Queering the Art Classroom: An ethnographically informed study on an intervention in a UK GCSE art and design classroom.

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2021
Abstract

Since 2003 successive British governments have taken steps to develop legislation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning / queer and those who are gender/sexuality non-conforming more generally (LGBTQ+). In doing so, they have foregrounded the need for educational institutions to respond proactively to this legislation. There is evidence to suggest that homophobia is prominent in UK schools, yet measures to address the issue have largely rested on schools and LGBTQ+ charities, reducing discussions of homosexuality to anti-bullying discourses and introducing curriculum modifications that are overwhelmingly homonormative. The limitations of these current approaches ignore the societal and institutional power structures – generally referred to as heteronormativity - that help to produce homophobia. Drawing on aspects of new materialist and queer theoretical perspectives, this thesis presents the findings of a research project that focused on developing an intervention at GCSE level, exploring genders and sexualities in the art curriculum. The research project was conducted with a year 10 GCSE art and design class in a secondary school in North London and ran from 2017 to 2018. Through the application of a pedagogy rooted in aspects of queer theory, the study not only explores the possibilities of disrupting heteronormativity, but also school art orthodoxies and didactic learning by investigating student and the teacher responses to the intervention. As such, the study is an exploration of an attempt at moving beyond the homonormative inclusion of LGBTQ+ content, towards a deeper exploration of gender and sexuality within the curriculum cultivated through making in the art classroom. The findings suggest that students and the classroom teacher were able to come to new realisations regarding themselves, gender and sexuality and their art practice/teaching practice. Therefore, the findings propose new avenues for pedagogy, with regards to art practice in schools and explorations of gender and sexuality in schools.
Impact statement

The impacts of the intervention and research can be felt throughout the data presented in this thesis and beyond. As I mention in chapter 1, outside of academia, the ideas explored in the intervention, were taken to four different schools and investigated by different students and teachers at GCSE. From there, I acquired Arts Council England funding, held three exhibitions in the National Trust and invited the general public, art teachers, students and local artists, to all explore the themes presented in this thesis (please visit queeringtheartclassroom.com). The three exhibitions hosted over one hundred members of the public and the three teacher workshops accompanying the exhibitions, had twenty teachers in each workshop. I have also been asked by the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Kettle’s Yard Gallery in Cambridge to do workshops concerning how we might queer the art classroom with their collections for their catchment schools. However, the workshops have currently been on hold due to Covid-19.

Inside academia, I believe my contribution is towards art education, providing insights to educational practitioners by imagining new pedagogical inquiry for the art classroom whilst acknowledging the restraints of school life. Specifically, my contribution suggests that the sheer making process of art, could provide a different dialogue, a non-linguistic interchange, to explore subjects such as gender and sexuality in the classroom. For example, the study proposes that the art making process can engender different ways of meaning making and communicating for students and teachers, than the current approaches to these subjects in schools. With regards to theory, I have also sought to bridge the divide between queer theory and new materialism to work towards a notion of queer outside of human centred conceptualisations. Moreover, with new Department for Education (DfE) policy regarding sex and relationship education, which is due to be taught in schools in summer 2021, my study supports this new change in policy. The study highlights different ways that schools could
explore gender and sexuality outside of current essentialist portrayals of identity, especially with regards to LGBTQ+ people. For example, the study provides practical examples for how teachers/schools, may investigate these subjects and imagines possible future sites for learning. As we have seen from the recent protests outside a school in Birmingham in 2019 (discussed below), regarding the teaching of LGBTQ+ resources to students, educational work which acknowledges or explores difference is still very much needed and under continued threat. Therefore, I believe the impact and relevance of my project is at the forefront of contemporary education and thought.
Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis would have not been possible without many people in my life. First and foremost, I would like to thank the year 10 students at Brill school and class teacher, Ms. Gibbins who made this research possible. I also wish to thank the parents who showed continued support during the research process and the exhibitions.

My sincerest and deepest thanks are for primary supervisor, Professor John Gray. He has shown much enthusiasm and a continued belief in my work which has truly kept me going. Encouraging phone calls, quick responses to my issues/worries and detailed feedback, were always much appreciated. It has been a privilege to work with him.

An extended thanks, to my second supervisor, Dr Claire Robins, who has developed and challenged my art knowledge throughout the four years. Thank you so much for all your help, I really have appreciated it.

And finally, to my family, friends and girlfriend, who have all listened attentively for over four years now, as I have complained, worried, wept and been excited about the writing/research process.
Declarations

I hereby declare that all work presented in this thesis is my own. I have indicated using citations and references of the sources I have used from other scholars. Word count, inclusive of front matter, references and appendices: 79792
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Chapter 1
Beginnings

1.0 Introduction

I began thinking of exploring gender and sexuality in the art classroom with secondary school students during my PGCE course at Cambridge University UK in 2013. It was there I was asked by my second training school at the time, to share my artwork with the students as part of introducing myself as the new art teacher for the term. Initially, I was apprehensive, as my artwork tends to range from, what some might consider as tame abstract oil paintings (see Figure 1.0) to more explicit lesbian/gay sexual images and content (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3).

Figure 1.0: Oil Paintings 2019 Tabitha Millett

My apprehension surfaced because I had understood, through my own schooling experience and PGCE training thus far, that schools were and still remained overwhelmingly
heteronormative\textsuperscript{1}. I will unpack the term heteronormative/heteronormativity in greater depth in chapters 2 and 3, however for now, heteronormativity is commonly described as the social phenomenon that acts within the organisational structures of institutions, like schools, to reinforce the notion that heterosexuality is natural/normal and anything outside of that understanding is abnormal/abject (Butler, 1990; Rubin 1993; DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a).

People who are deemed as ‘abnormal’ emerging from heterosexual cultures, are often met with hatred and fear, namely homophobia, as negative attitudes and prejudices are often engendered through everyday practices (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a). For example, in schools, uniform acts as a visible marker of gendered difference, married female teachers lose their maiden names and representations/explorations of gender non-conforming identities in the curriculum can be rare - all contributing to the reinforcement and omnipresence of heterosexual everyday/traditional gender roles.

Although social progress and legislation in Britain has been apparent particularly since 2003, which saw the repeal of the Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988\textsuperscript{2}, the impacts of Section 28 were still felt by me (at the time I was asked to present my artwork in 2013) and still arguably experienced today (Lee, 2019). For instance, many teachers are unsure how to broach homosexual/gender nonconforming topics in the classroom and as a result tend to not mention at all (Epstein et al., 2003; DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Rudoe, 2014). The most recent Stonewall Teacher Report 2014 stated that over half of primary school teachers and a third of secondary school teachers do not address sexual orientation in the curriculum (Guasp, 2014).

\textsuperscript{1} The term heteronormative/heteronormativity was developed by queer theorists Michael Warner (1993) and Gayle Rubin (1993). Heteronormativity is the hegemonic social system that constructs heterosexuality as natural and superior to other sexualities, such as homosexuality (Robinson, 2016). It is the assumed alignment of biological sex with gender and sexuality. For example, it is the belief that people naturally fall into two gendered categories, man and woman, and have innate characteristics and roles in life. Anything outside of the alignment can be perceived as abnormal.

\textsuperscript{2} Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, prohibited the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality as an acceptable family relationship in schools.
The reluctance to embrace non-normative\(^3\) gender/sexuality identities in schools, often referred to as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer and those who are gender/sexuality non-conforming more generally (LGBTQ+)\(^4\), is also supported by the positioning of childhood as a period of innocence and naivety (Ferfolia, 2014). For example, LGBTQ+ identities are often discursively associated with sex and therefore deemed a dangerous knowledge that children need protection from (Edelman 2004; DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Ferfolia, 2014).

The growing research interest reporting homophobia in UK schools since the overturn of Section 28 and lack of acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ identities/gender and sexuality in schools, has spurred educational institutions to respond proactively regarding LGBTQ+ students (Bradlow et al. 2017; Department for Education, 2019; Ofsted, 2020). This response can be seen from the new guidance given to sex and relationship education, where it is now mandatory for all UK schools to teach students about LGBTQ+ people (Department for Education, 2019). In addition, schools have actively sought outside charities to help with LGBTQ+ anti-bullying campaigns, such as Stonewall and Educate to Celebrate. I will unpack the measures schools have taken to explore LGBTQ+ or gender and sexuality more fully in the next chapter, however, for now I want to discuss the predicament I found myself in as a trainee art teacher who was positioned to share artworks referencing lesbian/gay content.

\(^{3}\) I apply non normative here to describe a social behaviour/action/identity that is not of standard practice. For example, in terms of gender expression, women sitting with their legs open to appear more masculine. Therefore, failing outside of the gender binary.

\(^{4}\) I include the LGBTQ+ acronym in the document due to much of UK policy and research doing so. However, I do recognise that it is problematic combining complex issues and research so. However, I do recognise that it is problematic combining complex issues and fluid gender and sexual identities into fixed groupings.
I knew through sharing and discussing my artwork with the students, I would ‘out’ myself as a ‘lesbian’. By way of background, this thesis draws on aspects of queer theory, which I will explore in greater detail in chapter 3, and thus recognises the complexity and problematic positioning of the identity label ‘lesbian’. This is because, some aspects of queer theory can often function as a tool to analyse and trouble the construction of identities placing identities as always in a state of becoming, not a static entity which the identity label ‘lesbian’ suggests (Butler, 1990). With this being said, from a queer theoretical perspective, the story I am telling about myself or the self-knowledge I am drawing on must be seen as unstable, questionable and unfolding, and that therefore, I cannot say that I know myself fully or the matter/subjects I interact with, as my subjectivity is also in a state of becoming and full of contradictions (Butler, 2005). Thus, my reflective story on my initial teaching experiences can also be questioned, as it suggests a pre-existing subject extracting objectively static and pre-existing representations of the world. Equally, problematic is the straightforward discourse of being ‘in or out of the closet’, as this not only underpins the premise that identity is static but infers the process of coming out is a onetime event- highlighting perhaps, what Judith Butler (1993) calls ‘the
necessary error of identity’ (p.174), as whilst I may out myself as a ‘lesbian’ (or be read as a ‘lesbian’) to communicate and live in the world, I do not believe myself to be such a stable entity. Nevertheless, Naomi Rudoe (2014) argues ‘the process of coming out may be differently negotiated by one person in different contexts’ (p.69) and suggests that some people are read as gay even when it is not stated or are only ‘out’ to certain people at school and not others. Indeed, research conducted in the UK indicates the ongoing strategies of identity management LGBTQ+ teachers in schools adopt and the complexities they face (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009; DePalma and Jennett, 2010; Ferfoljia, 2014; Lightfoot, 2020). Yet within these studies it has been indicated that lesbian/gay teachers do appear to have some degree of agency, not through ‘coming out’ per se, but through rewriting curriculum materials, challenging gender stereotyping (Rudoe, 2014) and endorsing the ‘teacher as professional’ identity (Ferfoljia, 2014). In other words, although there is a lack of exploration of sexual diversity in UK schools which can make it complicated for LGBTQ+ teachers, Tania Ferfoljia (2014) in her research suggests that LGBTQ+ teachers should not be positioned as victims, but instead viewed as subjects who strategically reposition themselves within institutional neoliberal discourses, therefore viewing being ‘out’ as having no relevance to their work or main client base - students/parents. I will unpack neoliberalism and its encroachment on UK schools more fully in the next chapter, however for now, neoliberalism in schools is usually described as responding or assimilating to market ethos via the production of school league tables and assessment driven targets which consequently engenders discourses of accountability and performance management for teachers (Adam, 2013). Here within the neoliberal school, teachers are responsible for both their pedagogical performance as well as their professional identity (Ferfoljia, 2014). Therein, when discussing neoliberalism throughout the thesis, I am not responding to specific Department of Education (DfE) documents that adopt neoliberal discourses and rationales for subjects in the curriculum (Spruce, 2013) (notably art and design.
do not have such a document, the subject only has the national curriculum). I am simply making a more general point regarding the current UK educational climate, which has been described as characterised by neoliberal values and practices (Furlong, 2000 et al.; Perryman et al. 2018).

It is important to note, that teachers were professionalised before the neoliberal era in schools, however, the point here is that, under neoliberalism that professionalism has been reconfigured that may benefit LGBTQ+ teachers. From her study, Ferfoljia (2014) argues LGBTQ+ teachers are not denying their sexuality as such but rather reframing themselves in more advantageous positions. For example, some LGBTQ+ teacher participants perceived ‘coming out’ or any discussion of sexual subjectivity as highly personal and inappropriate as it transgressed the ‘teacher as professional’ boundary. Although it has been argued (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Rudoe, 2014) that heterosexual teachers’ sexuality is ubiquitous in schools supported by normalised everyday practices, many LGBTQ+ teachers often avoid such discussions because of seeming unprofessional. Whilst it is problematic, that neoliberal discourses underpin the silence of some LGBTQ+ teachers, Ferfoljia (2014) argues that the closet can act as a space of resistance, as LGBTQ+ teachers may appear or be considered by staff/students/parents/other teachers as heterosexual, thereby, she suggests, (somewhat implausibly) destabilising ‘the naturalisation of heterosexuality’ (p.33). However, I argue appearing as a heterosexual teacher whilst being LGBTQ+, only reinforces heteronormativity as dominant sex and gender norms still remain unquestioned. Nevertheless, whether the LGBTQ+ teachers decide to stay in or out or negotiate between, it could be argued they have agency choosing, which is more than they had prior to 2003.
Yet, at the time of my PGCE, I had felt inclined to present all my artwork to students and thus ‘come out’. The reasoning behind this decision is I had felt I should act as a ‘role model’. Interestingly, LGBTQ+ teachers are often pressured to ‘come out’ in schools by LGBTQ+ teachers’ networks, activists and charity groups for the mental health and wellbeing of young LGBTQ+ students (Rudoe, 2014). One charity organisation in particular, Stonewall, is particularly guilt and pressure inducing. For example, in their most recent school report 2017, it states:

**Two in five** LGBT pupils (41 per cent) know of at least one member of school staff who is openly LGBT. LGBT pupils are far more likely to know of openly gay or lesbian members of staff than of staff who are openly bi or trans. Just **four per cent** know of an openly bi member of staff, while only **three per cent** know of an openly trans member of staff. LGBT pupils who know of an openly LGBT member of staff are far more likely to say that there is someone they can talk to at school about being LGBT than those who don’t, 58 per cent compared to 40 per cent (Bradlow et al. 2017, p.26).
Whilst the sentiment appears well intentioned, I argue the emphasis still relies on LGBTQ+ teachers/people to do most of the work for equality, instead of troubling⁵ the institutional heteronormative practices in schools (Rudoe, 2014). The role model discourse is also problematic as it can re-essentialise LGBTQ+ people, as LGBTQ+ teachers may feel pressure to be or act a certain way. Certainly, during my experience on the PGCE, I felt a huge pressure to do and say the ‘right’ things after I had ‘come out’, as I had a flurry of students ‘come out’ to me- perhaps indicating the lack of representation/exploration in the curriculum. Interestingly, the response to my presentation was met with mixed reactions, most notably from the local education authority (LEA), who, when on their routine visit, spoke to me. At the time, I had started an extra curricula art club in the hope to explore gender and sexuality more fully with the students. The creation of the club was wholly in response to the students who had ‘come out’ to me asking me to create something. I had told the LEA representative about the art club, as I wanted to show my enthusiasm as a trainee taking part in outside curricula events (also part of the government teaching standards). Although, later that day, I was invited to a meeting with the head of the trainees for the school and my mentor regarding the club’s intentions as the LEA had flagged it up as a potential problem. Here, I was told that two other teaching adults needed to be in the room with me (bearing in mind I had already been doing the club with another teacher) and that a door needed to be wide open at all time. As I have mentioned earlier, this was a clear indication of the public presumption that LGBTQ+/gender sexuality knowledges are unsafe for children to explore and that children are only safe in heterosexual culture. This is further evidenced by the recent protests in Birmingham in 2019,

⁵ ‘Trouble’ or ‘troubling’- Is often a term applied by queer theorists (Butler, 1990; Warner 1993) to disrupt the status quo. For example, to ‘trouble’ gender hegemony within Western society, would be to question or disrupt binary views of sex, sexuality and gender. ‘Troubling’ can also be applied to interrogate other forms of hegemony, i.e., Eurocentrism in the UK school curriculum. In this thesis, I apply the term troubling to act as a method to question, disrupt and puncture dominant forms of legitimacy. This act of troubling can be performed through linguistic and non-linguistic means (art making), as well as being felt affectively by individuals who have been ‘troubled’ by a disruption to their onto-epistemological understandings. These affects can be felt through ‘hot spots’ (please see chapter 4).
where parents removed their children from Parkfield Community School in disagreement with the school teaching lessons on same-sex relationships designed by the ‘No Outsiders’ charity (different people from the No Outsiders project mentioned later). I will expand on childhood innocence later on in the thesis. Nevertheless, the art club in the end, driven by the students’ desires, largely resulted in the creation of LGBTQ+ art display boards, which I distinctly remember feeling apathetic towards at the time. This indifference felt by me was due to the realisation that it did not matter whether I was ‘in’ or ‘out’ as a teacher, or whether there were LGBTQ+ boards - as this did not have a deep impact, if hegemonic sex and gender norms/roles still remained unchallenged.

