rather she proposes that young people are *as* "filthy" *as she is*. Hence, the way Abigail uses this adjective makes it apply to her as a sexual health worker as well.

Abigail returns to this notion of filth later on in the group: "When it's not filthy I can't answer ((laughs))", and she also less directly encouraged 'outlandish' suggestions: "Please put something fun" (Cat) "Just anything ludicrous" (Abigail) / "Oh I could say so many things, that I don't want to say" (Ethan) "That's the whole point of the game!" (Abigail). It is significant to note that this was a framing which did not come from me (see earlier for my references to interpreting a best answer). Rather, this was a collective construction of the

group, in playing a 'Cards Against Humanity' related game (again, the term 'Cards Against Virginity' was not explicitly used in fieldwork).

This collective framing of the game meant that many suggestions from 'PRONG' were around the 'bad' outer limits of sexuality discussed previously. For instance:

'When they reached sixty, Betty and Mike _____'

Cat: Build a sex dungeon.

Ethan: Ohh my life!

'Ash reckons the best way to stay safe is _____'

Robert: Starring in a porno (.) wear a condom (.) havin' sex under a bus shelter.

'Sara and Belle go outside _____'

Dale: For a quick striptease.

Cat: Bloody hell, Belle!

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Whilst some of these suggestions were arguably juvenile, I would like to suggest that such framing facilitated, in part, a "discourse of desire" (Fine and McClelland, 2006). This was first written about in 1988 (Fine, 1988) but is considered to be "still missing" from contemporary sex education discourse (Fine and McClelland, 2006; Montemurro et al. 2015). As I will discuss in the next chapter, I propose a potential reconfiguration of the 'discourse of desire' to be rather one of "foster filth" for a British context, with associations of departing from orderly, civilised society (Ktirj, 1997). This is also reflected in my data, with Abigail configuring 'filth' to be akin to pushing the boundaries, going beyond cautious (or restrictive, see: Epstein and Johnson, 1994) conceptions of sexuality. Within the boundaries of this game, conceptualised by Salen and Zimmerman (2004) as the 'magic circle' (inspired by the work of Huzinga, 1955, cited in Salen and Zimmerman, 2004), such contributions were permitted: "Can I write swear word in it?" (Dale) / "Mhm" (Abigail). I

suggest such framing allowed for participants to incorporate pleasure in their framing of sex, which occurred across both groups to a certain degree. For example:

‘Sara and Belle go outside _____’

Dale: To skinny dip in furry costumes.

Abigail: Someone’s got a fetish about fur.

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

‘Malan loves it when _____’

Verity: Meg kisses her toes (.) Malan loves it when her partner asks how the trip to the school nurse went (.) Malan loves it when you talk dirty.

‘Frank was ready to go all the way when _____’

Chloe: Ben put on a sexy onesie for him.

Maisie: Oooh!

Know-It, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

In their recent commentary on the story completion method, where participants write short stories in relation to prompts, Clarke et al. (2018) mention that short stories of two or three words can sometimes be some of the most memorable and contain much meaning to unpack. In a similar way, I suggest that although the answers provided here were short, they provide meaningful material to analyse, and the interactions happening around the generation and revelation of these answers provide a further layer of meaning-making. In the above, it is noteworthy that an answer includes an indication of a gay couple (“Ben put on a sexy onesie for him”), which was not directed by the prompt itself. This goes to support the idea discussed earlier that when self-directed, these young people ‘organically’ discussed LGBTQ issues. “Sexy onesie” is an exploration of erotic behaviours, and toe kissing and dirty talk can also be seen under these terms. The introduction of “furry costumes” prompts Abigail to explicitly draw on the idea of “fetish”, an area in the ‘bad outer limits’ (Rubin, 1984) of sexuality which was rarely spoken about in my data (although see the previous chapter for discussion around BDSM culture).

However, this was arguably in an accusatory way, a taunting of an unknown (anonymous) “someone”. Therefore, although the ‘private’ nature of completing these answers may have also contributed to more stark representations of sexuality, as has been argued in relation to story completion (Clarke et al. 2017; Clarke et al. 2018), this also presented the opportunity for potential shaming. This was indicated on several occasions with PRONG, for example when the character Belle appeared in two tasks in a row: “Belle's gettin' herself around” (Abigail) / “Bloody hell Belle” (Cat) and when ‘Jordan has decided to start wearing’: “Crocks” (George) ((laughter)). Although we might consider these as ‘in jest’, they nevertheless indicate potential difficulties in raising matters of sexual pleasure and agency – here they reinforced normative understandings around promiscuity, clothing and sexual practices.

Sexual pleasure was most directly addressed through a question suggested by a young person in this group:

Matt: Mmmmh, ok, I like this one, Dale's ultimate turn on is-

Ethan: ((laughs))

Mia: That is a good one.

Robert: That's so evil!

Abigail: We can't 'cos that's going to be really weird for me (.) and Mark.

George: Yeah, we can't.

Ethan: Well, none of it's gunna be true, is it?

Dale: Yeah but like-

Cat: Ohh Dale, I feel bad.

Dale: I'm walkin' away from, the crazy people.

Ethan: Oh no, no-

Mia: What, it could be a different Dale, I know a different Dale spelt the same way.

Matt: Ah is Dale, is Dale someone here?

Abigail: Aye, him.

Matt: Ahh I didn't know that (.) ok we shouldn't do that one, we shouldn't do it 'cos I didn't realise it was someone in the group, I think we've upset (.) someone.

Ethan: Who?

Mia: Who?

(pause)

Ethan: He's not upset.

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

After Dale had walked out of the workshop, the group took on a role of reassuring me, minimising the event: “Dale’s a big diva” (Gareth) / “Yeah he's always kickin' off about something” (George). While a task around an “ultimate turn on” explicitly featured discussion of pleasure beyond what I have witnessed working with young people in the UK over five years, the use of a participant’s name in this was a reminder of what made these tasks successful – that they were of *fictional* characters. Once this crossed the line to being about ‘real’ people, tasks then became problematic. Discussion of sexual pleasure was also seen to be problematic in other ways, specifically in relation to anal sex:

Ethan: My life. Belle doesn't want any more information on anal sex.

((laugh))

Abigail: She doesn't!

((laughter))

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Matt: Jonti and Flynn like to (.) hug each other ((laugh)) Jonti and Flynn like to bum each other.

Chloe: Phh ((laugh))

Verity: Oh dear!

Chloe: ((laugh)) graphic!

Matt: ((laughs))

Chloe: ((laugh))

Matt: ((laugh)) Jonti and Flynn like to-

Verity: Chloe!

Know-It, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

These instances indicate the problematic positioning of anal sex. Chloe's laughter at the "graphic" mention of "bum" is met with disapproval by Verity: "Oh dear" / "Chloe", and for Abigail it is something Belle 'doesn't want any more information on': "She doesn't!" The anus is therefore constructed as a problematic site of sexual pleasure. Anxieties about anal intercourse are common in discourse, it is regularly constructed as 'unsafe' (Holmes, O'Byrne and Gastaldo, 2006), and coupled with the so-called 'risky' discourse of 'barebacking' in gay men (Carballo-Diéguez and Bauermeister, 2004). Likewise, here anal sex became a topic off-limits for discussion in this context. As a topic Belle 'doesn't want any more information on', commonplace rhetorics of disgust (Baker, 2004; Holmes, Perron and O'Brune, 2006) were rehearsed and reproduced, and Verity's response in the above renders even the mention of anal sex inappropriate.

Therefore, although I suggest a discourse of "fostering filth" shows promise in having a sex education inclusive of sexual pleasure, with the idea of "filth" and "having a dirty mind" being culturally relevant ways of discussing more sexually explicit material, these notions nevertheless come with potential pitfalls. Discussions can be potentially shaming, particularly when this comes 'too close' to individual's own experiences, and it is notable that the potential for shaming is evident in the interactions of sexual health workers more so than in the discourse of young people. Likewise, although young people self-directed interactions to be inclusive of LGBT issues, the anus was situated as a problematic site for sexual pleasure, again initiated through the sexual health workers. This also has implications for more direct references to (traditional) sexual health, which were also a notable feature of 'Cards Against Virginité'.

5.10 Risks and Dangers

As indicated previously, scenarios suggested from young people demonstrated a willingness to engage in the relational side of sexual health, for example: "Last night you were in my room, and now ____" (anonymous suggestion from Know-it). Within this relational framing, underpinned by a discourse of "filth" discussed previously, these groups also had discussions about the risks and dangers of sex. For example:

‘Ken and Deirdre knew it was wrong but they still _____’

Matt: Put pineapple on a pizza, if you know what I mean ((laughs))

Ethan: ((laughs)) that is a good one.

PRONG, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

The suggestion in the above, which was a task suggested by a young person in PRONG, reframes the discourse around the risks and dangers of sex. While mainstream sexual health discourses often focus predominantly on preventing risk and danger, the above phrase recognises risk: “knew it was wrong”, whilst acknowledging ‘risk taking may occur’: “but they still”. Indeed, the framing of this scenario suggests that knowing something is wrong is a potentially alluring and seductive notion for these fictional characters. To “put pineapple on a pizza”, likewise indicates a cryptic, esoteric meaning – “you know what I mean” giving a sense of implied meaning-making within this reconstituted discourse.

Some of the tasks drawn up by me also addressed risk and prevention more explicitly. For example, in PRONG, Robert read out the card “Ash reckons the best way to stay safe is _____”, after which Abigail stated “Don’t want any disappointing answers from you”. Through this, and in the ‘spirit of the game’, Abigail therefore gently orientates towards a health promotion message in relation to this prompt. The benign mention of risk and prevention happened fairly frequently across the workshops, in a manner not dissimilar to the ‘everyday’ conversations around sex discussed earlier in the chapter:

‘Jessie’s teacher told them _____’

Cath: Use a condom as well as long acting reversible contraception, to avoid getting pregnant and an STI.

((laughter))

Know-It, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

‘Rory regrets _____’:

Matt: Getting crabs.

((laughter))

Cath: Would regret that!

Matt: Rory regrets not wearing a condom a few weeks ago, at an encounter he had at a party-

Cath: And getting crabs.