The nearest examples of research work in schools that challenge sexuality and gender roles, is the ground-breaking Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) funded No Outsiders research project 2006-2009, spearheaded by Renee DePalma (2009a) and Elizabeth Atkinson (2009a), and the current work by Emma Renold (2019) and Jessica Ringrose (2019) on the Jarring project. The No Outsiders project involved twenty-six primary school teachers, 16 primary schools in the UK and 9 university academics and aimed to address heteronormativity through the creation of teaching resources, LGBTQ+ books and workshops. However, there were notable tensions, Deborah Youdell (2011) an academic that took part in the project, highlighted the conflict between the two project aims, which were to engender a discourse for same sex equality, whilst at the same time to question those same sex and gendered identities. For example, some teachers in the project came ‘out’ to their students whilst others focused on troubling gendered categories and norms (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a). In addition, most of the work relied on safe examples of same sex relationships in pictures books, e.g., gay penguin dads or lesbian mums. Here, monogamy and childrearing not only reinforced and idealised heteronormative practices but also legitimised the same sex relationships on display through
the adoption of those practices (Youdell, 2011). In other words, same sex monogamous childrearing relationships presented in the picture books, engenders and strengthens a norm-monogamy/parents that are together, childrearing, middle class, white – as it does not account for the difficulties certain identities face (race, gender, disability, sexuality) and therefore can further marginalise people who do not conform in such normative ways. However, it is important to note, Youdell (2011) argued that at a practical everyday level, initial discussions regarding same sex coupling might be the first step for schools to unpack a more nuanced queer understanding of identity constructions later. I know certainly from my own experience regarding this research project, when I proposed to schools/teachers the queering the art classroom idea, I would use the discourses of same sex equality to make the project seem safer and more legitimate. Again, under this discourse of equality, nothing is unchanged in a significant way, as multiculturalism or diversity is often still embraced, as this approach does little to challenge the remaining school structures like heteronormativity. In what follows in this thesis, I aim to build on the No Outsiders project through focusing too on practical everyday approaches in the curriculum but to only challenge, explore and dismantle identity constructions.

Renold’s and Ringrose’s (2019) ‘Jarring’ project, was commissioned by the Children’s Commissioner Office of England, to research how gender matters to the everyday lives of young people. The project involved 125 children and young people and covered 4 regions across England. The government funded work applied arts-based research methods as part of its methodology alongside queer feminist and new materialist/post human underpinnings, which they refer to as a ‘PhEmaterialist’ methodology (Renold and Ringrose, 2019). I will

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6 I apply normative here to describe a social behaviour/action/identity that is of standard practice. For example, in terms of gender and sexuality, women marrying men and having children.
discuss later in more depth post human and new materialism in chapter 3, however for now, post humanism is usually associated with the decentring of humankind, especially mankind, through troubling the privileging of white/Eurocentric masculinities to prioritise other meaning makings (Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 2008; 2016) and new materialism offers a rethinking of how meaning is always in a state of becoming entangled with human and non-human agents instead of enacted by an individual human subject (Barad, 2007).

The arts-based activity, called ‘gender jars’, invited young people to consider gender roles through drawing, writing and discussing with one another the issues they face on glass jars. In this context, the word ‘jar’ acts as a pun, as gender ‘jars’ or ‘jolts’ due to the irritation of stereotypical gender roles, whilst the activity focused on decorating and writing notes in the glass jars provided. Here, the jarring activity became a collective making process for the young people to articulate their feelings surrounding gender, and more significantly, make meaning through the process and engagement with the a/effects of physical objects and materials. Other work that should not go unmentioned, is Renold’s (2016) AGENDA project and resource pack for schools, which is supported by the Welsh government. The resources pack is designed to help young people think about what matters to them in terms of gender and sexuality through examples of social media campaigns, online petitions and creative and performing arts. Most notable, is the ruler skirt, where young girls, who interacted with the AGENDA project, wrote down their experiences with sexual harassment to bring awareness and make visible their feelings through making a ruler skirt that could be worn (Figure 1.4) – an often contested, policed and sexualised piece of clothing of school uniform.
I argue that the aforementioned Jarring project and AGENDA resource pack begin to capture ways in which art making activities can contribute to pedagogy surrounding gender and sexuality. As I believe the examples do not rest on static notions of gender and sexuality or models of legitimate/homonormative same sex coupling in books, but instead act to disrupt notions of gender and explore identity construction. For example, the exploration provides young people to cultivate their own meanings about gender through art making. As the research I have presented thus far largely rests on projects and art activities that exist outside of the curriculum, I wish to focus my research on creating an art and design project that investigates the constructions of gender and sexuality norms in the curriculum. In other words, this thesis explores a curriculum project I designed, which is a viable and recognised unit of work at GCSE – so we might begin to explore this work at the everyday practical level in school.

When I finished the PGCE and started working in a state school in Camden, London, I continued wanting to explore gender and sexualities work with students in art and design. It

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7 The term to describe homosexuals conforming to heterosexual ideals, ‘homonormativity’, was later coined by Lisa Duggan in 2003.
was through the research I conducted on my subsequent MEd at Cambridge, that I was able to begin visualising what an art curriculum exploring gender and sexuality might involve. During the time of my MEd, I worked with my AS level students, who had said that due to their Bengali and Somali Muslim backgrounds they had little engagement with more diverse ideas of gender and sexuality. The research scheme of work, largely focused on presenting a canon of work considered to be the history of LGBTQ+ people’s artwork and had the students respond to that artwork (Reed, 2011; Lord and Meyer, 2013; Barlow, 2017; Pilcher; 2017). However, I see now, that there were significant problems regarding my scheme of work design. I will address more fully the issues with categorising artwork as ‘LGBTQ+’ in chapter 2, but for now, this canon of ‘LGBTQ+’ artwork often presents very specific representations of LGBTQ+ people. Therefore, when I presented the artwork to my students and labelled it ‘LGBTQ+’ artwork, I in fact essentialised LGBTQ+ people, as I introduced distinct ideas/images of what constitutes LGBTQ+ artwork/ people. Thus, the prescribed artwork examples marginalised those who do not fit in the designated categories in the ‘LGBTQ+’ acronym but are gender diverse in some other way and left my students, who were unfamiliar with LGBTQ+ at the beginning of the project, with very particular ideas of what LGBTQ+ people are and the kind of artworks they produce. Here, I believe, rather stereotypical and static portrayals of LGBTQ+ people were engendered, as the discourse rested on LGBTQ+ recognition only, instead of challenging what sex and gendered norms are. Therefore, it is an aim of this research project, that sex and gendered norms be fully addressed with students, in order to disrupt the generation of essentialist and recognition pedagogies which do not challenge identity norms or acknowledge identity construction, be it heterosexual, homosexual or other identities.

I now see the scheme of work design, in addition to underscoring essentialist discourses, was also quite conventional in its approach to art making. I had focused so much on the curriculum
content that I had forgotten art practice entirely and consequently reproduced certain art classroom orthodoxies. For instance, art in UK schools today, engendered by inherent conservatisms (Burgess, 2003; Robins, 2018) and current neoliberalist ethos (Adams, 2013), tends to be dominated by formalist, skills and representational discourses unscored by outcome orientated pedagogies, by which I mean, pedagogies that centre on the outcome of the artwork instead of the process or art practice (Downing and Watson, 2004; Atkinson, 2011; OCR, 2016a). In chapter 2, I will unpack art education in schools and these terms more fully, however for now, formalism is described as the study of the form and style in an artwork, through line, texture and tone, while representationalism refers to how accurately objects reflect reality (Tate, n.d.-b). It could be argued that skills, formalism and representationalism within a neoliberal outcome focused pedagogy (discussed in chapter 2) all work within a matrix to produce conformity and normativity in the art curriculum. In my experience working in/with London and Cambridge schools, I have seen many art departments focus on outcomes of work through teaching their students skills, using the elements of formalism, to enable students to produce representational artwork or pastiches of artists’ work E.g., ‘How to produce a tonal drawing of a clock’ or ‘how to draw/paint a Picasso Cubist face’. From here students’ work is assessed on outcome by being levelled on how well the artwork replicates the objects or is informed by the artists’ work (against the framework) - which later contributes to assessment results - I will expand on art practice in schools more fully in chapter 2.

Regarding the previous scheme of work design, I now feel that I fell into a replicative, normative and pastiche trap, as my students responded to the ‘LGBTQ+’ artwork through mostly formalist discourses. For example, my students discussed the colours/textures of the work in their ‘critical’ artist studies (a common practice in GCSE and A Level work) and redraw aspects of the artworks, like the figures or background textures/patterns – this not only
bypassed critical engagement with sex and gendered norms, but also avoided deeper explorations of art practice entirely. Therefore, the scheme of work I designed for this thesis (Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work), aims to disrupt not only gendered and sexuality norms but art classroom/secondary school art practice norms. More specifically, it aims to engage students with the role of experimentation or ‘not knowing’ with regards to the art making process (Fortnum, 2013), in a bid to work against controlled outcome driven pedagogies. For example, Rebecca Fortum (2013) states, often unforeseen events occur during the processes of making art, as the serendipitous materials and processes conjure artists to respond in unexpected ways, offering, I argue, an interconnectedness between doing, making and being-which I will further explain in chapter 3 with regards to new materialism. Here, I contend, that the process of making, the unfolding of unexpected material events and processes, is akin to queer theoretical ideas of identity construction being an unstable process and always in a state of becoming. Thus, by focusing on material processes and experimentation with the students, I hope to offer different avenues to explore gender and sexuality outside of essentialist representations, towards a making process that may account for the complexities of gender and sexuality.

1.1 Research setting

This thesis was generated from the time I spent in a coeducational secondary state school in the North London, late September 2017- late March 2018. At the start of 2017, I had left my school in Camden and had been working as an art supply teacher across North London (and sometimes East London). I worked as an art supply alongside my PhD, as working supply has less time demands than a permanent art teaching role. It was through working supply in different schools that I came to decide the type of school I wanted to conduct the research in. Brill school (pseudonym) was a standard co-ed state school, in the fact that, all students came
from different starting points in life, culturally, religiously, racially and socioeconomically. This mixture of identities was different from the schools I had worked in across Camden and East London, as those schools always had one overarching student demographic, either large amounts of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, single sex education, or one predominant ethnicity or religious grouping. However, in Brill school, this was not the case, as the demographic of the student population was so diverse. The ordinariness of the school was also echoed within the ordinariness of the school’s art department and art teachers. There were three female art teachers, from relatively middle-class backgrounds, a common occurrence in employment of art teachers (Dalton, 2001; Department for Education, 2020), and art practice in Brill school largely consisted of drawing and painting. The art rooms were covered in key stage 3 Cubism drawings, cardboard sculpture Pop Art coke cans and key stage 4 self-portraits using the grid method (a method to help draw an ‘accurate’ portrait). It is important to note here that in UK schools, most schemes of work/projects are chosen and sometimes designed by the head of art (HOA) (and were in the case of Brill school), and GCSE units are usually a term and a half long. Whilst specific schemes of work are not prescribed by the National Curriculum, art teachers, in my experience, tend to reproduce the same type of projects nationwide. This reproduction could be attributed to (some) art teachers failing to mourn the past (Atkinson, 2011) –something I will discuss further in chapter 2. In Brill school, key stage 3 schemes of work and GCSE units/schemes ranged from, pastiches of MC Escher, Pop Art, Cubism, lino printing patterns, natural forms and making clay slabs with decorations on, and of course, the Identity Scheme of Work. From my experience, many schools explore the subject of ‘identity’ in the art curriculum (especially at GCSE) and approach the subject very superficially. For example, the focus tends to be on the visible attributes of difference shown, like skin tone or hair colour, through the drawing of a self-portrait, together with mind maps of hobbies and products/clothes the students like. In my experience, the artists drawn on to
support the ‘identity’ projects are usually Chuck Close, Jenny Saville and Frida Kahlo. Whilst Frida Kahlo and Jenny Saville are sometimes drawn on to explore body image and trauma, all three artists above are mostly investigated for their formal elements of portraiture style, leaving deeper investigations of identity unexplored. Thus, I argue the Identity Scheme of Work in schools are largely focused on shallow portrayals of identity, bypassing any discussion of the fluidity of the self, social construction/norms (Addison, 2005) which may be more beneficial, not only to the exploration of art practice in schools, but the students themselves – who are arguable beginning to grow and shape their own. Of course, Brill school, was no exception in its exploration of identity, or in any of the art projects – as all teachers taught the same schemes of work to each year group and all schemes of work went unchanged for many years -only making small changes here and there.

Therefore, due to the small connection I had with Brill school through working there as an art supply teacher, which allowed me to build relationships to propose conducting the research. And due to the diverse student population, which I believe would generate varied/rich responses to my curriculum intervention. And due to the ordinariness of the art department and their exploration of the topic ‘identity’, I felt it a good place to attempt to queer the art classroom. Therein, I sought to explore the subjects of gender and sexuality whilst investigating alternative art practices for a unit of GCSE work. I will further discuss the intervention in chapter 4 research design.

1.2 Research question

In a thesis such as this, where the intention is to trouble and explore, research questions could be seen to be unnecessary, not to mention the incongruence with my conceptualisation of
knowledge as always being in a state of flux. For example, poststructuralist philosophical concepts, on which this study draws (further outlined in chapter 3), are intentionally anti-method and refuse pre-existing methodologies. In other words, many poststructuralist researchers would render methods of data collection, like interviewing or having research questions, as problematic because it suggests an ontology where data is separate to human beings. A large majority of social science research methodologies focus on how to represent authentically people’s experiences/lives, yet representation is not the goal for poststructuralism, which aims to trouble representational logic, and is equally not the goal for new materialism (another philosophical concept I draw upon for this study), which aims to ‘diffract’ not ‘reflect’ human and non-human. That is to say, representational logic suggests a separation of ontology, which proposes there is something out there that can be represented in a different ontological way (St. Pierre, 2021). I will further outline these discussions in chapter 3 and 4. However, given that there were responses to the intervention, the research question might be seen as follows:

Research question:

- In what ways can the practices of the art classroom be queered through an intervention aimed at the queering of gender and sexuality?

Whilst I am aware that the research questions are anthropocentric in nature, which is antithetical to my epistemology outlined in chapter 3, I account for this human centred

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8 Diffraction, when used as a metaphor for research inquiry, focuses on differences and interferences, and the effects of difference, or those practices that make differences and interferences (Barad, 2007).
approach to the questions in my analysis chapters, through acknowledging how all phenomena, human and non-human, are part of the constitution process.

1.3 Queering the art classroom exhibition

This thesis focuses solely on a GCSE curriculum intervention I designed, exploring the subjects of gender and sexuality in a North London school. However, this GCSE unit of work is only part of what happened during my involvement with Brill school. Unfortunately, due to the remits of this thesis/research, I am unable to discuss the entirety of the experience with Brill school, but I felt it important to acknowledge here how this work was received, not only by the students, teachers and parents but general public and other institutions. After the GCSE unit of work - Gender and Sexuality Scheme of work - which I will discuss in the proceeding chapters, the students’ artworks, sketchbooks and information about my PhD research project, were all exhibited publicly in the summer of 2018 at the National Trust’s Sutton House in Hackney London. I had made the connection with Sutton House, through a fellow PhD student, who had been working with Sutton House on ideas of queering museums. Remarkably, Sutton House, occupies a rather queer place amongst the more conventional National Trust properties, (of which there is often untouched displays of aristocratic family wealth), as the Hackney Tudor property had gone through many changes throughout its time, from being a school to a squatter’s haven. Therefore, it seemed fitting to exhibit my PhD queering the art classroom project there, due to the idea of queering a space that is usually associated with in-built conservativisms, due to the association of nobility with National Trust properties.
In the summer exhibition, over a hundred people attended over the two-weeks, with sixty-five attending the opening night (Figure 1.5 and 1.6). As part of the exhibition programme, there was also art teacher workshops, school visits and readings groups, all centred on queering the art classroom and the work I did within the project. Parents, teachers and students also came along with other members of the public. Significantly, some of the students and parents, even teachers, had never been to a National Trust property before. Thus, I argue, the *Queering the Art Classroom Exhibition* provided access to these spaces, often associated with the white heterosexual middle class, by appropriating the space with their bodies, artworks and otherness.
The *Queering the Art Classroom Exhibition* grew beyond my PhD research and Brill school. I worked with other schools in London throughout 2018-19, all exploring ways for queering the art classroom. In the summer of 2019, the *Queering the Art Classroom Exhibition* received Arts Council funding, of which two more exhibitions took place in Sutton House with a larger event programme (Figure 1.7 and 1.8).

![Figure 1.7: Queering the Art Classroom Exhibition of student work](image)

The first exhibition of the summer was with another school I worked with in Essex, and the second exhibition was of local artists’ work responding to the Essex students’ work through
making (Figure 1.9). For example, I paid local artists with the Arts Council funding, to attend the Essex students’ exhibition and respond to their work and themes through making artworks. The artists’ exhibition later that summer, was of the artwork they had made in response to that of the students’ artwork (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9: Artists’ work responding to student work.

In the summer 2019 exhibition programmes, further workshops took place. I invited two more schools to visit the artists’ exhibition and have artist workshops, all exploring the ideas of gender and sexuality (Figure 1.10 and 1.11). The hope was to foster an on-going conversation through making, between each school that worked with me and the group of artists.
Since the summer exhibitions at Sutton House, I have taken the position of PGCE art and design course leader at Cambridge University. I have currently been working with Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge to organise a similar version of the *Queering the Art Classroom Exhibitions* there, as now I have access with the partnership schools from the PGCE at Cambridge. Unfortunately, since COVID-19, a global pandemic, work regarding this nature has been put on hold— but not forgotten.

If I were to reflect on this from queer theoretical perspectives, the *Queering the Art Classroom Exhibitions* could be considered not very queer at all. As one could argue, the recognition of the project by public institutions, like the schools, the National Trust and Arts Council England, all suggest a certain acceptance or legitimisation of queerness, drawing my queer project under question— as queer is often described as at odds with the legitimate and dominant (Halperin, 1995). Still, I would argue, projects such as this are the first steps for schools and other institutions to unpack hetero/normativities in the future.
1.4 The structure of the thesis

As aforementioned, the thesis focuses on a GCSE curriculum intervention I designed, exploring the subjects of gender and sexuality in a North London school. In this introductory chapter, I have provided a background to how the thesis emerged during my prior experiences working in schools as art teacher exploring gender and sexuality in the art classroom. In chapter 2, I will be drawing largely on educational literature from the UK, to provide a background on UK schools and UK art education and how subjects of gender and sexuality are explored by schools. In chapter 3, I will examine the theoretical concepts which I will be engaging with throughout the thesis, ideas of queerness, subjectivity, constitution, agency and human and non-human matter. Chapter 4 discusses my methodological approach, as I will outline the intervention taken and the conceptual understandings of knowledge construction. In chapter 5, I will focus on two students’ making processes during the course of the GCSE project on gender and sexuality. In particular, I focus on their sculptural work created over a 3-month period and what this tells us about the intervention. In chapter 6, I will explore the interviews I conducted.
with the classroom teacher, Ms. Gibbins, over the course of the GCSE project and the impact the intervention had on her. Chapter 7 will centre on whole class responses to the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*. Finally, chapter 8, will draw the thesis to a close, and I will reflect on the intervention and discuss some further considerations for developing art teaching practice in terms of queering the art classroom.
Chapter 2

State of Affairs

2.0 Introduction

A central theme of this thesis locates itself with developing pedagogical approaches that may contribute to new ways of teaching and learning in the art classroom. It is a pedagogy that is concerned with disturbing and moving beyond established ways of teaching and learning, regarding curriculum content and its implementation, to reconfigure students, teachers and non-human matter, and the ways in which they relate in the art classroom. Since Margaret Thatcher’s government in the late 1970s, UK schools have been subject to increased educational reforms and regulations, which has seen the rise of school academisation and strict audit and accountability cultures (Ball, 2013; 2017). I argue, this focus on performance and assessment measures has led art teachers to lean even more towards a standardised and skill focused approach to teaching art and design, aka ‘school art’, already influenced by prior conservatisms since the early 20th Century (Efland, 1976, p.37; Adams, 2013; Biesta, 2017a; Robins, 2018). Moreover, I also contend, increased educational reforms have largely overlooked how schools produce educational inequalities which operate along racial, gender/sexuality and class lines. For example, the subject focus of the intervention, ‘gender and sexuality’, if broached at all in schools today, is often essentialist in its curriculum content and rarely challenges normative systems such as sexism, heteronormativity and homonormativity (Marston, 2015; Millett, 2019). However, even if gender and sexuality is introduced to schools in terms of inclusion/recognition, this exploration can still lead to protests and public uproar, as seen in Birmingham, mentioned in chapter 1. An argument running through this thesis, is that the art making process can afford possibilities to students and
teachers to ‘come into dialogue’ differently with subjects, like gender and sexuality, through its sheer materiality and process nature (Biesta, 2017a, p. 66; Millett, 2019). Therefore, even though there is some movement towards recognition accommodating difference/otherness by some educational charities/schools, I believe this falls short of the more radical approach that I am adopting. For example, I am adopting a pedagogy rooted in queer theory (outlined fully in the next chapter) to challenge normative approaches in school art and school explorations of gender and sexuality, in hope to encourage teachers and students to consider the structures which uphold these. To provide context to later discussions in the thesis, below I present a brief overview of the impacts of neoliberalism on UK education, specifically focusing on pedagogy, assessment and the curriculum. Following this, I outline current approaches to teaching art and design in schools, that I perceive limit the growth of art practice in the art classroom. To end, the next sections will discuss how the subjects of gender and sexuality are broached in schools and how I might begin to explore and implement such subjects in the art and design classroom.

2.1 UK school climate

Before going any further it is necessary to state what I understand this much-used term, ‘neoliberalism’, to mean. Drawing on John Gray, John O’Regan and Catherine Wallace (2018), neoliberalism is often described as the ‘current phase of capitalism’ (p.471), which not only endorses strong free market rights but is also a strong linguistic and cultural phenomenon. Meaning, in addition to neoliberalism being market driven, it also leads to the production of the neoliberal subject, usually characterised as individualist, entrepreneurial and competitive. It is important to draw on these scholars in education to provide a definition for neoliberalism, as they highlight the production of subjects with certain knowledges and dispositions due to
market driven practices in education - and as this study is interested in subject constitution in schools under neoliberalism, it is appropriate to mention it here.

Educational standards and values have become overwhelmingly market driven, due to four decades of consecutive UK governments withdrawing educational responsibilities to private sector organisations and inspection bodies like Ofsted in 1992 (Ball, 2017; Biesta 2010; 2017b, Perryman et al., 2018). The impact of privatisation has meant that schools compete with one another through raising ‘educational standards’ as Ofsted reports and results are published publicly online to entice prospective parents and staff. For example, on the Department for Education website, anyone can ‘check’ the ‘performance’ of any school in the UK by downloading exam results, Ofsted reports and financial information (Department for Education, 2020). However, within this rhetoric of performance, governments and private sector institutions, like Ofsted, engender a discourse that attributes the quality of learning in a school with the attainment and success in exam results - so much so, that Ofsted cannot judge a school as ‘good’ if students are not achieving the required results (Perryman et al., 2018). Consequently, the outcome of these measures, not only creates socioeconomic and racial disparity amongst students, but also produces a model of accepted standards that determine what effective teaching and learning is for schools to deliver (Biesta 2010). For instance, schools modify their behaviour based upon what they think Ofsted will inspect, like focusing on student progress tracking and other exhaustive audit practices to provide Ofsted with ‘evidence’ of successful student learning. An example of these practices can be found in key stage 1-4 assessments, whereby teachers have to make sure that students move up a specified number of ‘levels’ a term/year as evidence of student progression. Yet, anybody who has ever

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9 Year 7 students undertake exams or benchmarking activities to ascertain an initial attainment level in each subject. This information is then combined with their key stage 2 results to created target levels for each key stage.
been a teacher would know, that students do not fit neatly into universal progression grids gradually moving up through age and that levelling systems do not work in all subjects. For instance, in art and design, a student might progress or engage more with a certain art practice like sculpture, due to enjoying 3D work but disengage with 2-D printing in the next term. Or the same student might engage for the majority of year 8 but disengage for year 9, knowing that art is not their chosen subject for GCSE. Or a student might come to new realisations in their art practice yet be unable to move up a target level based on not meeting a specific standard- these examples are true for other subjects as well. Thus, students under this model are not judged on their learning but on how neatly they can fit an assessment criterion or how effectively they can move up target levels. Unfortunately, assessment driven practices do not take into account different ways of learning or progressing as a learner, as learning is turned into quantifiable units to be measured which do not support all students or all curriculum subjects. Increasingly, within this school assessment model, students’ progress is becoming no longer the responsibility of the students, as teachers are held gradually more accountable for student target levels and are subject to business-like appraisals, and annual reviews creating a culture of fear and surveillance. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s (1977) concept of governmentality, discussed further in chapter 3 and 6, Jane Perryman et al. (2018) names surveillance practices like the above, ‘panoptic performativity’, whereby teachers are subjected to constant observation and scrutiny to ensure they meet the government ‘teaching standards’. Under a Foucauldian lens, such conditions can be seen as operations of power, whereby teachers, or teaching subjects in Foucauldian terms, internalise and modify their behaviour to meet the acceptable teaching standards in order to become and be an accepted subject - or one could say, an Ofsted rated ‘good’ teacher. Therefore, not only is competition fostered between schools using exam and assessment result data, competition is engendered amongst teaching staff who are judged on their teaching practice through a prescribed set of standards and exam
results. In my experience, I have known teaching colleagues to move students’ grades up and ‘spoon feed’ students to meet progress/assessment standards, so they can be seen as doing their job successfully. These types of practices engender what Paulo Freire referred to as (1996) ‘banking model’, discussed further in chapter 6, where teachers are seen as depositors of information and students empty vessels to be filled with specific knowledges to then repeat to pass the exams/assessments. This practice is highly problematic, as pedagogy is reduced to prescriptive and recognised bodies of knowledge that determine how well students have learned based on if they can reproduce the established information. Here then, established and traditional curriculum knowledges of teaching and learning, by which I mean, epistemological frameworks that have specific ontologies underpinning what it means to learn certain subjects, lead to orthodoxy (Atkinson, 2011). For example, in art and design, pastiches of artists’ work, learning particular drawing techniques, (tone, line, perspective) or writing biographies of artists in sketchbooks, would be an example of this epistemological orthodoxy. The questions are then, how can teachers and students operate in such restrictive spaces to create more flexible learning opportunities? And how can teachers respond to students that produce work out of this framework of standardised recognition? One of the tensions running through this research intervention is developing a pedagogy that may begin to explore different ways of learning in the art classroom whilst meeting the standards students need to achieve for a GCSE and having the classroom art teacher keep her employment. I will aim to navigate these tensions throughout the thesis, although I am aware that this may prove difficult. As I mention next in chapter 3, projects such as mine or any intervention for that matter, will not change the overarching structure of capitalism/neoliberalism in any significant way or transform education, but by simply stating it here, I hope to highlight the awkwardness and messiness of this work. Although, with this being said, it still does not prevent me from investigating the potential the art classroom has for exploring subjects such as gender and sexuality, and how that exploration
might offer different avenues for pedagogy at an everyday level such as in schools. In the next section, I address the impact of standardisation on the art curriculum as a result of past conservatisms (Robins, 2018) and neoliberal discourse, and discuss current debates within art education in hope to foster a pedagogy that will trouble certain art practices in the classroom.

2.2 School art

The development of accountability measures in schools have meant that the arts in secondary school, by which I mean art and design, design technology, drama, dance and music, have been the hardest hit. In 2019, the Cultural Learning Alliance (2019) revealed a decline in UK students selecting arts-based subjects for GCSE and A Level. For an example, since 2010, art and design A level entries have dropped from 42,577 to 39,219 (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2019). Such a decline has been largely attributed to recent government incentives such as the English Baccalaureate 2010 (EBacc), where schools are encouraged to push their students towards ‘traditionally academic’ subjects like science, maths, technology or engineering (STEM), so the government can calculate an average score to determine if a school is successful based on students’ attainment in the selected subjects (Steers, 2013; Adams, 2013; NSEAD, 2019). The incentive behind the push for such subjects and not others, is arguably to create more graduates for the market economy (Adams, 2013). Although, it is worth mentioning that the arts and culture industry contributes £10.8 billion a year to the UK economy, suggesting a short sightedness in the government’s approach to arts subjects (Art Council England Report, 2019). However, as arts-based subjects are not included in the government’s selection for accountability measures, this has only added to the already precarious and subordinate nature of the arts in the curriculum (Efland, 1990; Eisner, 1998; 2001; Siegesmund, 1998). For example, the National Society for Education of Art and Design
in the UK (NSEAD), created a poster called, ‘Art, Craft and Design is for…’ (seen in Figure 2.0) to help art teachers and other NSEAD union members justify their subject to parents, students and teaching staff.