Know-it, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Therefore, through the playful, and sometimes “filthy” medium of this game, topics of traditional sexual health – risk, danger, and prevention – were nevertheless addressed. Through presenting an official scenario of a teacher instructing, a ‘by the book’ answer was facilitated in a playful fashion, so comprehensive that it in turn became amusing. Likewise, “crabs” became a recurring theme, also mentioned later in relation to another task: ‘It's all fun an' games until_____’ “you get crabs” (suggestion from Cath, Know-it). Traditional sexual health topics such as STIs were not given any special status within these interactions. Matters of risk and prevention were discussed alongside, and given the same status as, other aspects of sexuality. Through discussing the nature of this contribution, participants discussed ‘crabs’ (“would regret that” Cath) alongside other STIs – “I can’t write gonorrhoea” (Cath) / “Or you could say genital warts” (Verity) / “Yeah I was gonna say it or like genital lice” (Cath). Although these were perhaps ‘surface level’ discussions of STIs, it nevertheless indicated a strategy of facilitating these conversations in a manner akin to young people’s sexual cultures (again these discussions arose from young people’s interactions rather than being dictated terms). The reach of the game to address such ‘risky’ issues prompted youth workers to see different applications for the game: e.g. “You could do this for like other topics” (Verity, Know-it), which resulted in speculation from the rest of the group:

Verity: I mean I guess you could do one around drugs an' alcohol or something.

Maisie: Mmm.

Matt: Mmm.

Chloe: Yeah.

Verity: Maybe, like-

Cath: And smoking.

Chloe: Especially if you're going to be talkin' about risks an' stuff.

Verity: 'Cos it could bring out, hopefully things that could go wrong on a night, or something, couldn't it?

Chloe: Yeah, yeah.

Matt: Mmmm.

Cath: Yeah you could just do it all about like, like a night out, where you could do drugs, alcohol, sex, all of them.

Know-it, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

The speculations here come under the restrictive model of sexual health, alerting them to “risks an’ stuff”, things that “could go wrong on a night”. It is notable how these application cases are articulated rather tactlessly by these youth workers, they imagine the game could be applied to matters of “drugs, alcohol, sex”, the utterance “all of them” perhaps implying a ‘catch all’ condition for public health issues. Despite this, I want to suggest that the ‘low-fi’ medium of this card game meant that applications were readily articulated by youth workers. Both Cath and Chloe were participants in the ‘Talk about Sex’ workshops, and indicated preference for the card game: “I prefer the cards” (Cath) / “Yeah” (Megan), and the principle of ‘filling in the blanks’ was a concept Know-it could apply to their own practices, such as their social media page: “I think we should put this on our, social media try an' get people, on our *Facebook* page. I want people like respondin' to us” (Chloe).

This prompted the group to consider a digital application for the game that they could administer themselves: “The best hashtag or something” (Verity) / “Yeah that'd be a good idea” (Maisie). Verity suggested a task where players ‘filled-in the hashtag’, much to the amusement of the rest of the group:

Verity: It's like blank hashtag, y'know when you visit *Streetwise* like hashtag doodla doo!

Matt: ((laugh))

((laughter))

Chloe: What! Doodla-doo!

((laughter))

Chloe: It's like doodla-doo!

Verity: I thought that was a really good one!

Know-it, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

Verity's fondness for hashtags - "I like a hashtag" (Verity) – became a running joke throughout the workshop. Verity attempts, quite innocently, to appear on trend: "I thought that was a really good one", and is met with muted appreciation from young people: "'cos hashtags are-" (Matt) / "Happenin'" (Maisie). The impression given is that Verity is possibly not literate in such digital cultures – this is young people's domain, which curiously gave young people the upper hand in these interactions. Towards the end of the workshop, we had a discussion about hashtags, whether they used any hashtags currently: "We do, we do do some hashtags 'cos we have like hashtag skint, or we've had hashtag skinted and minted" (Verity):

Maisie: Skinted an' minted is a good one.

Chloe: Yeah that's good.

Matt: ((laugh))

Maisie: Oh my God, proud of you!

Know-it, Design Workshop 5: Card Game

The discursive introduction of 'hashtags', therefore, put young people on the upper foot in these interactions. Hashtags were readily used by young people in their answers to this game, both at Know-It: "hashtag free the nip" and at PRONG "hashtag disgust-ang" / "hashtag RIP" / "hashtag my rebellious life" (all anonymous suggestions). Verity's attempt to appeal to this mode of communication: "'cos everyone talks in hashtags don't they" (Verity), turned the tables on traditional hierarchies in sexual health - Maisie is "proud" of Verity for coming up with such a good hashtag, something she shows a keen but simple understanding of: "hashtag doodla doo!" (Verity). The (developing) literature on hashtags has examined how hashtags create 'publics' (Rambukkana, 2015) and can indicate identity membership categories (Yang et al. 2012). Here, the digitally 'literate' use of hashtags itself represented an identity category for young people, a culture not easily accessible by youth workers.

As an ‘intervention’ which addressed young people as ‘mature sexual adults’, ‘fostered filth’ within a palatable ‘game’ framing, but also allowed application to the risks and dangers around sex and sexuality, I propose that this was something usable for the sexual health service. “Know-it”, who were notably unenthusiastic in their contributions to ‘Talk about Sex’ were keen to suggest tasks for ‘Cards Against VirginitY’: “Uhh, I’ll do another one” (Chloe) / “Another one?” (Matt) / “Same” (Maisie) / “Same” (Cath). Likewise, youth leaders from PRONG indicated they enjoyed the game: “Ahh that was fun (.) that was funny” (Abigail) with a suggestion they could continue: “One more round?” (George). Moreover, through presenting the youth groups a simple concept and principle – that of ‘filling in the blanks’ – these groups were able to apply these ideas to their own service practice in a less prescribed manner. As I shall expand in the next chapter, the (self-directed) digital applications of these ideas may not have been particularly ambitious or cutting edge, but were, most importantly, relevant and applicable to the way the sexual health service occupies its practice.

5.11 Conclusions

Participants’ ‘lay accounts’ had a complicated relationship with the ‘expert’ narrative of sexual health, discussed earlier. An easily accessible narrative was one of irrelevance, and boredom, particularly in relation to school-based sex education. However, this also extended to other cultural notions such as ‘the sex education video’, regularly undermined in the accounts of young people. I suggest these narratives bear strong relation to ‘the mature sexual adult’ discussed previously, participants were able to use this positionality within the context of the workshops to discount ‘expert’ discourse, and could even on occasion undermine the authority of sexual health workers, even when they were present. However, this was not always the case, as young people were seen to defer to the presence and status of the workers and, most strikingly with the case of Joel, the power of this expert discourse had the potential to severely undermine the perspectives and suggestions from young people. A strategy far more sympathetic to the ‘mature sexual adult’ was the notion of mundane and everyday conversations about sex.

The ‘mature sexual adult’ position could easily be undermined, intentionally or otherwise. This was evident both in young people’s discussion of their experiences around sexual health provision, but also in my introduction of the ‘Talk about Sex’ intervention in the session. In various ways, this game delegitimised young people’s status of ‘mature sexual

adults', and they were only able to exercise this positionality through a resistance to the tasks presented. The interactions around play of 'Talk about Sex' demonstrated how powerful and pervasive a prescribed 'expert discourse' was, leading to almost confrontational interactional moments – an intervention *must* seek to target risk, and *cannot* be “for a laugh”. While much research has emphasised the importance of recognising young people's sexual autonomy (Lewis and Knijn, 2003), my analysis has shown how employing various forms sexual health 'expert discourse' can easily undermine this culturally fragile position.

Young people also employed a form of expert discourse as a culturally available resource for making sense of sexual health. Yet their use of these strategies was markedly different. Many of the young people's designs affirmed their knowledge and status. Moreover, in the often 'chaotic' and raucous format of the design workshops participants employed these discourses playfully, and in doing so, extended this discourse beyond how it is normally represented in 'expert' sources. As a prime example of this, LGBTQ topics were 'easily' incorporated into these (playful) narratives, whereas this was more problematically constructed in the accounts of youth workers. Young people also appeared to have access to a wider variety of cultural resources, for example incorporating notions of lived and felt experience. This speaks to a phenomenological perspective (Smith, 1996), different to the analytic approach in my thesis, and contrasts to critical approaches in sexual health, yet the presence of this discourse indicates a phenomenological perspective may be a valuable approach to bring to this topic.

What are the possible implications of these constructions for the delivery of sexual health, particularly in a digital space? As I have explored previously, digital technology has a number of discursive benefits in this space, constructed as “trendy” and “dead exciting” (Wood et al, 2018), which may be a benefit in itself. Indeed, I found previously that some sexual health workers identified that *anything* digital would hold benefits for the youth service. In contrasting 'Talk about Sex' and 'Cards Against Virginity', I have shown how, in practice, this may not be the case. 'Talk about Sex' was a rather complex multi-device game, and alongside the aforementioned issues with tasks delegitimising young people's positionality, the Wi-fi infrastructure in the youth centres and the technical capabilities of participants' phones often caused problems in playing the game. In contrast, on a purely pragmatic level, 'Cards Against Virginity' was governed by the 'implicit rules' of card games,

rather than relying on technical requirements. In contrast to the notion that digital is ‘automatically’ better (Wood et al. 2018), (some) participants overtly stated a preference of a card game over a digital one.

Digital interventions for sexual health are popular in that they offer interactional benefits over and above ‘brief’ or ‘minimal’ interventions such as leaflets, and are easily scaled in a (potentially) cost-effective manner (Murray et al. 2016). Yet, my data indicates a countering narrative of such individually based interventions. While (some) participants indicated a preference to finding out information on their own (see also McKellar, 2017), these notions were invariably problematic – participants articulated this as “shut themselves away”. To simply appease a preference for individual informational sources, without considering the wider implications of this would be problematic. A focus on the individual even departs from ‘expert’ policy discourse, which appears to have (more recently) shifted ‘blame’ to the collective rather than individual behaviour (Sykes et al. 2004).