This insecurity of the arts in the curriculum, has led to what Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) describes as ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumentalist’ justifications - echoed in the poster above. According to Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013), the instrumentalist approach is where the arts are only seen as valuable when supporting other non-arts subjects/areas of learning like engendering social empathy or improving academic achievement or procuring practical skills like dexterity and measurement. And the intrinsic approach, positions the arts as having something inherently special by advocating that the arts can enhance our experiences and
perceptions of the world through sensory means. Yet, it could be argued that this constant
reaffirming of the arts only reveals its insecurity, especially compared to other subjects who do
not need to fight to maintain their positions on the curriculum (Siegesmund, 1998), and
positions the arts as ‘doing something’, even though the arts might not do anything at all. For
instance, Gaztambide-Fernandez, (2013) argues that the majority of arts advocacy and
research demonstrates what the arts can do by detailing the positive effects of the arts on either
academic achievement or making us better human beings. This rhetoric and focus on the effects
of arts could be said to underpin technocratic and normative practices in education, as the arts
are positioned as something that can produce outcomes, whether it be positive or otherwise,
and tends to reinstate social hierarchies through institutions establishing what counts as the
‘arts’ or a successful outcome of an artistic practice. Gaztambide-Fernandez, (2013) states:

In other words, rather than thinking about the arts as doing something to people, we
should think about artistic forms as something people do. This conceptual shift to
cultural practice acknowledges that it is actual people, under real social
circumstances, in particular cultural contexts, and within specific material and
symbolic relations that have experiences involving symbolic materials and forms of
cultural production. From this perspective, the practices and processes associated
with the concept of the arts are nothing more than symbolic or cultural work, and
therefore their importance to education should hinge on their character as cultural
practice and not on their presumed or desired effects (p.226. Italics in original).

However, Gaztambide-Fernandez’s (2013) position is ultimately at odds with the claim I am
making through this thesis, where I am advocating that art’s sheer materiality and process
nature might contribute to different ways of exploring subjects like gender and sexuality in the art classroom. Yet, with this being said, I think the argument is in fact more nuanced and should not be approached as a binary of ‘the arts do something vs the arts do nothing’ or ‘the arts do something vs the arts are something people do’. Explored from the perspective of new materialism, which I will further explain in the next chapter, we cannot divorce the art making process or the materials/art from ourselves. In other words, instead of viewing the dilemma as art is something that happens to people or art is something that people do, I hope to advocate that the art making process is what makes us - as we are not separate from the materials we use. Put simply, we are made through making and making is made through us. Thus, the place for art in the curriculum should not be based on it improving/supporting learning or on arts positive effects as this underpins neoliberal discourses but that it is part of what it means to learn and create ourselves in the process.

Yet, finding room within the secondary art curriculum that may cultivate spaces for the creation of ourselves is hard to find, as inherent conservatisms since the early 20th Century, where mechanical techniques of drawing and craft were favoured, and an overreliance on outcomes centred pedagogy now engendered by neoliberalism, tends to dictate teacher and learner subjectivities (McDonald, 2004; Downing and Watson, 2004; Atkinson, 2011; 2017; Adams, 2013; Addison and Burgess, 2015; Biesta 2017a; 2017b; Robins, 2018; Grant 2019). In my experience and supported by the literature, outcome replication discourses, conservative and skills-based approaches, still dominate the art curriculum today (Burgess, 2003; Adams, 2013; Grant, 2019; Millett, 2019). Many art teachers across the UK believe it necessary to teach skills and techniques to students first, through traditional knowledges like formalism/representationalism and practices like the colour wheel, to provide their students
with tools to enhance self-expression and individualism later (Addison, 2005; Atkinson, 2011; Grant, 2019). For example, Dennis Atkinson (2011) states:

Frequently the emphasis on developing skills and techniques is justified by the claim that such development equips the learner with the necessary tools for self-expression, viewed by many as a key aim for art education. The concept of self-expression is often employed in association with the terms, uniqueness, originality and authenticity and is indicative of what might be termed a modernist discourse of art practice and understanding. The crucial point here is that the discourse of self-expression allied to discourses of technical skill and their associated practices of representation constitute the discursive framing of art practice, art object and artist in much school art education (p.50).

By way of extension, these practices are generally delivered through safe canons of Western art history in projects such a Cubism, Pop Art and Surrealism, (although, it could be argued that some of these canonical genres were far from safe when they first emerged), whereby students create a pastiche of the artist’s work from that period and are graded on how well they can reproduce the style, e.g., ‘my drawing of a coke can in the style of Roy Lichtenstein’ - is a popular favourite I have seen throughout my career. Thus, it could be argued, these once progressive canonical genres are made fairly anodyne through largely focusing on the reproduction of the formal elements of the artworks/genre through an a-political lens.

Although teaching students skills and techniques, or building an awareness of work from professional artists and designers at different periods or locations, is not always directed at self-expression, such discourse does contribute to the epistemology of art education, which can
dictate how art education can be explored - whilst unacknowledging the modern lives of students or more contemporary conceptualisations (Duncum, 2009; Grant, 2019). For example, the concept of the original and innate self-expression has been replaced with Western social theory with more contemporary poststructuralist ideas, concerning the fluidity and instability of the self – which I situate myself within for this thesis (Addison, 2005; Atkinson, 2011; Grant, 2019). In addition, young people in recent years, have been saturated with visual cultures from the internet, mobile phones and media, all defying ideas of origin and authenticity of any visual image/artwork or artist (Duncum, 2009). It seems a shame that art and design education, did not critically engage with visual culture, unlike new subjects that were introduced in the 1980s, such as Media studies, which draw on philosophers Roland Barthes and Charles Peirce to unpack advertisements semiotically (Hendry and Stevenson, 2017). And whilst the philosophers drawn upon in Media studies do not align with the approach I have taken in the intervention, it does suggest that there is a space to reinvest in the art curriculum, to have these conceptual and discursive explorations with students. Furthermore, the notion of skills and techniques, have long been challenged by contemporary art which explores a range of different forms and mediums to breakdown social and Eurocentric/racial hierarchies of form and aesthetics, like participatory/social artwork. Likewise, the linear rhetoric of making that art teachers tend to ascribe to, where learners are told they must learn the skills first in order to move onto making artwork later, seems at odds with contemporary understandings of art practice, where exploring a subject/process requires no such rigid structure. For instance, for this intervention, I wish to avoid this linearity and argue that students can come to such understandings through the making process. Thus, not only are these existing approaches to the art curriculum, discussed above, misaligned and outmoded with contemporary art and thought, they also dictate epistemologically what is means to teach and learn art, engendering a discourse of recognition, by which I mean, where an identity or social practice is familiar and
understood (Foucault, 1977; Atkinson, 2011; 2017; Biesta, 2017a; 2017b). In other words, art teachers identify themselves as art teachers through teaching specific art practices, which become established and recognised as components of what it means to teach and learn art—contributing to the epistemology of art education. This framework of recognition then constructs the parameters of what art education can be, which is later subjected to regulation and surveillance, seen through practices of assessment. Take GCSE art and design, students have to complete a series of units for coursework, usually in the form of projects, like *Natural forms, Surfaces*, followed by, at the end of the two years, a 10-hour exam. The work is then examined using an assessment grid with four assessment objectives, A01 Develop, A02 Refine, A03 Record, A04 present (See Figure: 2.3). A mark is given on each objective then levelled to provide an overall grade. This practice creates a set of specific characteristics which contribute to construct a discourse of accepted, valued and recognised bodies of knowledge that students and teachers have to perform to be recognised as a successful ‘art student’ or ‘art teacher’. Here, art practice is broken down and divided into small objectives, so much so, that students could receive a low grade simply due to not meeting one of the individual objectives even though their overall art practice is worthy of a higher grade. This practice is problematic, not only for the students who have not achieved a higher grade due to not meeting an objective but also for the students who produce artwork outside of established and recognised bodies of knowledge. Ultimately, this framework of recognition leads students to be misrecognised as their art practice is deemed unintelligible. Thus, art practice, teacher and student subjectivities are constructed in accordance with the established forms of recognised knowledges and standardised practices like the GCSE/assessment grids, as teachers and students produce artwork/practice that ultimately falls within the accepted framework to be recognised as art students and art teachers.
Yet with this being said, I argue there is room for movement within some of these standardised practices like GCSE assessment framework, as some of the language is open to interpretation—perhaps giving projects like this research intervention, some space for exploration. In my experience and as seen below in Figure 2.1 of OCR exemplar material for art teachers, assessment objective ‘A03 Record’ is usually interpreted by art teachers/exam boards as having students produce observational drawings using established recognised knowledges such as formalism and representationalism, to meet the assessment criteria’s ‘record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses’ (GCSE Art and Design Grid Edexcel, 2016, p.2).

![AO3: RECORDED IDEAS, OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS](image)

Figure 2:1: OCR Sample taster book (2016a).

And assessment objective ‘A04 Present’, also seen in Figure 2.2 OCR exemplar material, is usually interpreted by teachers/exam boards as having students produce a 10 hour ‘final piece’ which draws together all the previous objectives in a piece of artwork. For example, in Figure 2.2, we can see aspects of the observational work, the clock drawing, from assessment object ‘A03 Record’, in the final piece ‘A04 Present’.
Figure 2:2: OCR Sample taster book (2016).

However, even though the idea of ‘A04 Present’, is problematic, proposing that an outcome is the most important aspect of art making, feeding into technocratic outcome discourses as mentioned earlier by Gaztambide-Fernanadez (2013), the language used to reach the highest grade for A04 is still open to interpretation, see Figure 2.3.
As above, the language on the highest grade of A04 Present:

Exceptional ability to produce a personal and meaningful response. Exceptional ability to realise intentions. Realisations demonstrate exceptional understanding of visual language through application of formal elements (GCSE Art and Design Grid Edexcel, 2016, p.2).

Here, a final outcome of ‘A04 Present’ drawing together the previous objectives in a linear fashion, the student could be awarded on a ‘personal and meaningful response’ regarding their art making process per say not on a final product. Or instead of interpreting the language of ‘A04 Present’ as ‘exceptional understanding of visual language through application of formal elements’ within the parameters of traditional formalism, line, tone, texture, proportion, art teachers could interpret the ‘formal elements’ alternatively by thinking of the texture in the
making processes or the proportion/composition in a participatory work. This is not to say, art teachers are entirely to blame, there are examples of innovative and creative approaches by art teachers to curriculum and assessment across the UK (See, Kirlew, 2011 and Hinchingbrooke school, Cambridge). However, it is important to highlight that although the assessment practices still support school art orthodoxy, there is some room for movement within the structures if we look at different ways of interpreting. Although, with this being said, art teachers would still need the support of their head of department and external examiner as exam exemplar materials are still overwhelmingly prescriptive and tend to dictate what type of work students should produce for each assessment objective and therein how art teachers should deliver the objectives. For example, as seen again in Figure 2.2 above, objectives are tied to one another, e.g., ‘impacts directly on the work produced in response to the requirements of AO2 and AO4’, engendering an almost linear or ‘tick box’ way of working for students and teachers. And also seen from Figure 2.2, the observation for ‘A03 Record’ must be a drawing which has ‘quality/accuracy’, directly supporting traditional knowledges such as formalism and representationalism. Therefore, for art teachers and departments interpreting the GCSE grid differently could come at a cost considering the regulatory models provided by exam boards. Here, questions start to resurface again, do we want a pedagogy that tests learners through how well they can reproduce bodies of recognised knowledges, which are dictated by prescriptive exam exemplar materials and aspects of assessment, or do we want something different - and how can this be explored? (Atkinson, 2011).

The traditional models of the art curriculum have been subject to critical debates for several decades now (Eisner 1972; 2002; Burgess 2003; Downing and Watson, 2004; Hardy, 2006; Atkinson, 2011; 2017; Grant, 2019). Most notably, John Swift and John Steers’ (1999) A Manifesto for Art in Schools in which they proposed a rationale for art education based on
postmodernist principles of plurality, difference and independent thought. Swift and Steers (1999) state:

Through their application in art practice and theory, knowledge and knowing will become understood as a negotiation of ideas which arise from asking pertinent questions, and testing provisional answers rather than seeking predetermined ones. The emphasis is on the learner and learning, negotiating what they learn, learning how to learn, and understanding knowledge as a multiplicity of changing hypotheses or theories which are subject to evidence, proof, argument and embodiment. As such difference becomes a locus for action and discussion at a personal and social level, plurality points to a variety of methods, means, solutions and awareness for any issue, and independent thought develops individuality, the capacity to challenge, and creativity through introspection into the nature of learning and teaching in art. These abilities are as vital for teachers as they are for learners (p.17).

Here, a pedagogy rooted in postmodernist principles could encourage creative, interculturalist and independent approaches to the art classroom that are not predicated on specific outcomes, as learning/knowledge is negotiated between student and teacher engendering an open and more unpredictable pedagogy. Yet, the postmodernist rationale has come under some scrutiny. Whilst agreeing with Swift and Steers (1999) that art education needs to unpack certain Modernist\textsuperscript{10} values, Lesley Burgess and Diane Reay (2006) argue the arts are still historically gendered, raced and classed, and are imbued with the white male gaze, even if the plurality of

\textsuperscript{10} Modernist or Modernism encompasses a movement in culture and society during late 19\textsuperscript{th} to early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century. In the visual arts, artists created work that challenged certain technical norms and produced work to reflect their modern worlds. For example, there was a rejection of certain conservative values, such as representational depictions of subjects which led to an experimentation with abstraction. Modernism had social and political agendas and understood knowledge or reason to be objective or universally true (Tate, n.d.-c).
differences and the breaking down of hierarchies are advocated for. Therein, postmodernism’s preoccupation with deconstruction and plurality becomes a-politicised, as it unacknowledged the lived experiences of marginalised groups within the arts and their contributions outside of the heterosexual white male art history.

In addition, Stuart MacDonald (2016a) has also criticised the lack of a comprehensible philosophy when it comes to deciphering what a postmodernist art curriculum might be. For example, MacDonald (2016a) highlights the postmodernist predicament of promoting highly pluralistic practices, by which I mean, that art could be anything from a painting to a dinner party at home, whilst contending with postmodernism closely resembling a style. As such, MacDonald (2016a) states, ‘one can pick out postmodern objects: a Gehry building, a Schnabel painting, an Arad chair’ (p.48/49). Therein, MacDonald (2016b) contends:

Two substantive issues emerged, it seemed, from observation of the debate about what a postmodern curriculum might be. One was the lack of a coherent philosophy, possibly caused by the promiscuity of the concept. The other was an over-emphasis on the content of any postmodern curriculum and perceived external constraints on art education as opposed to the learning methodologies that might enliven it (p.57).