I do not wish to suggest my interventions were without problems, as my analysis indicates they were certainly susceptible to various forms of trouble. However, I suggest these deployments provided several learnings for the provision of adolescent sexual health, but that this may require rearticulating the constructs of “discourse of desire” developed in the US (Fine, 1988) and “discourse of erotics” in New Zealand (Allen, 2004) to be applicable to a UK context.

Finally, I pose a challenge of feasibility for digital interventions around sexual health. As I shall discuss in my next chapter, the ease of integration into a specific context can speak to the ultimate success of an intervention. While it would of course be (very) possible to make a digital version of ‘Cards Against Virginité’, it is important to note the affordances of this as a non-digital game. While the youth service did indicate potential digital applications for the notion of ‘filling in the blanks’, the ‘literate’ use of social media was a way of making identity for young people. The discursive status of digital technology in sexual health has implications far beyond risk and prevention.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

In this final chapter, I consider contributions and implications across my thesis. I summarise my findings overall, before discussing contributions in three areas: methodologically, conceptually, and for policy and practice. My methodological contributions focus on the distinctive role of workshops in generating interactional data, my conceptual contributions consider how young people positioned themselves as sexual agents, and my policy and practice contributions consider how such a positioning can be acknowledged in the provision of sexual health education. Throughout all of these, I indicate the value of acknowledging the discursive role of digital technology in young people's talk. Finally, I locate my findings in a programme of future research.

6.1 Summary of Thesis

My thesis has explored how young people attending youth services in the north east of England constructed a sexual identity through design methods and their talk around digital technology, using their group interactions to frame the analysis. Through this, I consider the implications of these constructions for designing digital technologies around sex education and sexual health. Chapter 2 situates Design Workshops within the wider landscape of Design Methods, and details how I adopted the method with the youth service. I also introduce my analytic approach of Thematic Discourse Analysis, as informed by discursive psychology, and discuss how this was employed in relation to multi-modal data.

A key contribution of Chapter 2 is how my use of discursive psychology illustrated some of the interactional tensions between youth workers and young people in one of the main youth centres where I conducted fieldwork. Through illustrating the power that a youth leader had within this setting, I showed how perspectives and reported questions from young people were readily undermined in this setting, and that this undermining provided a locally defined definition of 'sexual health'. While this was problematic, in recognising that knowledges acquired through qualitative enquiry are contextual, I suggest that this analysis provided invaluable, and transferable, insight in how I engaged with the youth centres from that point forward, particularly in how young people responded to this positioning. This underpinned my approach in 'Cards Against Virginity', discussed in Chapter 5.

These tensions also brought to the fore my positionality as a researcher within these settings. Specifically, I was situated, through discourse and practice, as a 'young person' in

these interactions. Through this, I was able to reflect upon my frustration at having been 'given' this identity, and seeing my own perspectives and authority undermined through conducting my fieldwork. I therefore felt able to identify as an 'insider' in this research, suggesting this enabled me to 'go beyond' institutional definitions of sexual health with my participants. Further, outing myself as a gay man, and talking about my own relationships, meant that LGBT matters were clearly put 'on the agenda' in these engagements. In (discursively) examining the talk of these young people, rather than (just) that of the 'oppressors', this approach responds to concerns that discursive psychology can undermine talk of oppressed groups (Clarke, 2000).

Chapter 3 focused on constructions of the body. In responding to concerns that constructionist research negates the body in favour of language and discourse (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999), I consider the socio-cultural meanings that were made about and around the body. I argue that my design method of *group* 'body-mapping', on the unusual medium of inflatable dolls, provided a departure from similar methods which emphasise experiential accounts. I suggest that this culturally-loaded medium allowed me to examine cultural representations of the sexual body in addition to personal narratives, allowing me to analyse the relationship young people had with socio-cultural scripts of sex and sexuality. In examining the ways traditionalistic scripts of sex, sexuality and appearance were reproduced through my design activities, my analysis also showed how self-authentication, individuality and rebellion were pertinent justifications, specifically for body modification practices, but also for more mundane beauty practices. This played a key role in young people defining mature (visual) gendered and sexual identities.

The notion of maturity was pertinent across my data, underpinning the first of my themes in Chapter 4 which discusses young people's sexual cultures. In this chapter, I consider specifically how young people used talk *about* their use of digital technologies to construct a sexual identity. The old technologies of yester-year positioned young people's former sexual selves, and the 'inappropriate' technological behaviours of 'others', as immature. The collective definition(s) of 'appropriate' technology use, to ascertain a 'mature' sexual identity was, however, more complicated. Oftentimes a mature sexual self was disassociated with technology, specifically social media use. Participants were able to demonstrate (some) awareness of phenomena such as pornography, masturbation, or 'direct' sexual activity, but admitting engagement with such practices was shown to be

problematic – these reports of practice were often ‘in the abstract’ or unsaid. These practices were also fragile to the jury and verdict of young people as ‘judges of sexuality’, who produced tight boundaries in which legitimate teen sexuality could operate within. These boundaries were subject to change, particularly when teenagers reach ‘a certain age’, although when this happened remained unclear. While participants exercised judgement around (some of) the ‘bad outer limits’ of sexuality (Rubin, 1984), they also exercised enquiry around (other) non-mainstream sexual practices, with use of digital technology identified as key in young people’s enquiries around sex acts such as masturbation and LGBT topics. Overall, I suggest that my interactional analysis provided evidence that in this (local) context, peer-to-peer interactions offered considerably more productive exchanges than those with youth workers.

This is also reflected upon in my final data chapter, where I focus upon sexual health and sex education. Here, adult-directed guidance was typically disregarded by participants, particularly in interventions by parents. Interventions from all adult agents were identified as being in some way problematic, although when incorporated in everyday mundane conversations they appeared to show more promise. In reports of information-seeking behaviour, use of digital technology was identified as having an important role, although was also problematic, drawing on the notion of a culturally isolated teen being left to ‘self-discover’. When designing devices to help with sexual health, my participants often rehearsed these as traditionalistic scripts, albeit with a permission to be ‘silly’ (Blythe et al. 2016), perhaps afforded through the medium of Lego bricks.

I reflect on this alongside earlier observations of the ‘mature sexual adult’ and self-authentication in the data surrounding the interventions (locally) deployed in response to these engagements. In my brief discussion of ‘Talk About Sex’, I demonstrated how, although there were some productive exchanges, the game also went to undermine the ‘mature sexual adult’. I reflect that the very notion of putting an application on a young person’s phone was problematic, particularly in the light of ‘immature’ uses of digital technology which participants discussed previously. I responded to this through a non-digital game, ‘Cards Against Virginity’, which sought to affirm the ‘mature sexual adult’ through enabling cultural meanings around implicit gameplay rules, and allowing participants to exercise positionality as both judges and enquirers of sexuality. Moreover, in my (limited) evaluation sessions hierarchy between youth worker and young person

appeared to be diminished. Such conclusions are necessarily cautious, and I also discuss how this game also fostered problematic discussion. Nevertheless, I suggest reflexive iteration produced considerable advance in the designs presented to participants.

6.2 Reflexivity

Before going on to outline my contributions across, I would like to provide a more reflexive account of my thesis. Here I address three main overlapping issues: the choice of using discursive psychology, what this brought to my analysis and some potential limitations; the issue of neoliberalism and the extent to which how I may have contributed to this discourse; and how my reliance on pre-existing theory might be seen as an example of ‘confirmation bias’. I now discuss each of these in turn.

6.2.1 Discursive Psychology

The choice to analyse my data through discursive psychology was driven by my training in and resistance to traditional ‘cognitive’ models of psychology. As discussed previously, discursive psychology examines the rhetorical function of ‘psychological’ concepts such as ‘memory’ (e.g. the ‘nostalgia’ of participants towards the technologies of yesteryear), and accountability (e.g. how participants judged others’ sexuality). The position is firmly relativist, in that it asserts knowledge is produced (and becomes ratified as ‘truth’) in certain social situations.

The choice to adopt this method was informed by my critical stance towards psychology. Like many undergraduates, I was trained in traditional models of cognition, such as ‘attitudes’ and executive function, positioning ‘psychology’ as something that happens within one’s head. When I was introduced to critical and qualitative methods, I was quickly drawn to methods of discourse analysis, and throughout my PhD have further developed a ‘radical critical theory’ position. There are, however, clearly limitations to taking such an approach.

In viewing discourse as something to be unpacked and deconstructed, discursive psychology arguably takes a reductive approach, reducing participant accounts down to the discursive patterns they are using, rather than acknowledging that the words are spoken by real young people, with real lives and experiences. Discursive psychology does not seek to unpack individuals ‘lived experiences’, and as such was not a focus of my analysis. However, this

means that there were aspects of my data where ‘giving voice’ to my participants may have been beneficial, but were overlooked.

This could be seen as an example of confirmation bias. My focus on ‘discourse’ means I often relied on existing work and theoretical orientations in order to make sense of the ‘discourses’ I saw present in participants’ accounts. Discursive psychology could be seen to ‘seize upon’ particular discursive strategies when we see them occur. I have been trained in identifying ‘discursive devices’ (see Chapter 2), and when I find one in the data (e.g. an ‘Extreme Case Formulation’) I often get excited as I see this as an opportunity for analysis. However, this analytic eye means that I am attuned to certain aspects of the data at the sacrifice of others. For example, the ‘double hermeneutic’ in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith and Shinebourne, 2012), i.e. the ‘making sense’ of participants’ experiences, is not particularly evident in my analysis. This is something I am becoming more aware of as a qualitative researcher and I am beginning to adopt different epistemologies to suit new research questions, such as a research project I am about to embark on looking at the qualitative dimensions of immersion in virtual reality, where I will be taking an experiential (critical realist) perspective. This argument also extends to my use of theory and pre-existing work. While ultimately I feel that relating my analysis to pre-existing work *somewhat* strengthens the claims I make around the data, it may also be seen as an example of confirmation bias.