The difference between curriculum content and learning methodologies is an important distinction to make, as potentially any curriculum content, post/modernist or otherwise, could be legitimised if the pedagogy differs from didactic and prescriptive models and is replaced with more process orientated and child centred pedagogies. Therefore, Swift and Steers’ (1999) manifesto gains some validity here as their postmodernist principles of plurality, difference and independent thought could be applied to any curriculum content, as long as there is
considerable acknowledgment of the contributions of feminist, black and LGBTQ+ artists and their knowledges (and those other who also identify on the margins). Yet applying these approaches, suggested over two decades ago, have still proven practically difficult for art teachers to explore, perhaps signifying there may be deeper reasons for why art teachers resist more progressive models for the art classroom. Thus, rather than positioning art teachers as reluctant prisoners of external bodies of regulation/surveillance, like exam/assessments and Ofsted, Atkinson (2011) has suggested a more nuanced reason for the stagnancy within the art curriculum. Atkinson (2011), drawing on Judith Butler (1997) has proposed that art teachers refuse to mourn the past, as they are ‘passionately attached’ to pedagogical transmission models and established knowledges of a skills-based curriculum from the early 20th Century. This is because, as I mentioned earlier, they are constituted by bodies of recognition, like formalism, to become recognised subjects- art teaching subjects. Yet in order to escape this framework of recognition, where art teachers, students, Ofsted and examining bodies hold such value, it is imperative to develop a pedagogy that ruptures and exposes these structures in place- this is of course difficult, as learning will rest on unprescribed/unpredictable ways of working which may lead to assessments practices, art teachers and students needing to adjust to such change. However, drawing on psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and philosopher Alain Badiou, Atkinson’s (2011; 2017) proposes the above with his ‘pedagogy of the event’ or ‘adventure pedagogy’. From this perspective, learning is described as entering a process of renewal, where the established frameworks/knowledges, or in Lacanian terms, the ‘symbolic order’ is punctured by an ‘event’ (Badiou) which questions and disrupts all previous knowledge/structures embarking on the Lacanian ‘Real’. Lacan’s (1979) ‘Real’ is what occurs when subjects transgress the symbolic order. The symbolic order for Lacan is the structure where frameworks of language, symbols and signifiers are established and recognised
intersubjectively between humans. Drawing on Lacan and Badiou, Atkinson (2011) calls the
process of entering into his *pedagogy of the event*, as ‘real’ learning, he states:

> The notion of real learning as an encounter, as a movement into a new ontological
state is crucial because it involves both a disruption of previous forms of
understanding and action and an affirmation of new ways of thinking and acting.
When learning is viewed as an encounter that precipitates new forms of practice, new
worlds of practice, then new subjectivities have the potential to emerge (p.111).

Here, Atkinson’s (2011) model for real learning transforms pedagogy from states of
recognition, be it formalism/representationalism, to facilitating states of unknowingness,
unpredictability and immanence for those involved. Therefore, Atkinson (2011) advocates for
a pedagogy that, I would say, ‘queers’ prior art practices through exploring difference or effects
of difference, e.g., whether it be a strange drawing that breaks formalist agendas/rules, or a
subject that is considered controversial within that context. Drawing on Badiou, Atkinson
(2011) suggests that subjectivities, in this case learners and teachers, are constituted through
an encounter with ‘truth’. Similarly, to Lacan, ‘truth’ for Badiou, emerges from an event which
is understood as something that punctures all prior forms of knowledge in a given situation.
Badiou’s concept of the event, can lead to ‘truth procedures’ in which subjects emerge. Thus,
the notions of event, truth and truth procedures all interconnect and work to transform or
reconfigure existing knowledges, subjects and situations. An example of this might be, a
teacher who is confronted with student work that is unrecognisable (event), not only within the
examination/assessment frameworks, but their own epistemological understandings of art
(truth) therefore the teacher is constituted differently than before (truth procedure). Therefore,
Atkinson’s (2011) *pedagogy of the event* could be applied to any curriculum content, from
painting to \textit{Pop Art}, as long as the exploration of difference is at the core. Yet, it is important to note, these encounters with difference, where previous forms of knowledge are punctured, to which Atkinson (2011) refers, may need to be seized by those involved. As I unpack in chapter 5, not all puncturing or troubling leads to states of becoming, as in some senses one has to want to respond to the \textit{a/effect} of being troubled- e.g., a teacher might be affected/confused/shocked by a students’ artwork but do nothing more. In other words, whilst I argue in more depth in my theoretical framework chapter 3, that all phenomena affect and are affected in some way, suggesting a constant state of flux, affect and becoming, a human subject may have to respond consciously to an affect and be open to being troubled.

Nevertheless, building on Atkinson (2011), I hope to borrow ideas brought forth by his \textit{pedagogy of the event} - that of puncturing, disruption and unknowingness, to explore the notion of a pedagogy rooted in aspects of queer theory and new materialism. Yet, instead of \textit{only} human subjectivities emerging from a strange localised (truth) event like Atkinson (2011), I wish to seek and \textit{capture} the emergence of human and non-human matter that constitute one another in states of unknowingness - I will expand on this in the next chapter. However, in the next section, I will discuss how gender and sexuality is approached in the UK curriculum, with special attention to LGBTQ+ - as part of the intervention is to investigate non-essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality, in hope to explore practically the ideas discussed by Atkinson (2011) for the art classroom. In other words, I have chosen to explore gender and sexuality as part of the curriculum content, as I wanted to rupture hegemonic structures that reside, not only within the art classroom’s normative practices (formalism, representationalism), but also the structures that permeated throughout UK schools (heteronormativity/ static notions of identity).
2.3 Gender and sexuality in school

For the past 70 years, scholars in education have widely written on the ways schools engender inequalities and social justice issues by researching the variances in academic outcomes and educational experiences of different identity groups often described as, Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME), LGBTQ+ and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), as well as accounting for socioeconomic class and gender (Reay, 2006; DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Gillborn, 2010; Bhopal and Preston, 2012; Ringrose and Renold, 2016). Whilst I will not be unpacking the full discussion here, as I wish to focus on non-essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality for the intervention and therefore will be discussing heteronormativity in UK schools, I do feel it is important to highlight the problem with presenting identity as fixed essentialist categories; as this presentation fails to recognise not only the fluidity of identity, which I will discuss further in the next chapter, but also the other intersections of identity that work across identity axes, e.g. BAME students who are also LGBTQ+, leading to different inequalities/social justice issues which are largely unaddressed when discussing identity so rigidly (Hill-Collins and Bilge, 2016). However, even though I am aware that focusing my intervention solely on gender and sexuality is problematic, as this is only one aspect of identity construction, I do believe that an intervention such as mine may disrupt prevailing heteronormative structures in UK schools as the project is rooted in non-essentialist explorations of gender and sexuality – thus contributing to interrogating the structures that produce identity categories.

Discussed theoretically in the next chapter, heteronormativity is usually described as a Western social norm that is predicated on the belief that sexual and marital relationships are only appropriate between members of the opposite sex and that a person’s biological sex should
equate to certain societal gender roles, e.g., females having sex with males and child rearing (Rubin, 1993). Heteronormativity is argued as a dominant social structure that is performed and practiced throughout society within public institutions, and runs through cultural and political beliefs and in the economy (Rubin, 1993; Warner, 1993). Schools are one institutional site where heteronormativity is practiced, as student identities involving gender and sexuality are routinely negotiated, policed and maintained as part of the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Monk, 2011; Helmer, 2016). In other words, students learn through societal discourses and practices, what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ regarding sexual preference and gender conformity through schools’ organisational structures, such as in gendered uniform, gendered/sexist language, school proms, toilets, sports fields and of course, the formal curriculum (Macintosh, 2007, DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; 2009b; Helmer, 2016).

The privileging of heterosexuality and gender conformity in schools has sought to exclude other students, mainly those who identify as LGBTQ+ and girls, as their identities are not affirmed or recognised, or worse, subject to sexual harassment and bullying (House of Commons Report, 2016; Bradlow et al. 2017). For example, the latest research suggests that homophobia and sexism are very embedded within the UK school system. A recent survey of over 3,713 LGBTQ+ 11-19-year-olds found that forty five percent are bullied for being LGBTQ+ at school (Bradlow et al. 2017). Moreover, research has indicated that LGBTQ+ youth, and youth who are perceived to be LGBTQ+, can develop depression, suicide ideation and self-esteem issues due to the bullying experienced (Guasp, 2014; Metro Youth Chances, 2014; Bradlow et al. 2017). Consequently, the impact of homophobia is said to affect LGBTQ+ youth’s schoolwork, future educational plans and attendance, with forty percent of LGBTQ+ truanting from school (Bradlow et al. 2017). And whilst there is no centralised data collection for sexual harassment and violence of young girls in schools, as under-reporting by schools to
police and other authorities have made it difficult to establish a precise number (House of Commons Report, 2016), data collected by a 2010 YouGov poll of 16-18-year-old found twenty percent experienced unwanted sexual touching at school and seventy one percent said they heard or were called sexual derogatory names such as slag or slut on a daily basis. In 2015 the BBC found that over a three-year period 5,500 sexual offences were recorded in UK schools and a fifth of those offences were peer on peer.

Yet despite these statistics, there has been mounting criticism, especially surrounding the statistical representation and portrayal of LGBTQ+ students as tragic victims (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; 2009b; Monk, 2011; McCormack, 2012; Harris and Farrington, 2014; Formby, 2013; 2015; Marston, 2015). Daniel Monk (2011) argues that homophobic bullying tends to be defined within a broad spectrum of categories, anything from language use, physical harm or simply feeling like an outsider. For example, in Ian Warwick and Peter Aggleton’s (2014) research study, which focused on three secondary schools in south London, they highlighted that students were keen to distinguish the difference between ‘cussing’ and bullying. In other words, the word ‘gay’ can be used by students to describe things that they perceive as ‘rubbish’ or ‘having a joke’ with no intent to be homophobic, yet this could be counted as homophobia by some researchers. Whilst this language still has pejorative connotations and should be tackled, it may suggest a more nuanced approach is needed to understand how students define homophobia (Monk, 2011; McCormack, 2012; Formby, 2015). Eleanor Formby (2015) too has argued that researchers fail to recognise other intersections of identity that shape LGBTQ+ student lives, such as race and class (mentioned earlier) when linking weak academic performance or inconsistent attendance with homophobic bullying. Furthering this, the statistical research also does not account for the LGBTQ+ students who have not experienced homophobia and by doing so constructs a discourse of ‘selective
statistical representation,’ which portrays schools as dangerous places for LGBTQ+ students (Monk, 2011, p.186).

By depicting LGBTQ+ students as inherent victims at imminent risk of being bullied, by charities like Stonewall - ‘over 75,000 young LGBT+ people are bullied at school every year’ - a narrative is put forward, which reinforces their stigmatisation and constructs LGBTQ+ students as the ‘other’ in contrast to their ‘normal’ heterosexual peers (Formby, 2015; Marston, 2015; Stonewall, n.d.). This position further amplifies LGBTQ+ students as a target to be taunted and produces environments where they are fearful of ‘coming out’ or pressured to ‘come out’ (Monk, 2011; Formby, 2015; Marston, 2015). Monk (2011) further argues that dominant discourses surrounding homophobic bullying, which usually consist of child abuse and victimhood, are generated to strategically create an environment where homosexuality in schools can be addressed without associating homosexuals with sex. This conservativeness surrounding homosexuality is most likely due to the legacy of Section 28 of the local government act 1988. It is understandable then, that LGBTQ+ anti-bullying agendas are often connected to suicide/mental illness to reach a wider audience because if schools did not address the cause of LGBTQ+ students’ mental health issues, it could be interpreted as a form of neglect (Monk, 2011). Therefore, LGBTQ+ equality agendas are made plausible in schools through victim discourses. However, desexualising the LGBTQ+ equality agenda in schools, by only focusing on victim narratives, misrecognises teenagers as sexual beings and misses the opportunity to push for LGBTQ+ students to receive the much-needed access to safe sex education, especially around HIV (Monk, 2011). It is hoped with the new changes to sex and relationship education, due to be delivered from summer 2021 onwards, may support much needed conversations centred on LGBTQ+ young people and the sexual health.
The victim narrative also subjects LGBTQ+ students to essentialist discourses, as it does not account for the complexities of identity. For example, LGBTQ+ teacher groups and charities, such as Educate and Celebrate, Stonewall and Schools Out, have all raised awareness in recent years to challenge homophobia in schools via assembly days, teacher training and PSHE resource packages. However, LGBTQ+ identities are often homogenised within these services into uniform identities that are all characterised as experiencing the same risks and acquiring the same needs (Ellis, 2007; Formby, 2015). By essentialising identity in this way, the voices of LGBTQ+ students who are untouched by homophobia are ignored and youth who do not fit neatly within the essentialist categories of ‘L’ ‘G’ ‘B’ ‘T’, such as gender nonconforming youth. Furthermore, people may re-identify as they go through life – i.e., lesbians who now identify as gay trans men. Therefore, this presentation of identity in schools only seeks to reinforce the ‘born this way’ fixed narrative which supports heteronormativity, by viewing LGBTQ+ people as inherently abnormal and heterosexuals as inherently normal. Perhaps, what is needed, as Warwick and Aggleton’s (2014) research study suggests, is for the presentation/discussion of LGBTQ+ identities and the tackling homophobia to be developed from the students’ own sophisticated understandings of sexuality and homophobia - and how it could be addressed. This would indeed promote a more democratic and student led approach, which could adequately respond to students’ needs.

A further limitation of reducing discussions on homosexuality to anti-bullying discourses is the oversimplification of the cause of homophobia. Instead of considering the societal and institutional power structures that (re)produce homophobia, namely heteronormativity, the problem is placed on the individual (LGBTQ+ youth) rather than the institution (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; 2009b; 2010). However, simply incorporating greater visibility of LGBTQ+ people in the curriculum, as previously mentioned, can produce essentialising discourses and
monolithic representations. Current resources given to schools by LGBTQ+ charities, often push positive imagery that represent happy and ‘normal/homonormative’ gay people (Educate and Celebrate, 2020; Schools Out, 2020). The positive imagery usually consists of successful gay celebrities, gender conforming gay athletes and gay parents, like Tom Daley and his husband (Ellis, 2007; DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Educate and Celebrate, n.d.). The recognition discourse is problematic as it does little to disrupt heteronormativity. Instead, it creates an environment where LGBTQ+ students can only be accepted through certain standards and norms, which are largely heteronormative, e.g., gender conforming/monogamy/child-rearing - therein, equating certain norms with success/happiness further supports heteronormativity, as heterosexual norms are viewed as standards to aspire to. This implementation of LGBTQ+ subjects in school silences and excludes LGBTQ+ students who cannot conform, or do not want to conform in such heteronormative ways. Hence, it could be argued that the curriculum needs ‘queering’, which means addressing its inherent normativity and discussing the construction of normativity, in this case with regards to sexual and gendered identities (Macintosh, 2007, DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; 2009b; 2010). I believe, it is not enough to focus on individual cases (‘bully’ vs ‘victim’), or policing language (‘that’s so gay’) as this shuts down any potential discussion schools could have with students regarding heteronormativity/essentialism - whereby heteronormativity continues to be hidden beneath the surface and remains unquestioned (Macintosh, 2007). Therefore, utilising aspects of queer theory in the classroom could begin to disrupt heteronormativity in schools, as having students question how identities are constructed as ‘natural/normal’ could create new perspectives for all students (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a). Instead of a victim narrative, this line of thinking could also be more beneficial for LGBTQ+ students and indeed all young people who may be struggling in schools and give them a greater understanding about themselves. In the next section, I will address the possibilities of how aspects of queer theory
could be applied within the art classroom to interrogate heteronormativity/normativity in schools.

2.4 Gender and sexuality in art

There has been much advocation in Western scholarship for exploring LGBTQ+/non-heterosexuality in art education, through themed artwork and projects, to encourage greater inclusion, visibility and student critical thinking skills (Check, 1992; Dittman and Meecham, 2006; Addison, 2005; 2007; 2012; Stanley, 2007; 2021; Ashburn, 2007; R. Hall, 2007; Walker, 2007; Kuan Chung, 2007; Lampela, 2010; Gubes Vas and Sanders, 2014). In this section, I argue that these strategies can be fruitful for teaching, provided teachers are able to trouble pre-existing student understandings surrounding LGBTQ+ people and explore identity as a fluid socially constructed category. However, I also argue that investigating LGBTQ+ themes/representations in artwork could ultimately be limiting, as portrayals of sexuality and gender that exclusively focus on recognisable LGBTQ+ themes and depictions of same-sex bodies and their sexual acts, can reduce non-normative sexuality/gender to an essentialist caricature, thus misrecognising the complexities of sexuality, desire and gender (Getsy, 2015). Therefore, I also look to non-representational11 sculpture and the materials and processes in the art making process, for alternative avenues, as applying queer readings to these notions, may move beyond the restrictions of bodily representations, towards a more dynamic queer/fluid interpretation of sexuality and gender.

11 I apply the term non-representational here to refer to objects/images/art that do not accurately depict material objects or which seek to represent concrete reality.
Since the early nineteenth century, LGBTQ+ people have fought for identity affirmation through a politics of representation, as they have been traditionally excluded from certain histories, institutions and policies. Stuart Hall (1997) describes representation as a ‘process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture’ involving the ‘use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things’ (p.15). It is understandable then, that a large majority of LGBTQ+ art has consisted of depicting sexuality in figurative representations and explicit iconography of same-sex erotic acts and bodies, surgery scars, AIDS references, vulvas, gender bending and drag queens, to present a unified visible LGBTQ+ identity (Hall, 2014; Getsy, 2015). This canon of artwork, which mainly consists of white Western artists self-identified as LGBTQ+, has been collected in many art anthologies over the years and is considered to be the history of LGBTQ+ people’s artwork (Smyth, 1996; Hammond, 2000; Aldrich, 2010; Reed, 2011; Lord and Meyer, 2013; Barlow, 2017; Pilcher; 2017). The most well-known examples include the artists: Frida Kahlo; Sadie Lee; Harmony Hammond; Robert Mapplethorpe; David Hockney; Derek Jarman, Francis Bacon; Vaginal Davis; Keith Haring; Andy Warhol; Gilbert and George; Catherine Opie; Nan Goldin; Wolfgang Tillmans; Del La Grace Volcano; David Wojnarowicz and many more. However, there are different LGBTQ+ art canons, that take account for the global south, that being the work of Zaneli Muholi, Gabriel Garcia Roman, Rafael Suriani, Christus Nobrega, Fabio Baroli and Antonio Oba. Yet, in light of this grouping above, I do not wish to suggest that all the artists share the same gay essentialist iconography, as this would not acknowledge artists such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Wolfgang Tillmans and Harmony Hammond, who have all explored sexuality and gender/identity outside of the figure, or commonly associated depictions of LGBTQ+, opposing a single fixed identity (Stanley, 2021). Nevertheless, in the

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12 There are self-identified LGBTQ+ artists that do not reference LGBTQ+ themes in their artwork but these artists are rarely acknowledged in LGBTQ+ art books or collections. Similarly, there are also artists that are not self-identified as LGBTQ+ but produce LGBTQ+ themed artwork, like Nan Goldin. These artists have tended to be acknowledged within the group. I will return to this later in the section.
last decade, there has been much attention drawn to the creation of LGBTQ+ art histories, archiving and adopting a revisionist history in many public museums and art gallery collections with a common gay lens - what Nick Stanley (2021) describes as the ‘new gay archaeology’ (p.5). For instance, the Tate Britain in 2019, exhibited the *Queer British Art 1861-1967*, the National Victoria and Albert Museum had a weekend event *Out on Display* in 2014 and National Trust's in 2017 had their *Prejudice and Pride: Exploring LGBTQ history programme* - to name a few. This reclamation of the pink past by public museums and galleries has meant that educational resources concerning LGBTQ+ identities/artworks have expanded and are readily available on their websites or acknowledged during Pride month (February). For example, the University of Exeter in partnerships with the Wellcome collection and Science museum have created educational resources, *LGBT+ Objects*, for young people and teachers, through identifying objects/relics that could be deemed LGBTQ+ from national museums and collections. In the *LGBT+ Objects* resources, each historical object has a targeted age group, key stage 3-5, with questions and exercises the students can do. The exercises are focused on troubling stereotypical gender/sex roles and stereotypes of LGBTQ+ people through students discussing questions in groups. I believe the questions asked in this resource pack, to be an important starting point for the introduction of this work, as troubling pre-existing student understandings surrounding LGBTQ+ people and exploring identity as a socially constructed category is a must for disrupting essentialist discourses. Yet in agreement with Stanley (2021), it can be difficult to understand how students would engage with the museum/gallery resources, if unable to see the artwork or objects first-hand, especially considering the decline in school visits to museums/galleries. Also, to add, the museum/gallery educational resources, like the *LGBT+ objects*, often do not approach how students might respond or explore the work in a practical manner, beyond conversations of stereotypes and affirmation of LGBTQ+ identity. This is where I believe the majority of the educational resources created by national museums
fall short for art and design students/teachers in particular, as an investigation practically or non-linguistically remains unexplored – an avenue I wish to cultivate in this research.

Yet despite the progression of LGBTQ+ educational resources in galleries/museums and reclamation of LGBTQ+ art histories, there still remains, in my experience, an under-acknowledgement of these artists in schools. Of course, some of the male artists mentioned above, have always been acknowledged in the art curriculum due to the academy favouring white male artists (Downing and Watson, 2004; Watts, 2007, Millett, 2019). For example, David Hockney and Keith Haring are still widely drawn upon by art teachers for their aesthetic and technical skills yet rarely explored for their homosexual themes (Dittman and Meecham, 2006). It is thought that the combination of Section 28 of the local government act 1988 and art education’s overreliance on formalist technical agendas, bypassing any investigation of content, may have created the conditions that stifled any exploration of gender and sexuality (especially sexuality) in art education (Addison, 2005; Dittman and Meecham, 2006). This under-acknowledgement has led scholars to call for art education to recognise new changes in policy regarding LGBTQ+ people, i.e., The Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act in 2013 and now the new sex and relationship curriculum, to highlight the central role sexuality plays in the development of all young people’s lives (Epstein at el., 2003; Dittman and Meecham, 2006; Walker, 2007; Addison, 2005; 2007; 2012). Therein, most scholars interested in these topics, agree that schools have a responsibility to deliver a more inclusive curriculum that recognises LGBTQ+ students, as traditionally the curriculum has privileged more dominant groups (Check, 1992; Stanley 2007; Walker, 2007; Lampela, 2010, Dalton, 2001; DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a). As mentioned earlier, LGBTQ+ subjects, if approached at all, are only mentioned in peripheral subjects such as PSHE, tutor group or anti-bullying campaigns (Gubes Vas and Sanders III, 2014). This absence has led scholars to suggest that the art classroom
offers unique opportunities for exploring gender/sexuality, as art offers in-depth/open discussions, criticality and visual literacy to students compared to more logic-based subjects like Maths/Science (Dittman and Meecham, 2006; Stanley, 2007; Addison, 2012). As mentioned in chapter 1, ‘identity’ is a widely celebrated subject in art GCSE and across the school curriculum, yet in my experience and supported by the literature, GCSE work tends to have portraiture as the main signifier of identity and students are inclined to ‘cut-and-paste’ artists’ biographies, bypassing any meaning in the iconography or critical discussions of identity essentialism (Downing and Watson, 2004; Ofsted, 2009; 2012). Therefore, it could be argued that there is a need for the art curriculum to investigate artists’ work and the subject of ‘identity’ in more critical and nuanced ways.

Whilst many agree that sexuality and gender should be explored in art education (Check, 1992; Hall, 2007; Stanley, 2007; Addison, 2012), how it should be approached in the art and design curriculum is still debated. Of course, there is no singular way to explore this work, yet troubling gender/sexuality normativity is a good starting point. In 2007, the *International Journal of Art and Design Education* (IJADE), marked the 40th anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 in Britain, with producing a special edition of the journal on Lesbian and Gay Issues in Art, Design and Media Education, contributed and edited by Stanley, (2007). This ground-breaking edition presented suggestions for teachers on how LGBTQ+ artworks and subjects could be explored with students in the art curriculum. For instance, from the IJADE special edition, Liz Ashburn (2007) suggests how studying Tina Fiveash’s photographic work with students, could start to critically examine the legitimacy of heteronormativity through exposing dominant structures and adds that LGBTQ+ artists could contribute to LGBTQ+ students’ own artwork and sense of self whilst revealing the debt mainstream culture owes to ‘gay aesthetics’ (p.33). Like Ashburn (2007), Stanley (2007), too
argued that LGBTQ+ people have a specific contribution to the development of the art curriculum as LGBTQ+ people, can bring an outsider perspective, that of irony, parody and performance, and students could explore LGBTQ+ themes such as ‘coming out’ or ‘depicting fear’ (Stanley, 2007, p.7). In addition, Stanley (2007) also proposed that exploring LGBTQ+ art and subjects with students may reassess dominant modes of the telling of art history and knowledges. In agreement with Stanley (2007), other scholars have also suggested that teachers need to affirm LGBTQ+ students’ identities by acknowledging LGBTQ+ art histories, this, they believe, would not only expand the curriculum but would provide LGBTQ+ students with resources and a sense of tradition (Check, 1992; Walker, 2007). However, it could be argued that presenting LGBTQ+ themed artwork as the ‘outsider perspective’ or as an ‘alternative knowledge’ with students runs the risk of reinforcing hierarchical relationships between the norm and the other, leaving students with distorted perceptions of LGBTQ+ people and conventional portrayals. As Stanley (2021) states in a later work, ‘in such circumstances to try and identify a gay aesthetic is both tortuous and impractical’ (p.5). Significantly, Stanley (2021) suggests that masquerade, may be another avenue for art education to explore with regards to gender and sexuality, as masquerade offers an ‘alternative reality not confined by normative bounds’ (p.8), that could be investigated in a manner of different arts disciplines.

Whilst I agree that these proposals, could potentially affirm some LGBTQ+ student identities and reclaim the pink past, which has not been broached before in the curriculum, such presentations could lead to essentialism once again, as the LGBTQ+ experience, is constantly in a state of flux and multifaceted. As I have mentioned earlier, the canon of artwork considered LGBTQ+ does present very particular representations of LGBTQ+ people with focused and recurrent themes. Presenting any artwork to students and labelling it ‘LGBTQ+ artwork’ or categorising it as an example of ‘gay aesthetics’ can serve to essentialise people and their
artistic contributions. Thus, the notion put forth by scholars that LGBTQ+ artwork can validate LGBTQ+ students’ identities could be problematic as it excludes identities that exist outside of the prescribed examples/themes. For example, an LGBTQ+ student could potentially be presented with what is deemed a representational portrayal of LGBTQ+ people’s artwork with LGBTQ+ ‘themes’ but could not see themselves reflected within the depictions, leading to confusion surrounding their own identity. Therefore, this approach may leave all students, not just LGBTQ+, with rather essentialist conclusions whilst engendering a pedagogy of recognition, by which I mean a pedagogy based on what is already recognised, established or known (Atkinson, 2011), thus preventing exploring sexuality and gender in more open or nuanced ways. Therefore, whilst the proposals by the scholars above make an interesting and important contribution to exploring sexuality and gender in the curriculum, in this study I hope to build on this foundational work and go beyond it, as there is a dilemma with presenting artwork that has LGBTQ+ identities depicted in the content - as examples could lead to tokenism and essentialism and perhaps do not always account for identities in a state of flux. Yet despite this problem, I am not wholeheartedly opposed to presenting this artwork to students like the aforementioned, as this would, to some extent, reclaim certain histories that have been ignored in the curriculum in the past and thus I agree with the scholars above on this premise. I also agree with Stanley (2021), students can begin to critically engage to ‘reappraise dominant modes of the telling’ (p.1), by disrupting ideas of challenging notions of a fixed identity or histories, knowledges. In addition, exploring this work may also be a more accessible way for GCSE students to understand and discuss what gender and sexual norms are and look like. However, for reasons I have mentioned above, the presentation and usage of this work needs to be handled carefully with a pedagogy that addresses and troubles essentialism and the construction of knowledge as the ways in which teachers introduce artwork influence what students may see and know (Gubes Vas and Sanders III, 2014).
example, Tara Burk and Amy Raffel (n.d.) educational resource, *Sexuality and Art*, does this successfully, as the lesson resource discusses issues of visibility, identity politics, censorship and essentialism. Yet, for this project, I hope to build a GCSE project over a series of weeks that accounts for making as well as discussions surrounding essentialism and LGBTQ+ artwork.

Nevertheless, what I would like to address now, is another avenue, that I argue has not fully been explored with regards to these subjects and art education yet- that is, how we might explore these subjects with students in a more non-linguistic fashion, a fashion that allows for art’s materiality and process to take the investigative role instead of a representational sign, discussions of LGBTQ+ artworks or LGBTQ+ celebratory discourse. However, how can students investigate gender and sexuality through making exactly? And how can I implement a project practically in the art classroom that aims to explore non-essentialist explorations of gender and sexuality, toward queerer explorations?

Of course, claiming an object or artwork as queer is problematic, as queer by its very nature is not one thing and should not be held to an easily recognisable static entity. Undeniably, it is difficult to capture sexuality, desire and gender in a visibly sophisticated way as sexuality and gender are complex and fluid but reducing sexuality or difference to recognisable depictions, such as gender bending/same sex coupling like previous artwork mentioned, restricts sexuality to bodily representations leading to essentialism and categories of regulation/recognition (Foucault, 1977; Getsy and Simmons, 2015). In other words, the restriction to the human form can be problematic as the body is ‘inescapably culturally marked’, due to society categorising the form according to the sex then projecting cultural assumptions based on the form, known as gender (Getsy and Simmons, 2015, p.43). From here, identities are made legible and
therefore can be easily regulated through binaries; male/female, gay/straight. Thus, I want to propose exploring artwork with students that ‘resists the reproduction of regulatory power that makes the queer subject identifiable and distinguishable’ by creating artwork that refuses visible and intelligible representations ‘through which people are recognised and regulated’ (Getsy and Simmons, 2015, p.43/44). Whilst ongoing invisibility of LGBTQ+ arts/culture in public life would see far right groups/people, such as the ISIS, Katie Hopkins, or those who recently protested outside the Birmingham school, overjoyed at the prospect of creating artwork that refuses LGBTQ+ representations, leading some LGBTQ+ advocates questioning the intended impact or purpose of research such as mine - my project has different intentions (although with this being said, the starting point of the art project with the students did begin in a more conventional manner, discussed further in chapter 4). In other words, my research project has queering intentions instead of LGBTQ+ advocation, as it aims to explore the art classroom’s potential for undoing the constraints of essentialist, static and conventional ideas of identity through making.