It is worth noting, however, that discursive psychology itself claims a certain reflexive position. The shift to consider the discursive function of psychological concepts can be related to the sociology of scientific knowledge and a resistance to positivism. Potter (2010) claims that psychologists have not addressed practices in how they are orientated to action, and that critical discursive psychology is inherently engaged with how psychological concepts are put ‘into action’ through discourse. Moreover, discursive psychology is often concerned with political and ethical matters such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism and nationalism (see: Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007), and I would like to suggest my thesis seeks to achieve similar goals. Despite this, I take the risk of ‘overinterpreting’ data as a serious potential limitation of my analysis, and I would like to think a ‘future me’ might be less inclined to seize upon discourse with quite the voracity seen in the current work.

6.2.2 Neoliberalism

In the introduction, I focused on Bay-Cheng's (2015) definition of neoliberalism, whereby young people are given an imperative of *personal* agency when it comes to gender and sexuality. However, my own interpretation of the data might be seen as also contributing to this discourse. Through my analysis I assert young people as 'autonomous sexual beings', emphasising agency within this space. Although this is a 'discourse' I have identified in participants' talk (see section above), this does not mean it is a 'get out of jail free card' for me. My western 'millennial' upbringing means I favour ideas of personal agency, which might have been more rigorously examined from a different perspective. It is worth noting therefore that I could be seen to perpetuate and celebrate personal agency (Bay-Cheng, 2015), and that my recommendations to acknowledge this are inevitably in dialogue with aspects of the neoliberal position.

6.3 Key Contributions of the Thesis

I now identify the contributions of my thesis as a whole. The first are methodological, where I argue the role of workshops in producing 'interactive' data that can be analysed discursively. The second are conceptual, setting out how my analysis fed into understandings of young people's sexual identities. The final contributions are for policy and practice, setting out how my findings can be brought forward into an applied sex education and sexual health agenda.

6.3.1 Methodological Contributions: Design Workshops as Interactive Data

My thesis responds to calls for more engaged understandings of design workshops (Rosner et al. 2016), in analysing design workshop data interactionally. I analysed my data using discursive thematic analysis, drawing on the "radically emic" (Potter, 2003) approach of discursive psychology. This, to my knowledge, has not been attempted with the Design Workshop method previously. This means a focus on identifying the local discourses which *produce* opinions, attitudes and cognition, rather than these as entities sitting behind, and to be uncovered through, interactions (Potter, 2000). This epistemological position challenges individualistic models of the user/participant, instead drawing on models of the self as both situational (Hollander, 2004) and interactional (Kitzinger, 2006; Potter, 2006). This distinction and approach contribute to HCI work concerned with examining the social processes of design workshops. When used as a research instrument (see Chapter 2), analyses of design workshops are usually preoccupied with uncovering "the concerns,

attitudes and priorities of the participants” (Rosner et al, 2016). Discursive psychology indicates a shift in focus, towards how discourse is employed to produce these (concerns, attitudes and priorities) as local systems of meaning-making (see Chapter 2). I argue that such a social constructionist approach, rather than a participatory approach often favoured in research using Design Workshops (see: Sanders, 2002; Steen and Manschot, 2011; Tomitsch et al. 2018), enabled rather different insights around this data. For instance, in Chapter 2, I looked at the minutia of how youth worker Joel interacted in these sessions, which showed how power is exercised in these settings, seriously undermining the participation of young people.

Researchers using discursive psychology for analysis tend to favour data that is more ‘naturalistic’ (Wiggins and Potter, 2008), such as dinner table discussions (Wiggins, 2014), and in psychology would tend to favour focus groups over interviews due to them replicating everyday social interactions (Wellings, Branigan and Mitchell, 2000). Through my analysis, I have shown how design workshops have similar interactional qualities. Much of my analysis has featured everyday interactions which illuminate the social dynamics of the youth groups I engaged with, for example the power dynamics between youth workers and young people discussed in Chapter 2. I have argued that a great deal of meaningful analysis can be achieved through examining mundane interactions, see for example the insights gained through analysing Kyle’s offer of pens in Chapter 2.

It has been argued that focus groups are potentially complex social situations (Hollander, 2004), with participants interacting with each other to ask questions, challenge, disagree and agree. I suggest that design workshops share many of these qualities, resulting in data which is possibly even more ‘naturalistic’ than focus groups. In my research, these workshops mirrored youth group settings through the nature of collaborative tasks. The use of group activities, also seen in focus group research (Colucci, 2007), is put to the fore in workshops. My thesis has shown how these activities can be productive forms of enquiry with young people, particularly in relation to sex and sexuality, where these ‘naturalistic’ discussions encouraged often explicit and uncensored discussions around sexuality.

Some researchers have argued that ‘naturalistic’ data is under-utilised if the researcher does not consider the interactional, contextual, group dynamics of the data (Farnsworth and Boon, 2010; Hollander, 2004; Kitzinger 1994). Typically, focus group data does not analyse interactional elements in depth (Webb and Kevern, 2001; Wilkinson, 1998), and I

suggest this criticism to be even more relevant for research using design workshops. I have found very few studies to consider the interactional elements of design workshops, with only a minority of studies providing analysis around these interactional features (e.g.: Blythe et al. 2016; Le Dantec, & Fox, 2015; Rosner et al. 2016).

Therefore, my thesis calls on researchers to view design workshops seriously as a form of interactional data. As such, established arguments around the exploitation of interaction in focus group research; maximising interaction between participants, using group work to highlight participants' shared culture, and the importance of disagreement as well as agreement (see: Kitzinger, 1994), are all highly relevant to research utilising workshops. In my thesis fieldwork, this meant that the role of the workshop facilitator was often minimised, with these group activities frequently facilitating self-initiated group interactions. These interactions often resulted in disagreement between participants, which became meaningful facets of the data to analyse, particularly in how this served as a device for positioning young people as sexual agents. These interactions became the bedrock for my analysis.

As discussed in Chapter 2, discursive psychology views discourses distinctly, often as *interpretative repertoires* (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) or *discursive resources* (Wiggins & Potter, 2010). In viewing design workshop data interactively, I suggest we can identify participants' talk about technology also as a discursive resource, in that these accounts are put together to create a version of reality. This perspective has implications for how HCI considers accounts of technology use. Rather than reflecting an account of what 'actually happened', we can analyse talk about technology for what these discourses achieve. While it has been suggested that discursive psychology has limited value for applied research (Potter, 1996), I suggest this perspective can bring insight to applied work in HCI, and in my work, specifically around how digital technology intercepts with young people's sexual and gendered identities.

6.3.2 Conceptual Contributions: Young People's Gendered and Sexual Identities

Looking at the discursive function of talk around digital technology also gives insight around how young people negotiate a gendered and sexual identity. In Chapter 4, I identified three subject positions for how young people situated themselves in relation to sexuality, and used talk about their use of digital technology differently in articulating these positions. Participants used the notion of nostalgia to look back on the way they used to interact with

technology, while displaying familiarity and criticality with internet pornography to assert themselves as 'mature sexual adults.' A familiarity around technology was also used in 'the enquirers of sexuality', but in this theme achieved something different, exercising curiosity around certain aspects of the 'outer limits' of sexuality (Rubin, 1984). Rubin's 'inner charmed circle', and 'bad outer limits' were also relevant in 'the judges of sexuality', where the subject of these discourses shifted, assessing other young people's uses of technology in articulating good and bad sex and sexual conduct.

Therefore, my thesis contributes to research arguing the centrality of digital technology in young people navigating their sexuality (e.g. Livingstone, 2016), specifically as agentic users. My analysis in Chapter 4 around young people's talk about technology mirrors Buckingham and Bragg's (2003, 2004) position that young people can be "literate and cultural consumers" of sexualised media. However, while Allen (2007) argues young men used engagement with pornography to assert their sexual identity, my analysis (of mostly young women) found a slightly more subtle 'accustomed yet critical' (see Chapter 4) positioning of the medium.

This framing contributes to youth-centred research which positions young people as 'resourceful participants' (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009), highlighting the salience of independence, individuality and autonomy. However, my research also indicates how these categories and framings are problematic. This was perhaps most starkly illustrated in Chapter 3, where I argue this framing is neoliberal, in that it is underpinned by an assumption that women must invest labour into their bodies in order to maintain their femininity (Black and Sharma, 2001; Fahs and Delgado, 2011). I specifically highlight here how these discourses were present in young teenage girls, and argue that the 'beauty myth' (Wolf, 1990) was pertinent for these young people. I point out that technological culture trends were also drawn on as discursive resources, such as the 'scouse brow' popularised in recent online make-up tutorials (Garcia-Rapp, 2016).

Moreover, my analysis contributes to discursive work on appearance practices (e.g. Terry et al. 2017; Li and Braun, 2016), in looking at how these were made to be legitimate/illegitimate to my participants through talk. My participants' talk about body modification practices framed these decisions as control and autonomy, reflecting neoliberal ideals discussed earlier. This mirrors work with body art communities (Ferreira 2014; Riley and Cahill 2005; Sullivan 2001) but, importantly, these arguments were made

speculatively. The young women in my research, on the whole, did not have piercings or tattoos, but the (neoliberal) discourses underpinning their legitimacy were still pertinent.

The 'blow-up body-mapping' method, discussed in Chapter 3, was notable in how the young people produced sexualised discourses around the characterisation of female sexuality. This extends upon experiential work in this area (e.g. Fahs, 2011; 2012), focusing on socio-cultural scripts drawn upon by participants. My analysis in Chapter 3 focused on representations of appearance norms, body hair, how conformity and non-conformity were managed conversationally. Through this analysis, I build on scholarly work around identity and appearance (see: Rumsey and Harcourt, 2012), observing how cultural ideals of appearance were reproduced through the talk of young women in my research.

My analysis in Chapter 3 also has implications for research on LGBTQ youth. While research has highlighted the purposes of LGBTQ 'looks' for subverting assumptions and being recognised by others (Clarke and Spence, 2012; Clarke and Turner, 2007), here I found that the (mostly) heterosexual participants, on the whole, denied visual norms for LGBT people. This was starkly illustrated visually in Esther's 'gender fluid' doll as an absence of identity. This speaks to Clarke's (2016, 2019) finding that university students deny overt signifiers of homosexuality, thereby instilling a culture of heteronormativity.

Likewise, bounded notions of heteronormativity prevailed in Chapter 4, where I discussed the position of young people as 'judges of sexuality'. Here, I argue Rubin's (1984) 'bad outer limits' of sexuality was pertinent to my participants, where areas of sexuality outside the 'inner charmed circle' were often branded taboo. However, the other side of this coin was 'the enquirers of sexuality', where young people explored different facets of sexuality, often outside of a heteronormative framing, including BDSM culture, sexual violence and group sex. These topics are outside the usual scope of institutionalised discussions of sex education and sexual health, yet were clearly topics young people in my research were willing to explore.

The three positions discussed in Chapter 4, 'mature sexual adults', 'judges of sexuality' and 'enquirers of sexuality', therefore, contribute to knowledge into young people's sexual cultures (e.g. Allen, 2006, 2009; Taylor 2010; Straksrud and Livingstone, 2009), proposing distinctive ways in which young people occupy a sexual agency. However, I also suggest

these have applied implications, and now consider how these apply to the provision of sexuality and sexual health education.

6.3.3 Policy & Practice Contributions: Sexuality and Sexual Health Education

In the introduction, I detail the changing statutory requirements around the provision of sex education in schools, and suggest a role for HCI in contributing to these debates. In Chapter 2, I show how adult-led models of sexual health and sex education can inform and legitimise informational and didactic agendas. However, my data chapters suggest young people's agency as sexual beings, in turn, challenging these top-down models. The role of digital technology, then, clearly goes far beyond risks and dangers, with my findings suggesting that talk about technology can achieve a myriad of different purposes. We can use this way of thinking to draw out implications about how technology can be used for sexual health and sex education.

In Chapter 5, I found that the game 'Talk about Sex' was unsuccessful specifically with older groups of young people. In examining participants' talk about why this was the case, the game appeared to delegitimise young people's authority as 'mature sexual adults'. This had serious implications for how young people played the game, in fact one of the few ways they were able to assert a mature sexual identity through play of this game was through resisting tasks that were presented to them. Here, a discursive approach gave light to a nuanced aspect of technology use, which intercepted with notions of identity, an insight which may not have been considered if a different method of analysis had been employed.

In light of this struggle, my analyses in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 provided stimulus to consider more productive lines of inquiry. In 'Cards Against Virginity', the premise of the game was built around forming a judgement, akin to my theme 'Judges of Sexuality'. I suggest that, as a premise that resonated with how young people articulated their sexual identity, this was a more successful 'intervention'. As Digital Civics research "shift from building a thing and making it usable to questioning whether to build the thing at all" (Le Dantec & Fox, 2015: p. 1357), it is interesting to note here that in my fieldwork, a non-digital intervention had more success than a digital one. Technology was still present in the scenarios, particularly ones suggested by young people (e.g. "*Tindr* is good for ____"), yet here the work was *about* technology, rather than *of* technology (Andersen et al. 2018).

The shift to consider the discursive implications of technology use has implications for how we view the interventionist role of digital technology. For me, my findings echoed those of Harcourt et al. (2016) supporting shared decision-making interventions for women who undergo mastectomy and are offered reconstructive surgery. They detail that, while their digital interventions had reasonable degrees of success, by far the most beneficial was a non-digital intervention completed between health professionals and patients. Key to this was the simplicity of the intervention, as a way of structuring a conversation, and the scalability, as sheets could simply be run through the photocopier. This resulted in an intervention that the researchers could not stop healthcare professionals using (for the purposes of a trial) – it had become integrated into the service.

In a similar way, in my research, youth groups PRONG and Know-it have reported to continue using the premise of ‘Cards Against VirginitY’ in their own youth work practice. Both have reported playing the game as part of their youth group programme, and Know-it have incorporated the concept into their social media platforms, asking young people to ‘fill in the blanks’ and ‘complete hashtags’ by commenting on social media statuses. As Digital Civics considers how it may influence the way public services are delivered (Olivier and Wright, 2015), I suggest we must consider the potentially unexpected ways these services adopt concepts and ideas that come out of our research. This should include the methods that we adopt, and potentially non-digital approaches that may be more appropriate for the context at hand. This could mean we need to broaden our remit of technology as HCI researchers to consider applications of more mundane technological practices such as photocopying, automated printing services (such as moo.com) and local services’ use of social media.

As I discussed in the introduction and in Chapter 5, critical research into sex education has long proposed advocating a “discourse of desire” (initially in the US, see: Fine and McClelland, 2006) or a “discourse of erotics” (initially in New Zealand, see: Allen, 2005) into sexual health and sex education rhetoric. This was first written about in 1988 (Fine, 1988) but is considered to be “still missing” from contemporary sex education discourse (Fine and McClelland, 2006; Monemurro, 2015). The notion that pleasure and desire has been missing from discourses of sexuality has since been applied to many areas of sexuality research, including a number of studies around techno-sexuality such as the moral panic around sexting (Hanisoff, 2015), representations of sexuality in mainstream cultures (Evans & Riley,

2015; Gill & Orgad, 2018). While the concept of a “discourse of desire” has been configured for a range of different cultures (Allen, 2005; Le Grice & Braun, 2018), this has arguably been less successfully applied in UK contexts (Hirst, 2004), with young people often exercising a moral conservatism around matters of sexual pleasure (see also Chapter 4). My thesis contributes to this critical perspective, suggesting how a “discourse of desire” might be productively reimagined in critical sexuality studies.

As a critical psychologist working in human sexuality, I am familiar with and sympathetic to arguments that sexual health should also incorporate matters of pleasure and desire. However, as I discussed in Chapter 4, this was not a perspective evident in my data. Whilst young people readily identified the faults in their sex education at school, within the setting of my fieldwork the devices that young people designed typically went to support a traditional model of sex education and sexual health, that of “plumbing and prevention” (Lenskyj, 1990). This was perhaps not surprising since, as detailed in Chapter 2, traditional, top-down and adult-led models of sexual health were privileged over and above the perspectives of young people. The setting of these youth groups, therefore, provided strict boundaries for what constitutes young people’s sexual health.

This presents a challenge in looking at strategies for employing a permissive (Hollway, 1984), rather than a restrictive, model of sex education and sexual health – that is allowing for freedom of expression and exploration in our model of child sexuality. Throughout my fieldwork I found that young people were often willing to engage in ‘deviant’ topics around sex and sexuality, making a compelling case for a permissive approach to sex education and sexual health.

How, then, might we articulate a model of sex education and sexual health that goes beyond the “essentialist, hydraulic model” of “male hegemony and heteronormativity” (Myerson, 2007: 95)? Especially when the “discourse of desire” (Fine, 1988) is “still missing” (Fine and McClelland, 2006) all these years later? From the local context of my data, young people in the northeast of England, I would like to propose a reticulation of a “discourse of desire” to “fostering filth”.

As discussed in Chapter 5, young people’s notions of requiring censorship within the context of the youth groups were common, such as Maisie saying “I’ve got such a dirty mind I’m trying to really censor it”. Through this, the youth group is constructed as a place where a certain set of behaviours, and indeed censorship, is appropriate. Digital spaces, such as

Facebook, as well as non-digital spaces, such as the common room, were presented in the data as places only allowing for tightly bounded conditions of (hetero)sexuality, as discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, I suggest that the youth group, the sexual health service and even the sex education lesson could productively seek to challenge this censorship. I suggest that the premise of ‘Cards against Virginity’ meant that youth workers directly challenged this. At PRONG, youth worker Abigail comments on being “good at this game” as a challenge to young people: “I’m sure youse [are] all, filthy”, and at Know-it youth worker Verity comments Maisie should not be censoring herself: “go for it Maisie”.

I suggest that this notion of “filth” could be productively used to challenge the implicit censorship present in these sex education settings. Considering the local context of my data, this may be a recommendation particularly to the UK - the idea of “filth” is a distinctly ‘British’ concept, epitomised in Irvine Welsh’s novel of the same name (Welsh, 1998) and has associations with departing from orderly, civilised society (Ktirj, 1997). During the gameplay of ‘Cards Against Virginity’, this notion was referred to by youth workers both implicitly (by Verity) and explicitly (by Abigail), and encouraging explicit responses meant topics outside the “inner charmed circle” of sexuality, into the “bad outer limits” of sexuality (Rubin, 1984) were explored. During ‘Cards Against Virginity’, BDSM practices, masturbation and gay sex were all brought into the room as topics for debate and discussion.

I see ‘Fostering Filth’ as a provocation for how we might tackle the matters of sex education more head-on in sex education settings. However, this is not intended as a solution to ‘fix’ sex education, and inevitably there may be issues with introducing such an idea into an institutional framework. To these ends, I will now attempt to shape my considerations into some more actionable and practical principles for policy.

6.3.4 Principles for Policy

Based on my overall contributions, I would like to put forward three principles for policy as sex education as relationships and sex education becomes a statutory requirement in English schools:

1) Recognise the constructions of digital technology

My analysis has shown that the construction of ‘digital technology’ holds a multitude of different purposes. In recognising the role of digital technology, practitioners must not see technology as a singular (or binary) entity, either as ‘corrupting’ young people or providing a solution to sex education. Rather, digital technology holds a complicated, and at times

contradictory, role in establishing young people's sexual and gendered identity. It is important to recognise how these understandings are being formed. For instance, my analysis has shown how young people expressed a mundane ambivalence toward pornography, recognising it as something to navigate in negotiating their gendered and sexual identity. These technologies must not be ignored or demonised, rather young people should be acknowledged as agents who will be required to navigate this landscape. Moreover, understandings of digital technology are being formed by young people alongside establishing these identities. 'Lay' understandings of technology, which may not be correct, such as any digital image being 'out there forever', should be avoided. Practitioners should engage with technology seriously, avoid 'alarmist' thinking about technology, and recognise navigating a digital landscape is now a necessary (and not optional) factor in young people exploring these gendered and sexual identities.