Drawing on Jack Halberstam (2005) and David Getsy (2015), I aim to examine the possibilities of investigating/creating non-representational sculpture/artwork with students that may resist heteronormativity/normativity, in the hope to move beyond the restrictions of bodily/figurative representational artwork towards more dynamic interpretations for the art classroom. For example, Halberstam (2005) and Getsy (2015) propose abstraction as having potential for a queerer stance, as non-representational objects/depictions produce less determined ways of seeing bodies and identities. They suggest that ambiguous visualisations may dissolve binaries and categories by resisting bodily configurations, as abstraction, is not easily readable or restricted to one interpretation. Both suggest that the materials and processes within the work may evoke the complexities of subjectivity instead of a representational subject/sign.
Therefore, Halberstam (2005) and Getsy and Simmons (2015) view abstraction as expanding new possibilities for understanding accounts of gender and sexual plurality that transcend the body, whilst seeing the political potential of refusing representation. Getsy (2015) is particularly interested in abstract sculpture’s\textsuperscript{13} ability to evoke the body through its material presences and physicality, even if the works have no relation to bodily representations. Building on this, there are countless examples of artwork that evoke ambiguous modes of being, for instance artwork from Eva Hesse, Louise Bourgeois, Lucy Orta, John Chamberlain, to name a few - all of which could be explored in the classroom with students surrounding the ideas brought forth here. Therefore, my aim is twofold, I wish to trouble school art orthodoxies (as mentioned above) by having students experiment with making outside of formalist, representational, figurative, outcome agendas (further explained in the research design chapter), and I wish to trouble essentialism and representationalism through making also. Therein, I argue that the making processes of art, if explored in an experimental and non-representational/abstract manner, are akin with understandings of a fluid identity- as both rest on experimentation, process, movement, flux and becoming, and it is here that may suggest a different avenue for art education when approaching these subjects.

However, it is important to mention, that too often sexuality in art is dismissed if it does not have straightforward depictions of LGBTQ+ bodies and themes. For example, Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy (2013) argue a common criticism is that art critics are ‘reading too much into it’ if the artwork is not representational when exploring these subjects. Yet, this resistance to queer readings of non-representational artwork opens debates regarding ‘what kind of argument one is allowed to make within art history’ and projects an underlying defensive

\[\text{Abstract sculpture was developed in the early 20th century. Sculptors tend to produce work devoid of representation and experiment with shape, proportion and technique. Artists include John Chamberlain, Jean Arp and Anthony Caro (Harrison and Wood, 2002).}\]
position to ‘uphold the normative’ (Doyle and Getsy, 2013, p.63). Thus, surely, establishing new meanings for different people within the artworks is more inclusive and interesting for everyone (Doyle and Getsy, 2013). It is here, I am reminded of Umberto Eco’s (1979) work regarding semiotics and the notion of open and closed interpretations of texts. In his work on *The role of the reader*, he suggests that texts can either have a generative/open interpretation or closed/passive interpretation. For example, he argues that some texts presuppose the reader to the read in a particular way compared to other texts, which allow the reader to enter into the text in a more open way giving the reader more freedom. In a sense, this notion of open and closed texts, underpins my argument for exploring with students gender and sexuality through materials/processes to engender a more open reading and investigation, instead of a ‘closed reading’, where students are only exploring gender and sexuality through representational signs or human figures. It is with this sentiment that I wish as part of the pedagogy/learning methodology to adopt queer readings of objects, sculptures, materials and processes with students. The pedagogy will be worked alongside a curriculum content of artworks/artists from different time periods and mediums- I will elaborate on this further in the research design chapter.

2.5 State of Affairs conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the impacts of neoliberalism on UK schools, in particular I have focused on how practices of assessment produce a model of accepted standards that determine what effective teaching and learning is alongside traditional models of art teaching, influencing teaching practice and the curriculum. And due to this, I have argued that assessment driven practices do not account for the different ways of learning or progressing as a learner, as learning is turned into quantifiable units to be measured leaving other approaches to learning
unexplored. Drawing on my professional experience and art education literature, I have also analysed the context of UK art education today. For instance, I have argued that neoliberal discourses and an overreliance on representationalism and traditional skills rhetoric in the art classroom are misaligned with contemporary art/thought and tend to dictate teacher and learner subjectivities. I contend that this school art orthodoxy supports a narrowing of what can be considered as art in a school context, engendering recognition practices that later contribute to the epistemology of art education. Following this, I draw on Atkinson’s (2011) pedagogy of the event which advocates for a puncturing of such regulatory and recognition practices in the art classroom to explore unforeseen and different avenues for pedagogy. From there, I built on Atkinson’s (2011) ideas in a practical manner, by exploring how I might develop a pedagogy/learning methodology that troubles dominant structures within schools, mainly heteronormativity, through an art curriculum that does not underscore the usual outcome, formalist, or skill-based practices. For example, I draw on aspects of queer theory for reading non-representational objects/artworks with students in hope that the ambiguous visualisations/materials/processes may evoke the complexities of subjectivity and dissolvement of binaries. I have argued that this may be a more fruitful way for exploring topics of gender and sexuality with students opposed to the essentialist PSHE and anti-bullying material provided by schools to discuss subjects of gender and sexual diversity. I will expand on the intervention design further in methodology chapter 4 however, in the next chapter I will draw on aspects of queer theory and new materialism in hope to provide the theoretical underpinnings of the intervention/curriculum project I will be making with students.
Chapter 3
Theoretical framework
Post human queering

3.0 Introduction

My intention in this chapter is to explore how established school art pedagogies and school approaches to gender and sexuality, which I discussed in the previous chapter, might be reworked and reimagined utilising two theoretical perspectives, queer theory and new materialism to enable me to provide a theoretical framework for this study. First, I will provide an account of queer theory because the research project aims to trouble normative art practices in the art classroom with an intervention centred on questioning categories of gender and sexuality and second, I will provide an account of new materialism, as the exploration of materiality and how all matter constitutes phenomena is aligned with the art making process. Karen Barad (2007), a leading scholar in the field of new materialism, has argued that poststructuralism, a theoretical approach in which queer theory is located, is limited as it views matter as a passive product of discourse and language rather than an active entity for creating being. With this being said, I hope to reconcile the tensions between the two theories by carving my own line of reasoning for how the theories could be combined to bring light to new ways of knowing and being in the art classroom. To begin, I will outline some of queer theory’s cultural foundations.
3.1 Queer foundations I

Queer is unclear in its definition, as the ‘theory’ is not a unified body of thought, or indeed even a single theory, as queer has multiple ‘origins and influences’ from feminism, racial theory, the gay and lesbian liberation movement, the AIDS crisis, sadomasochism, disability studies, postcolonialism, transgender studies and poststructuralism (Hall and Jagose, 2013, p. xvi). One key origin is rooted in the American and European gay liberation movement of the 1960s-1980s, whereby gay activists fought for social and political recognition on debates concerning HIV/AIDS policies and homosexuals serving openly in public life. Yet, assimilatory politics implemented within the movement, which sought to uphold a unified and often conservative gay identity to appeal to the heterosexual white middle class political majority, exposed social divisions based on class/race/gender, leaving the privileging of certain gay identities – mainly gay identities that conformed to heterosexual norms/ideals, or ‘homonormative’ identities, over less conventional gay identities. This led to radical groups in the late 1980s early 1990s, to separate from the gay liberation movement calling into question the notions of a collective unified gay and lesbian identity (Bersani, 1987; Richards 2004; 2005; Gray, 2016). Therefore, one of the components of queer theory has been to provide a critical theory that is anti-identity and anti-conformist to explore difference outside of identity categories and norms, as categories of identity can often lead to essentialist discourses which can be exclusionary and restrictive. For example, gay/lesbian essentialism would entail the belief that all gay and lesbian people share a common trait or norm which is inherent and biologically determined – e.g., all lesbians are butch. However, queer theory would argue that this view is restrictive as there are multiple ways of being inside and outside of these categories and that our identities are not inherent but continually being created. This led to the conclusion, especially in the early 1990s, that having an anti-identity stance, through the failure to
reproduce essentialist identities ‘masculine straight man’, could cause a ‘threat to the social ordering of life itself’, as social conventions would not be upheld (Ahmed, 2013, p.423).

However today, within contemporary sexuality politics, queer theory is being used to fashion new ‘queer’ identity categories which are directly at odds with queer’s originally intended 1980s-1990s anti-assimilatory and anti-identity position. For example, ‘queer’ has become an umbrella term and identity marker for those who do not conform to heterosexual ideals (marriage/monogamy/child rearing/gender-conforming). Queerness is constantly being related to subcultures, chem-sex parties, drag, androgyny and transgender bodies (Jones, 2009). Language is being used to fashion ‘queer identities’ online, ‘non-binary’, ‘demi boy’, ‘agender’, ‘pangender’ and the use of pronouns, ‘they’, ‘ze/zir’, are also being used to describe the ‘queer identities’ of gender non-conforming people. Yet, it has been argued, that the creation of new identities all work within and uphold heteronormative structures by producing binaries such as, ‘cis vs trans’ ‘they vs she’ ‘androgyne vs conformity’, ‘heteronormativity vs queerness’ - all operating against the term’s original anti-binary, pro-fluidity position (Rufflo, 2009). Thus, working within this framework, where unintelligibility upholds intelligibility e.g., an identity is defined by what it is not/the other, ultimately perpetuates binaries such as, conformity vs unconformity, as any subversion by unintelligible subjects still continues to sustain the discursive structure through needing intelligible identities (Rufflo, 2009). Here then, within some of the contemporary politics surrounding sexuality, it could be argued that queer has become colonised by identity politics and lost certain aspects its radical origins.

Building on this, David Halperin (2003) has argued that queer theory is increasingly being co-opted by the academy (despite I argue queer theory being very much a product of the academy), as queer theory has become somewhat canonised in universities. For example, queer studies seems to routinely and uniformly begin with the works of Michel Foucault (1977), Judith
Butler (1990), on language, discourse and subjectivity to further continue with Gayle Rubin (1993), Leo Bersani (1987), Eve Sedgwick (2008), Michael Warner, (1993), Jack Halberstam, (2005) and Susan Stryker (2006) regarding heteronormativity, the body and a sexual politics centred on the subject. This has led critics to pose the question, ‘is queer, queer anymore?’, suggesting if queer theory is to have any future at all, then it must be restored back to its radical origins which are anti-assimilatory drawing on new modes of thought (Eng et al. 2005; Halperin, 2008; Jones, 2009). Instead, as Halperin (2008) claims, we seem preoccupied with canonising, institutionalising and normalising the theorisations which are directly at odds with queer’s intended anti-conformist attitude. Thus, I use Halperin’s (1995) definition of queer theory for this study, as I believe it to underpin queer theory’s radical origins:

    Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence (Halperin, 1995, p. 62).

Yet, queer becoming an identity category or being canonised within institutions may not be so problematic. It has been argued, queer theory’s championing for an anti-identity/assimilatory position, tends to depoliticise the material conditions and oppressions LGBTQ+ people face, and fails to address patriarchal and Eurocentric positions that do not consider differences in lived experience across gender, class, sexual and racial lines (Jones and Silver, 2014). This has left some critics questioning queer theory’s purpose and intended political outcomes (Edwards, 1998; Green, 2002; 2007; Jones and Silver, 2014; Penney, 2014). After all, identity politics have proven a powerful tool for empowering historically disenfranchised identity groups, such as black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME), lesbians and gays, women and/or disabled people, all of which have found community support through campaigning for shared equal rights/protection and challenging stereotypical representations by demanding recognition in
wider society. However, as seen from the gay liberation movement and the feminist movements, the categories, or indeed community gatherings based on them, have and still continue to exclude people who do not fit neatly into what is discursively available - meaning more outlier gender/sexual non-conforming people, who may not have the words/identifications/discourses to fit in, could be unaccounted for (Gray, 2016). As Nancy Fraser states, ‘ironically, then, the identity model serves as a vehicle for misrecognition’ (Fraser, 2000), p.112). Although with that being said, identity is still a ‘necessary error’ in our everyday lives, meaning we still need to communicate with each other and live in the world (Butler, 1993, p.229). For example, we need to identify ourselves and each other for fighting for shared rights, access to medical records/procedures, IDs for criminal checks and passports. Thus, there is a tension here and within some aspects of the movement. Perhaps it is here queer theory needs to be viewed more modestly. Whilst it is true that queer theory can depoliticise the material conditions of certain disenfranchised groups, this does not mean we should abandon queer perspectives altogether. In fact, I believe queer theory is simply teaching us to explore outside of norms that can be restrictive, whatever that may be, and to look for new ways of being which might be beneficial for all. So queer is a stance, a commitment to being permanently awkward, a refusal not to trouble, a kind of ‘hold on a minute’ vigilance with regard to all social phenomena.

It has also been argued that an emancipatory agenda based on the recognition of identity solely (identity politics), or a politics based on the dismissal of identity and troubling the normative (queer), has flawed foundations for the establishment of a truly emancipatory project if the economic redistribution of wealth is not also fought for (Hennessy, 1994; Fraser, 2000; Penney, 2014). James Penney (2014), in his anti queer critique, argues that we should 'abandon the

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14 Postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Chakravirty Spivak (1996), acknowledges this tension and has called for a ‘strategic essentialism’, whereby, minority groups mobilise ‘strategically’ based upon shared identity categories to fight for shared rights, yet still engage in on going debates.
exhausted project of sexuality's politicisation' (p.1), contending that the queer project is generally focused on micro level politics which are lifestyle orientated, meaning that society will not be transformed in any structural way through a politics of sexuality. For Penney (2014) the term ‘queer’ is itself classed, as its theoretical concerns largely address a Eurocentric and privileged group of academics and students. Thus Penney (2014) argues, queer’s failure is positioning heteronormativity as an enemy, instead of placing capitalism at the forefront, as capitalism does not need the family unit to stay stable, as money can still be made from non-conformity (Fraser, 2000). In fact, activist projects have become markers for the expansion of capitalist/neoliberal policies, using the guise of cultural recognition of identity for capital gains purposes (Hennessy, 1994; Schulman, 2011; Franke, 2012; Edelman and Zimman, 2014; Rao, 2015). For example, governments and international financial institutions have been found to be increasingly supportive of LGBTQA+ rights agendas to appear as modern/Western/well-meaning to advance neoliberal political economies globally (Schulman, 2011; Franke, 2012; Puar, 2013; Rao, 2015). Take for instance, commercial advertising by banks at Pride marches, Israel’s promotion of Tel Aviv as the gay capital of the world or the conservative UK government voting in the Marriage (same sex couples) Act 2013. Therefore, sexual politics is not immune to the overarching/structural exploitation or co-option by neoliberalism/capitalism, as the mainstreaming of sexual recognition has in some instances narrowed political progress. Yet it important to note, queer theorists such as Jack Halberstam (2005) and Jose Esteban Munoz (2005), have differentiated queer studies/theory from the co-opting of mass media consumer lifestyles of gay and lesbian identities. Yet as Halperin (2008) argued earlier, queer is still welcomed into neoliberal universities, as queer subject modules are often taught (and attract fee paying students), and grant proposals centred on queer theory are mostly accepted. Thus, in agreement with Penney (2014), an emancipatory agenda based on the politics of queer or recognition alone will never be a threat to capitalism or change
anything in a significant way. Nevertheless, I still believe that sexual politics/queer theory can be utilised to fight against the repressive structures and norms faced under capitalist exploitation. At a very basic level politics has an impact on access to medical care, civil partnerships and of course, education. Since LGBTQ+ lives are incredibly caught up in politics as aforementioned, Penney’s (2014) argument that we should abandon sexuality’s politicisation is therefore problematic. It is here, I believe queer theory has something to offer, as I argue that it can teach us to not accept certain repressive structures we face as people but instead explore different ways of being - as queer is a constant interrogation of what we are surrounded by. In other words, we will never arrive at queer, as queer has no arrival, this is because as soon as we arrive at queer, it will be over, it will not be queer. Therefore, queer should be regarded at as a process or a method for questioning what is around us - a doing rather than a being. Perhaps this is where queer theory gains legitimacy for this research study. Clearly a research intervention such as mine, cannot have as its goal the transformation of an entire social structure, but I will suggest over the course of this thesis, that it has the potential to contribute to change at a level that affects our everyday lives – by encouraging teachers and students to consider critically received ways of being and the structures which uphold these.