2) Recognise how young people position themselves as sexual agents

In my research, young people used a variety of tactics to position themselves as autonomous sexual agents. The overriding position presented was one of young people 'knowing what they're doing', and displaying a level of disdain towards those attempting to 'interfere' with them navigating sex, sexuality and gender. This presents a challenge to didactic models of sex education, and would suggest that such approaches are not likely to succeed. Rather, sex education should seek to 'make space' (see Principle 3 below) for young people's sexuality. It needs to acknowledge that young people are already by necessity navigating this, and should seek not to undermine young people's own explorations. For example, the notion of young people 'doing their own research' was pertinent in my data, particularly through the theme 'enquirers of sexuality', where young people exercised a playful curiosity through digital technologies. To these ends, we could imagine a model of sex education which, rather than delivering information to young people 'top down', encourages peer-to-peer sharing of young people's knowledges.

It is important to acknowledge here that my provocation of 'Fostering Filth' could run the risk of undermining the agency of young people, in a similar way to the unsuccessful game 'Talk about Sex' discussed in Chapter 5. If this was delivered in a top-down didactic fashion, we could easily see how this would not resonate with young people. However, if this was built into a model of sex education that encouraged sharing of knowledge, it could

encourage young people to ‘speak up’ around matters of sexuality that might otherwise be filtered.

3) Recognise the need to ‘make space’

To these ends, my thesis emphasises the need to ‘make space’ for talk around sex, sexualities and gender. While the nature of my work with local authorities often assumed the need for some kind of ‘intervention’, I often found that the most productive way of dealing with potentially problematic issues in my fieldwork was allowing space for an argument to play out. This was also addressed in some of the more successful tactics seen from youth workers in my fieldwork. In particular, Abigail often allowed young people to explore issues in their own way, reflecting back (rather than resisting) their talk (see for example her utterance of “Okay, interesting” on p. 138). It is also noteworthy that Abigail was the most successful at incorporating the idea of ‘filth’ within the card game for sexual health. This proposes a simple and easily implemented principle for sex educators, that oftentimes the most productive strategy can be to give space to these topics, and not being hesitant to address these matters head-on.

6.4 Future Directions

I have used discursive analysis to analyse design workshops data, providing an account of how my participants negotiated sexuality and gender through design methods in relation to digital technology. As discussed in this conclusion, this research has made important contributions around the analysis of design workshop data, how accounts of technology may be used discursively to consider the complicated role digital technology plays in the negotiation of gender and sexuality, and the implications this has for producing a framing for childhood sexuality that goes beyond restrictive models of sex education and sexual health. I suggest my thesis proposes future work for the discursive analysis of design workshop data, the discursive status of technology and specifically how this frames the intervention role of digital technology in young people’s sexual health, as well as proposing future directions for enquiries into childhood sexuality.

This research builds on increasing work articulating design workshops as a research method (e.g. Rosner et al. 2016; Anderson and Wakkary, 2019; Blythe et al. 2016; Wilde, Vallgarda and Tomico, 2017), and specifically analysing outcomes as “stories...socially constructed from shared resources” (Blythe et al. 2016: p.4971). While analyses of design workshops are seen to identify individual commitments and desires (e.g. Anderson and Wakkary, 2019), in

articulating design workshops as an interactional form of data, we can analyse this data as the co-construction of meaning (Wilkinson, 1998). In this research, I have proposed the value of discursive psychology in analysing these meaning-making processes. Future research utilising design workshops could use the principles of discursive psychology to analyse processes of local meaning-making, further mobilising social constructionism as a lens for design workshop data. While I am not suggesting HCI and psychology should abandon all other methods and adopt design workshops instead, I am suggesting they provide a productive framing for research looking at the co-construction of meaning.

Different forms of discursive analysis could also extend these enquiries. While my research examined the success of my developed ‘interventions’ in relation to participants’ subject positions, a more micro form of interaction analysis could provide insight into the granularities of these interactions. The use of conversation analysis, for example, could identify elements of talk such as turn taking, sequence organisation, word selection and repair (see: Shegloff, 2007) that made these interactions successful or unsuccessful. Conversation analysis is regularly used in HCI to investigate voice based interactions (e.g. Porcheron et al. 2017; Luger and Sellen, 2016; Reeves et al. 2018), but with the popularisation of Head-up-Gaming - games which promote social interaction and face-to-face communication which this thesis draws upon (Soute, Markopoulos and Magielse, 2010) - the use of conversation analysis could be extended to examine the ‘quality’ of interactions such interventions produce.

When assessing the virtues of specific technologies, researchers could examine the discursive function they achieve in users’ talk. For instance, in my research *MSN* ‘instant messaging’ came with cultural notions of nostalgia, *Facebook* was represented as an inappropriate place to play out romantic relationships, yet *Tumblr* was used discursively as a site of knowledge for ‘enquirers of sexuality’ (see Chapter 4), and in particular, LGBTQ participants. In examining the discursive role technologies hold for users, designers/researchers of technology may anticipate appropriate routes of enquiry and design.

Moreover, subject positions (Davies and Harré, 1990; Korobov, 2010, see also Chapter 2) can also inform the evaluation of a proposed design or system. In this thesis, I analysed evaluation of ‘Talk about Sex’ in light of the ‘Mature Sexual Adult’ subject position, with young people commenting the game was ‘too immature’ for them. In contrast, the more

successful of my interventions, 'Cards against Virginity', purposefully used the subject positions of 'Judges' and 'Enquirers' of sexuality. My thesis demonstrates that subject positions can be used productively as a resource for design in this way, and proposes that the 'Mature Sexual Adult', 'Judges of Sexuality' and 'Enquirers of Sexuality' are helpful subject positions for examining how young people navigate a gendered and sexual identity through digital technology.

Future research may examine how these subject positions relate to specific populations of young people, and how sexual and gendered identities are changing for them. While my participants were predominantly heterosexual, some also identified as bisexual and pansexual, with fewer identifying as lesbian or gay. This is reflective of a huge cultural shift around how young people identify a gendered and a sexual identity, with many more young people identifying as gender fluid or pansexual. While my research did not explicitly set out to explore this, I found that many participants identifying in this way talked about the Internet, specifically *Tumblr* and *YouTube*, as a way of exercising their enquiries of sexuality. An examination of how young queer people utilise digital technologies in relation to contemporary LGBTQ identities would be, therefore, timely and important.

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Appendices

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Young people's perspectives on sexual health:

A Design Workshop study

Participant Information Sheet

Who are the researchers and what is the research about?

Thank you for your interest in this research on young people's perspectives on sexual health. We are Matt Wood and Madeline Balaam, and we are researchers in interaction design (which is basically concerned with designing innovative technology that people will use) at Newcastle University. We are completing research into sexual health in partnership with Newcastle and Northumberland county councils.

Our study aims to explore young people's perspectives on sexuality and sexual health. Although lots of people have many different opinions on what should be involved with sexual health, young people are not often asked about their own perspectives, particularly people under 18. Therefore we are hoping to explore young people's perspectives on sexual health and their thoughts on any services they have used, with the view to building some kind of digital tool or experience around this topic.

What kind of research is being done?

We are going to be running a series of three 'Design Workshops'. Design workshops are group sessions which involve activities around a particular topic or theme – in this instance sexual health. As well as completing the activities, we will also be having discussions around the topics of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. We are really interested in your views and opinions – there are no right or wrong answers! We will also invite you to answer some questions about you, so we can have a sense of who is taking part in the research.

Who can participate?

Anybody between the ages of 13 – 18 living in Northumberland/Newcastle.

When are the workshops scheduled for?

The three workshops will be facilitated by two of our research team and will be held on three days over the February half term [add specific information]. The workshops should run for about 2 hours each.

What will be involved with the workshops?

We are going to be holding three workshops on consecutive days [insert time specific information]. We will start the groups by discussing what will happen in the sessions and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions. We will also collectively agree on some ground rules for the workshops (for example being respectful and considerate). In the first workshop we will start by getting to know each other by making one-another name badges, and we will then do a 'body-mapping' exercise where we will collaboratively draw our ideas of gender, sex and sexuality on some life-sized gender neutral dolls. The second workshop will be based around a timelining activity where we map examples of sexually related material we are exposed to on a day-to-day basis. In the third workshop, we will map sexual health services on a local map and ask your perspectives on any sexual health services you have used. We also hope to involve some kind of design element in the final workshop,

where we get your perspectives on some design ideas that we've had, but will also involve the opportunity to do some designing together.

Throughout all of the workshops we will be having discussions around sexual health. This might include questions asked by us, but may also be based around your own contributions to the discussions. You will also be given the opportunity to ask any further questions you might have at the end of the sessions. The sessions will be both audio and video recorded and any prototypes built in the sessions will be photographed.

How will the data be used?

The workshop audio will be transcribed (typed up), anonymised (anything that could identify you removed) and analysed for the research. The video will only be viewed by the research team so we can observe in more detail what has happened in the workshops. Extracts or observations from the workshops may be written up in publications that arise from the research. The 'questions about you' will be compiled into a table and included in publications that arise from the research. The information you provide will be treated confidentially and personally identifiable details will be stored separately to the data.

What are the benefits of taking part?

You will get the opportunity to participate in a research project on an important social issue. The information you provide will be used to inform design projects in sexual health, and in the later workshops you will have the opportunity to join in with this design process too.

How do I withdraw from the research?

Participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time. We will provide information about the study and give an opportunity for questions at the beginning of the session, and we will check that everyone is okay to continue. Likewise you can exit from the workshops at any time with no explanation, or you can ask us to temporarily stop the workshop if you wish to stop participating. If you retrospectively decide you want to withdraw from the research please contact us via email [<m.wood8@newcastle.ac.uk>](mailto:m.wood8@newcastle.ac.uk) Please note that there are certain points beyond which it will be impossible to withdraw from the research – for instance, once we have published the results of the research. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to contact me within a month of participation if you wish to withdraw your data.

Are there any risks involved?

The 'risks' of participating in design workshops on any topic centre on the potential to become upset by a particular question or topic (e.g., if a question reminds you of a distressing personal experience), or by another participant's comments or behaviour, especially as sex is a potentially 'sensitive' issue.

If you feel distressed as a result of participating in the workshop there will be at least one youth worker present who will be able to provide support. Alternatively you can get in touch with one of the local support services [insert specific information, to be discussed with youth workers on an individual basis].

If you have any questions about this research please feel free to contact either of the researchers:

Matt Wood

Culture Lab, Newcastle University

Email: m.wood8@newcastle.ac.uk

Madeline Balaam

Culture Lab, Newcastle University

Email: madeline.balaam@newcastle.ac.uk

This research project has been approved by the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering Research Ethics Committee, Newcastle University.

Appendix B: Example Consent Form (Phase 1)

Talking about Sex: Exploring Digital Opportunities

Participant Consent Form

I agree to participate in this evaluation being carried out by Newcastle University.

I can confirm that (please initial each box):

(Please Initial)

- I have read and understood the information sheet about taking part ☐
- I understand I can ask questions at any point during the evaluation about any aspect of the research ☐
- I understand that this workshop will be audio recorded. ☐
- I understand that the audio will be transcribed (typed up) and all potentially identifying information will be removed ☐
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be stored in the School of Computing Science at Newcastle University ☐
- I understand that the information collected for this study will be used only for research purposes. ☐
- I understand that my name will not be used on any documents or in any presentations about the research. ☐
- I understand that I can leave the study at any time without needing to say why. ☐

Signature of participant.....

Name (in capitals) Date.....

If you have any questions about this research please feel free to contact either of the researchers:

Matt Wood

Dr. Madeline Balaam

Open Lab, Newcastle University Open Lab, Newcastle University

Email: m.wood@newcastle.ac.uk

Email: madeline.balaam@newcastle.ac.uk

card games & sexual health

Information Sheet

Who are the researchers and what is the research about?

We are Matt Wood & Madeline Balaam - Matt is a PhD Student in Digital Civics & Madeline is a lecturer in Interaction Design. We are both based at Open Lab, Newcastle University. This research is being conducted for Matt's PhD research, and Madeline is the supervisor for this project.

We are interested in the opportunities of digital and non-digital play in facilitating conversations about sex. We are developing a digital card game where participants 'fill in the blanks' on fantasy scenarios based around sex and sexuality. In this research, we are conducting some sessions to design and play this game alongside young people.

What are we asking you to do?

We are asking you to participate in a session where we will play through a version of the card game. Once we have played the game, we will then ask you to complete a short survey asking you about your experience of playing the game. We will then have a small group discussion where we will ask you for your opinions, the ways the finished game should be made, & how it could be further modified and adapted. We will also ask you for some input on content for the game, and some key decisions around the design and potential applications. The session will be audio recorded, & we will also ask to film your hands during the gameplay.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Your participation in this research will directly feed in to our design and development of this game, which may have application to the way sexual health information is delivered. The information you provide will also feed into research studies around the important topic of young people's sexual health. Once completed, we will also offer you a copy of the card game/you will be one of the first to use the digital platform.

card games & sexual health

Consent Form

How will the data be used?

The audio from the session will be transcribed (typed up), anonymised (all potentially identifiable information removed) & analysed for my research. The video data will be stored securely & will only be accessed by the research team. Some still images from the video data may appear in publications, but anything that could potentially identify you will be removed. Short extracts of what you say / comments you make on the survey may also be used in publications under a pseudonym (made up name). We will collate any responses you make during the game / suggestions for tasks which we will analyse & may also be used in publications. They will also feed into the design of the game.

Are there any risks?

The 'risks' of participating in this kind of research are around the potential to become upset by a particular topic, question or answer, or by another player/participant's behaviour. However, these sessions are being conducted in conjunction with [name] who have support services available should you become upset by anything in the session.

How do I withdraw my data?

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time. We will provide information about the study and give an opportunity for questions at the beginning of the session, and we will check that everyone is okay to continue. Likewise you can exit from the workshops at any time with no explanation, or you can ask us to temporarily stop the workshop if you wish to stop participating. If you retrospectively decide you want to withdraw from the research please contact us via email <m.wood8@newcastle.ac.uk> Please note that there are certain points beyond which it will be impossible to withdraw from the research – for instance, once we have published the results of the research. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to contact me within a month of participation if you wish to withdraw.

If you have any questions about this research please contact the researchers Matt Wood (m.wood8@newcastle.ac.uk) or his supervisor Madeline Balaam (madeline.balaam@newcastle.ac.uk) or call 0191 2084636. This research project has been approved by the Science Agriculture & Engineering (SAGE) Ethics Committee.

card games & sexual health

Consent Form

I agree to participate in this study. I can confirm that (please initial):

- I have read the information sheet & have had the opportunity to ask questions ☐
- I understand the interview/focus group will be audio recorded, typed up, and anonymised (i.e. any personally identifying information will be removed) ☐
- I understand my hands during the gameplay will be filmed, & that stills from these images may be used in publications (and anything that could potential identify me will be removed) ☐
- I understand the data collected will be stored at Newcastle University & used only for research purposes ☐
- I understand that the data may be used in publications/reports of the research, but my name will not be used on any documents or in any presentations about the research ☐
- I understand I can withdraw my data (within the limits on the information sheet) from the study without needing to say why ☐

Signature of participant.....

Name (in capitals)..... Date

If you have any further questions about the research please contact the researcher Matt Wood at m.wood8@newcastle.ac.uk, Madeline Balaam at madeline.balaam@newcastle.ac.uk or phone 0191 2084636. Many thanks for your participation

Appendix D: Researcher devised Cards for Cards Against Virginity

For their first time Omar & Hector have _____ sex.

On their first date, Ben & Tom _____.

Sally lies expectantly on the bed for _____.

To prepare for sex, Josh _____ & Tara _____.

Po's Mum is having 'the chat' with her. Suddenly Po brings up _____.

Sara & Bell go outside _____.

Rowan's Mum comes in to find them _____.

Jordan has decided to start wearing _____.

Kai looks in the mirror & sees _____.

Kelly sits her parents down. She needs to tell them _____.

To get in 'the mood' Harry & Ella _____.

Ash reckons the best way to stay safe is _____.

To get condoms Quinn _____.

Kez is shocked to find _____ all over Facebook.

Snapchat made Tess _____.

Proteek is gay because _____.

Neil thinks a tasteful picture is _____.

Roxy does not want to see a picture of _____.

In order to maintain a good sex life, Pete & Sally _____.

To shake things up a bit, Vera _____.

When they reached sixty, Betty & Mike _____.

To show her girlfriend she loved her, Sara _____.

No! Kath does not want to talk to her parents about _____.

Peff thinks the perfect body _____.

Francis thinks the ideal body _____.

To show her partner she's in 'the mood' Alice _____.

Casey thinks it's not OK to _____.

Lennon is at the sexual health clinic for _____.

Sanjay is getting checked out for _____.

Rory regrets _____.

Siyeed only knew about sex when _____ /

When they reached sixteen, Jamie _____.
Reese thinks gay sex _____.
Charlotte & Kaz have been seeing each other for a while _____.
Frank was ready to go 'all the way' when _____.
Hector wasn't happy that _____.
Marley lost it when _____.
Micah thinks real beauty _____.
Blake's act of true love _____.
Alexis was online to _____.
Lucy uses social media to _____.
Billy used their mobile phone to _____.
Shaowen & Rachel 'do it' _____.
Belle doesn't want any more information on _____.
Fay was shocked to find _____.
Milan loves it when _____.
Frankie found out about sex _____.
Jesse's teacher told them _____.
Skyler is bored because _____.
Oakley & Remy found each other _____.

Appendix E: Participant devised Tasks for Talk about Sex

1. Tell the group a once in a lifetime experience you have had
2. Text from another player's phone
3. Explain the C-Card Scheme
4. Wild Card
5. What is the legal age of consent in the UK?
6. Get a friend to guess your crush
7. Name one famous person you would have sex with
8. What are the initials of your partner?
9. Unlocked phone
10. What age did you 'lose it'?
11. Say 'I love you' to a friend <3
12. Tell the group some SPECIFIC life advice
13. Name your favourite/funniest (school) moment
14. Name your crush/boyfriend
15. Two truths and a lie about yourself. Friend guess lie
16. Take off one piece of clothing
17. Share something you regret
18. Tell a story about your first kiss
19. Touch one body part of your choice
20. Let someone send 1 message on their (your) phone
21. Say 'you are beautiful' to someone
22. What is the name of your first crush?
23. Share an embarrassing moment
24. Get a friend to tell your insecurities (or get)
25. Hold hands for a whole circle of questions
26. How many times have you had sex?
27. Have you ever had sex while drunk?
28. Something to do with physical contact
29. Give some life advice to the group
30. When was the last time you kissed a boy/girl?
31. 'Dab' with your friend(s)

32. Do Gangnam style
33. Celebrity crush
34. Who do you hate?
35. Write down all the words for the male/female genitalia
36. Say something positive about another person in the room
37. Do you talk about sex? If so, who with?
38. What services could you access? Online links
39. What do you use the Internet mostly for?
40. Have you ever felt pressure from another person to do something you didn't want to do?
41. Do you feel embarrassed or awkward talking about sex? Why?
42. Consent – peer pressure etc.
43. Do you think you'd be ready/prepared for sex? What makes someone ready?
44. What do you think about the age of consent?
45. Online is the best place to look for advice? E.g. sex, image, etc.
46. What time is the right time to have sex?
47. Beer goggles activity
48. How do you know when you're ready?
49. Peer pressure
50. Specific statements (True/False)
51. Open Discussion

(Unclassified)

52. Give to the married in love now
53. Still tasks for contract you been people
54. To planning on time. Don't be late. Still group on work together

Appendix F: Participant Demographics (Phase 1)

Group	Participant	Age	Gender	Employment	Sexuality	Relationship	Ethnicity	Disability	Class
Brampton	Elsie	16	F	Student	Heterosexual	Seeing Someone	White	No	
Brampton	Gill	15	F	Student	Heterosexual	Seeing Someone	White		
Brampton	Debbie	15	F	Student	Heterosexual	Seeing Someone	White	No	
Know It	Bryony	16	F	Student	Heterosexual	In a relationship	White	No	Working/middle
Know It	Andrew	16	M	Student	Gay	Single	White	No	Lower middle class
Know It	Molly	16	F	Student	Heterosexual	Single	White	No	middle
Know It	Hetty	17	F	Student	Heterosexual	Seeing Someone	White	No	Working
PRONG	Tilly	17	F	Student	Heterosexual	Single	White	No	no class
PRONG	Ursa	16	F	Student	Bisexual	Seeing Someone	White	No	Working
PRONG	Dacey	16	F	Student	Heterosexual	Single	Black/African	No	
PRONG	Julia	19	F	Student	Bisexual	Single	White	No	Working
PRONG	Roxy	17	F	Student	Bisexual	Single	White	Yes	NO class
Know It	Polly	16	F	Student	Pansexual	Single	White	No	Middle
Thornside	Esther	15	F	Student	Bisexual		White	Yes	middle
Thornside	Danika	19	F	Unemployed	Heterosexual	Single	White	No	no class
Thornside	Sarah	15	F	Student	Bisexual	Seeing Someone	White	No	middle

Appendix G: Participant Attendance Breakdown (Phase 1 & 2)

Group	Participant	YP/W	Workshop 1 - Dolls	Workshop 2 - Timelines	Workshop 3 - Lego	Workshop 4 - App Testing	Workshop 5 - App Reviewing	Workshop 6 - Card Game
Brampton	Elsie	YP	√	√	√			
Brampton	Gill	YP	√	√	√			
Brampton	Debbie	YP	√	√	√			
Brampton	Kay	W	√	√	√			
Brampton	Paul	W	√					
	Total		3 YP / 2 W	3 YP / 1 W	3 YP / 1 W			
"Know It"	Bryony	YP	√	√				
"Know It"	Polly	YP	√	√	√	√		√
"Know It"	Andrew	YP	√	√				
"Know It"	Molly	YP	√	√	√	√		
"Know It"	Hetty	YP		√	√			
"Know It"	Freya	YP				√	√	
"Know It"	Hannah	YP				√		
"Know It"	Peter	YP					√	
"Know It"	Cath	YP					√	√
"Know It"	Ava	YP					√	
"Know It"	Dom	W					√	
"Know It"	Verity	W	√	√	√	√	√	√
"Know It"	Chloe	W						√
	Total		4 YP / 1 W	5 YP / 1 W	3 YP / 1 W	4 YP / 1 W	4 YP / 2 W	2 YP / 2 W
PRONG	Roxy	YP	√	√	√			

PRONG	Julia	YP	√	√	√			
PRONG	Dacey	YP	√					
PRONG	Tilly	YP	√					
PRONG	Ursa	YP	√					
PRONG	Jackson	YP				√		
PRONG	Liam	YP				√		
PRONG	Noah	YP				√		
PRONG	Aiden	YP				√		
PRONG	Lucas	YP				√		
PRONG	Caden	YP				√		
PRONG	Grayson	YP				√		
PRONG	Leah	YP					√	
PRONG	Cat	YP					√	√
PRONG	Dale	YP					√	√
PRONG	Paul	YP					√	
PRONG	Kez	YP					√	
PRONG	George	YP					√	
PRONG	Jake	YP					√	
PRONG	Hazel	YP					√	
PRONG	Frank	YP					√	
PRONG	Yan	YP					√	
PRONG	Ethan	YP						√
PRONG	Gareth	YP						√
PRONG	Robert	YP						√
PRONG	Hailey	YP						√
PRONG	Mia	YP						√
PRONG	Abigail	W						

PRONG	Kyle	W					✓	✓
PRONG	Verity	W				✓		
PRONG	Chloe	W				✓		
PRONG	Sibohan	W					✓	✓
PRONG	Ben	W					✓	✓
	Total		5 YP / 1 W	2 YP / 1 W	2 YP / 1 W	7 YP / 2 W	2 F/Gs First: 4 YP / 1 W Second: 6 YP / 3 W	7 YP / 3 W

Thornside	Chrissy		✓	✓	✓			
Thornside	Lory		✓	✓	✓			
Thornside	Rachel		✓	✓	✓			
Thornside	Esther		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Thornside	Sally		✓	✓	✓			
Thornside	Steph		✓	✓	✓			
Thornside	Mary		✓	✓	✓			
Thornside	Danika		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Thornside	Sarah			✓	✓			
Thornside	Alfie					✓		
Thornside	Caro					✓		
Thornside	Grace					✓		
Thornside	Dana					✓		
Thornside	Aaron		✓					
Thornside	Brian		✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Total		8 YP / 2 W	9 YP / 1 W	9 YP / 1 W	6 YP / 1 W		

The sisters are doing it for themselves: DIY Sexual Health

WE ARE BEING JUDGED AND INTERROGATED (but we're careful?)

Possibly some of these understandings leading to third wave feminism

Drugs being a part of young people's sexual cultures

Matt: Do drugs help?

Julia: Yeah 'cos there's a song like "I got high".

Roxy: "I got high!"

Julia: An' he didn't clean his room an' he, he got with this woman, an' like there was blood like an' then he stole her, 'cos there's a music video to it.

Matt: ((laughs))

Roxy: You can tell what she does with her spare time don't ya!

Matt: (laughs)

Julia: It wasn't actually, it wasn't actually allowed to be in this film, like in this country, because the song was about drugs an' what, or something.

Roxy: Most of the Little Wayne songs are all about drugs.

Julia: It was, but it wasn't with me it was with someone else (.) you know I'm gonna look it up on my phone.

Notions of brainwashed children

Julia: Probably teaching, like, here, like, in this school not to do it, but they have like different years as well, they'll probably like teach it in year on- like, children who are six year old an' brainwash them.

Matt: Yeah.

Julia: Like I don't think it's (.) when you were a child you get pushed into everything an' you've gotta know everything, like sexual education.

Pressures from everywhere

Julia: Probably, no I think if they're from a religion and their parents were quite strict about it, but then they'll be people nagging them on an' stuff, I think friends would go, would come into it, an' then like 'you should get with them' an' that an' trying to make things worse for them.

Matt: Mmm, mmm.

Navigating social world, parents on Facebook?

Julia: I just went to a new (unclear) block with my parents, an' the family.

Roxy: I'd never block me mum, she'd think I'm hiding something.

Julia: I would in so many words, yeah.

Matt: So is there any, is there any dodgy stuff that goes on on *Facebook*?

Julia: Yes, probably some people do block their parents, or have two different accounts one where they can go on it and one where they can't and do anything about it, and it's just like a few friends an' that.

Matt: Mmm.

A space to be 'stupid'. To 'experiment'

Julia: Probably not, no:: like I don't know people who've said they're in like, they're sixteen or something and they're engaged.

Matt: Mmm.

Julia: An' then they fall out, like-

Abigail: Sometimes they just do it with their friends to be-

Matt: Yeah.

Abigail: A bit stupid, y'know what I mean like-

Julia: Yeah.

Abigail: -or

Exercising young people's sexual identities

Julia: Or like their boyfriend's an' that, like they do that, or girlfriend and boyfriend do it, it's like why, it's just weird, maybe when you're at college or something but -

Matt: Mmmm.

Julia: - at high school it's a bit weird.

Matt: Yeah.

Julia: I don't get it.

Rights of knowing as a friend

Roxy: Aye, I put a picture of me and my boyfriend on *Facebook* once-

Matt: Mmm.

Julia: An' then they found out they proper bullied yer, I think it's that as well bullying, I don't bully, (you can do that) if you want, I don't bully yer.

Roxy: Sharon does!

Julia: How does Sharon know? How do I not know?

Roxy: 'Cos she was my cousin.

Julia: Ri:ght, and I'm your friend.

Roxy: Yeah.

Appendix I: Theme Summary

Sexual Encounters

Young people had a range of ways of positioning themselves throughout the workshops. Youth leaders positioned them as “bitches” who “can be nasty”, which young people positioned themselves against “we haven’t fell out in a while”, asserting their maturity “you and me haven’t fell out in a while”. Young people also positioned other young people as “drama queens”, when they stated “I’m walking away from these crazy people”, but also “divas”, who maintained an element of resilience when they felt victimised “he’s always kickin’ off about something” / “he’s not upset”.

Porn consumption had a range of nuance and potentially conflicting meanings. Porn consumptions in (mature) sexual relationships were labelled as lighthearted “Like my ex-boyfriend, like, we did watch it once, not like to get ideas for, but literally like, to laugh at it, kind of thing”. However, there is a sense of undermining pornography, which happened often between young people. For boys, porn consumption was seen as legitimate “oh yeah, so you’ve watched porn, obviously, yeah, let’s continue our normal conversation” whereas for girls the concept was repeatedly questioned “why is she watching porn?”.

A gendered dimension of this was identified by participants “that common thing that, boys have a sex drive and girls don’t”. However, this was often identified as something people did “for the status”: “I think a lot of the boys in year seven would like, find it, once, and then just tell everyone that they’d watched it, and they probably wouldn’t like”. Here, porn consumption was labelled as a “social thing”, more so than something young people actually engaged with. The idea of a “rite of passage” was common amongst participants, in this case identified to teenage boys as “watching porn and get a girlfriend”.

Young people expressed a sense of being ‘worn down’ by pornography, at first horrific and terrifying “OH::: MY GOD!”, and then “a few years later, I saw it again and I was like “oh” ((laugh)) “oh” ((laugh))... It’s not, not horrific”. Young people differentiated between “stuff on TV” and “porny porn”.

Sex was seen as something that simply ‘can’t be avoided’, “with *Facebook*, it makes, stuff that could be classed as pornography a lot more prominent”. Porn consumption was constructed as incidental, accidental and often unwanted.

“Sometimes I’ll just scroll along mine and just see, pictures of people having sex or, and I don’t-“, “well it’s everywhere, if you type the name it’s gunna pop up.”

“Walkin’ in, while someone else in class was watchin’ it.”

“There was this link right, and I just clicked on it an’ I was, like, let’s just go through *Facebook*, and there was a link, so I clicked on it, and then it was, like, on the corner it had like porn and stuff and I was like (yuck).”

“Rachel: That’s what I hate about *Primewire*, there’s always like some sort of animation porn on the side (Steph: yeah) An’ I had to like block it out.”

For these young people, pornography was constructed as a mundane part of their lives, that they had developed techniques for avoiding (“I had to like block it out”).

We saw evidence of boys asserting a sexual identity in the only workshop done with six boys from Middle Eastern families: “that was the first anal I got in my life.”