3.2 Queer foundations II

Another origin of queer theory is rooted within philosophical conceptualisations of the human subject, in particular the poststructuralist notion of subjectivation, an area of inquiry that theorises how subjects are constituted through power, language and discourse. Dominating much of queer theory, are Michel Foucault’s (1977) and Judith Butler’s (1990) conceptualisations of discursive practices and norms inscribed onto bodies to produce
disciplined subjects. For example, in his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) explores how sovereign societies in the 18th century transitioned to become disciplinary societies in the 19th century. For Foucault (1977), sovereign societies are characterised by one person holding the power- the sovereign, suggesting a more ‘top down’ approach to power, whereby in a disciplinary society, power is not held by a single person but instead is enacted through institutions and people. Foucault (1977) conceptualised disciplinary societies as adopting three techniques to discipline bodies; hierarchal observation, normalising judgement and examination. Put simply, hierarchal observation, is a higher status figure/institution being able to watch an individual’s action at any given time, manifesting in an omnipresent feeling of surveillance. In turn, the individual regulates their behaviour accordingly as an observation could occur at any time. An example of this can be seen when Ofsted visits a school and teachers adjust their lesson plans for both days of the visit, to ensure they are making the teaching standards set by the government. This is because, at any minute within the two-day Ofsted visit an Ofsted inspector could enter into the teacher’s classroom and assess them. The feeling that anybody could be inspecting them at any given time, produces subjects who watch themselves through self-disciplining effects. The other two technologies, normalising judgement and examination, work together to judge and classify individuals based on normative standards usually set by an establishment/institution. This practice leads to people being objectified, as individuals can only be seen in terms of what standards they can/cannot meet, and shamed, as individuals who do not meet the standards will be constituted and identified as abnormal or a failure- leading the individual to assume that failed/abnormal identity. For example, a student may wish to achieve an A in her art exam and so aims to produce artwork to meet the standards set by that institution. However, the student may produce artwork that does not meet the standards, resulting in feelings of shame and failure, which in turn constitutes the student as a ‘bad’ art student, not only by the institution, but potentially
within herself. For Foucault (1977), these practices and their effects are manifestations of disciplinary power which are inscribed onto bodies and create (or seek to create) disciplined subjects. Therefore, from this perspective, power is not something that is top down, possessed by an individual or state, but something that is ubiquitous and only existing relationally between subjects. Consequently, subjects are dependent on power to be perceived as intelligible subjects through which they have to submit to power and self-govern in the form of customs, norms and standards to avoid abjection. In other words, relating back to my example, the teachers adjust their lesson plans and self-govern as they want to be seen as an intelligible teacher, which means they aspire to meet the teaching standards based on the normalising judgement of the institution/school(Ofsted to be constituted as a ‘good’ teacher. If the teachers do not meet the normative teaching standards, they become unintelligible as a teacher and risk abjection and loss of legitimate subjecthood (to themselves and others). Thus, the making of the subject (subjectivation) is subjugation. For Foucault (1977) subjects can never break free of power, as power is circulated through the subjects. However, resistance is always possible, where there is power, there is a possibility for resistance - where resistance is not possible, there is no power. Therefore, from this perspective, one must work within the power relations to resist instead of wanting to escape, as one cannot escape power.

How subjects become subjugated through power/discourse and the possible reworking of this power was/is a driving component for queer theory. It is here where Butler’s (1990) borrows from Foucault (1977) to develop her concept of performativity, a concept pivotal to queer theory, as the concept considers the conditions of power within discourse and language repetitions that normalise, shape and construct the body. Butler (1990) also draws from Jacques Derrida (1988), J.L Austin (1962) and Louis Althusser (1971) to develop the concept. For

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15 Abjection is understood by Julia Kristeva’s (1984) as the collapse of how individuals understand or view themselves and others.
example, Austin (1962) in his work ‘How to do things with words’ differentiated between ‘constative utterances’ and ‘performative utterances’, viewing language as performing an action, therefore positioning language as a social practice, e.g. ‘I now pronounce you wife and wife’, as distinct from a statement e.g., ‘the cat is on the mat’. The performative utterances were deemed as historical by Derrida (1988) as the utterances do not originate from the subject but instead are a product of iterative citational chains preceding the subject. For example, the discourses and language that surround the idea of what it means to be a woman, are imbued with how women have been conceived in language/discourses in the past, feminine/passive, therein constituting how women become in the present - this discourse then affects how women are perceived by others and themselves, potentially passing through generations. Within these citational chains, the subject is then hailed into ‘subjecthood’, meaning the subject must recognise oneself within discourses intertwined with power to become intelligible to the hailer; this process was coined by Althusser (1971) as ‘interpellation’. An example of interpellation is a teacher who is ‘hailed’ into being a teacher by her students who call her ‘Miss’ and ask her to help them with their work. By responding to ‘Miss’ and helping the students with their work, she is becoming and enacting what it means to be a teacher to her students and herself, as she is aligning herself with the norms of what it means to be a teacher. If she did not respond to ‘Miss’ and instead ignored her students, and walked out the classroom, she would be unintelligible as a teacher in that context. It is within these theorisations that Butler (1990) combines ideas from Foucault, Austin and Althusser to propose her theory of gender performativity, conceding that gender is not a thing of substance but a ‘doing’ or a deed without a doer. She states:
Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (Butler, 1990, p. 33).

Meaning, that through the enactment of stylistic performances (an individual acting feminine by crossing their legs) subjects are produced and only made legible as a subject when recognised or are interpellated (Althusser) within the localised (gendered) framework. In other words, subjects must assume and identify with the fantasy of gender (Masculine = Man), as for Butler (1990) gender is not inherent or biologically determined but a product of social constructions and ideas/fantasies, and it is through this identification that subjects are made intelligible/recognisable, otherwise they risk being unintelligible - here the psyche of the individual reflects power relations as subjects internalise and become attached to norms as they want to be intelligible subjects. This line of thinking destabilises essentialist discourses surrounding the body, as sex does not naturally imply gender, instead the gender performative informs sex (body). It is important to note, that, from this perspective, the subject does not exist prior to this performative but rather is materialised through the discourses being upheld. Butler (1997) states:

If we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it, insulting us from the start, as it were by its prior power (Butler, 1997, p.2).

Therefore, the idea of an autonomous Cartesian subject accounting for their own utterances is in fact a fallacy, as the utterances in which they speak only reflect the power discourses that precede and exceed them - this is where Butler (1997) draws on Derrida’s (1988) historical citations chains. The reiteration of speech acts (Austin) and discourses (Foucault) are then
organised within a power matrix, leading to determine subject positions which can be restrictive and support essentialist discourses. For example, heterosexuality is conceptualised as a matrix that privileges, (re)produces and naturalises the heterosexual subject, known as ‘heteronormativity’, e.g., men are masculine and are attracted to women, whilst perceiving anything outside of the pattern as abnormal/unintelligible, e.g., men who are effeminate and attracted to men (Butler, 1990; Rubin, 1993). This concept was highly influential to queer theory as the work exposed the processes of power that upheld heteronormativity and binaries such as -gay/straight, male/female – shedding light on the confinements on the subject and possible ways to question/trouble/subvert the matrix (Butler, 1990, Sedgwick, 1990). In the following section, I turn my attention to the topic of agency and how it might be conceptualised in this thesis.

3.3 Butler’s Agency

If we take Butler’s (1990), and Foucault’s (1977) view, that an individual is dependent upon power to be a viable subject, this would suggest that subjects do not have any agency at all, and that power is totalising and absolute - leading me to questions - are we nothing more than the sum of discourses in which we locate ourselves? Do I conceive of myself as having any agency in this research? After all, this research wishes to claim some degree of agency, as it aims to trouble normative practices in an art classroom which suggests agency within the intervention. Yet poststructuralists do seek to provide some space for some agency, as we saw earlier from Foucault’s (1977) power-resistance dyad. Therefore, to address these tensions, I draw on Butler’s (2005) *Giving an Account of Oneself*, as I argue, she locates some agency emerging through power and discourse between subjects in her conceptualisation of ethics, which I will outline below. Butler (1993) states:
The paradox of subjectivation (assujetissement) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power (Butler, 1993, p.51).

It is clear from this quotation that Butler (1993) does not expunge agency altogether but neither does she affirm agency as something that a fully conscious subject can own - as one cannot remove oneself from power/discourse. Instead, she argues that agency can be possible at the site of constitution as this site is ambivalent due to the iterative and temporal nature of the performative acts. For Butler (1997), the site of constitution is the process by which the subject must submit to power and is dependent upon power, e.g., norms, to become recognisable as the subject, as ‘no subject emerges without a passionate attachment’ (p.7). Meaning, the site of constitution is where the subject is created in subordination and must passionately attach to norms for existence. An example of this could be how the gay subject is conceptualised – an individual must identify and become passionately attached by internalising and adopting the discourses/norms surrounding what it might mean to be gay (within that context) in order to be understood as a gay subject by themselves and others and in doing so, the individual is constituted as a gay subject in that context. Butler (1995) continues:

[T]o claim that the subject is constituted is not the same claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency (Butler, 1995, p.46).

Thus, similarly to Foucault (1977), Butler’s (1997) constitution is paradoxical in nature, as the very process that the subject is dependent upon for constitution, is the very process that may
grant the subject agency. In other words, the resignifying process is one that happens continually and due to the iterative nature of the performative process, power can be reworked/resisted as there is always slippage within the iterative performatives. Therein, Butler (1990) suggests the possibility of subverting the ‘matrix of intelligibility’ to ‘expose the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity’ through failing and destabilising the repetitions of signifiers by becoming unintelligible to open new possibilities for acting/thinking differently (Butler, 1990, p.33). Put differently, subjects are made intelligible by repeating gendered norms (Femininity=female) and also made unintelligible through not conforming to norms (Masculinity=female); it is within the unintelligible where the failure to repeat exposes the binaries/significations/identifications that do not consider multiplicity amongst individuals- possibly leading to new ideas. With this being said, for Butler (2005), agency is then relational in nature, as agency, like disciplinary power, is experienced between subjects, as we need the other to be interpellated, or constituted, through discourse and language, meaning subjects are made intelligible or unintelligible through interaction with one another. Hence, agency is not owned by an individual subject but instead agency is within the discursive practices between subjects and is limited to the localised situation within the discourse - as we cannot, from this perspective, escape discourse.

Butler (2005) develops her understanding of agency as located within the performative acts specifically in a relationship between the self and other in language and discourse and proposes that we may begin to achieve some degree of agency if we suspend the desire for ‘complete coherence’ at the moment of constitution between the self and the other in order to relate more ethically to one another. For example, Butler (2005) suggests that we receive ‘accounts’ or ‘narratives’ from others and disclose and assume accounts to ourselves and to others at the ‘scene of address’- by which she means, constitution or interpellation (p.21). As mentioned earlier, these narratives, are discourses and norms that precede the subject, as ‘they are not born
with me’ (p.35), which in turn means the subject can never fully account for itself, as the narrative is not exclusively the subject’s, but instead is the ongoing product of multiple discourses, cultures, norms and institutions that have been congealing over time through generations. Butler (2005) explains:

Paradoxically, I become dispossessed in the telling, and in that dispossession an ethical claim takes hold, since no ‘‘I’’ belongs to itself. From the outset, it comes into being through an address I can neither recall nor recuperate, and when I act, I act in a world whose structure is in large part not of my making (p.132).

For Butler (2005), in each scene of address, the subject will never repeat a clear and coherent account of themselves, as the narrative is not wholly theirs and will change every time depending who the other is, as each scene of address requires a recognition between subjects of norms/discourse which too reconstruct and are unstable in each address. Butler (2005) continues:

When we claim to know and to present ourselves, we will fail in some ways that are nevertheless essential to who we are. We cannot reasonably expect anything different from others in return (p.42).

Thus, drawing on Adorno’s conception of ethical violence, Butler (2005) suggests that during the scene of address, it is unreasonable for the subject to ask the other to make itself known through the recognition of discourses/norms, as the subject itself cannot fully account for their own story and therefore asking the other to be recognisable as a subject, is a form of ‘ethical violence’. Butler (2005) posits:

It would be, perhaps, an ethics based on our shared, invariable, and partial blindness about ourselves. The recognition that one is, at every turn, not quite the same as how
one presents oneself in the available discourse might imply, in turn, a certain patience with others that would suspend the demand that they be self-same at every moment. Suspending the demand for self-identity or, more particularly, for complete coherence seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same. (p. 42).

Consequently, the unknowingness in the subject and other, due to the ‘partial blindness about ourselves’ is the core of Butler’s ethics as it is here, within the unknown, where we may begin to gain some agency. In other words, Butler suggests that we should suspend our desire for ‘complete coherence’ between ourselves and others through moments of unknowingness and unintelligibility, as this could bring forth reconfiguration and change. This means asking ourselves and others to withhold from the norms that constitute us because, if we refuse these repetitions that constitute us as intelligible subjects, we may achieve incoherence – a state Butler (2005) is asking us to reach momentarily so we may begin to connect differently with others. It is here within the misappropriations and incoherence, where Butler (2005) believes we can connect more ethically with one another, as we are not relying on reproducing norms to do so- and I believe this is where Butler locates her agency. And, as I am interested in an intervention that aims to trouble normative structures in an art classroom, it is precisely here, where I draw my interests in Butler (2005) for this research project, as I want to argue that the unknown is the generative space for agency and thus, difference/change. I will return to and explore Butler’s (2005) agency and ethics further in the analysis chapters.
3.4 Moving towards matter

Although, I will draw on Butler’s (2005) incoherence as an agentive space for aspects of this research project, it is important to note that Butler (1990) and queer theory’s conceptualisations do come with certain limitations. For example, when considering the nature of performativity and potential moments of unintelligibility, queer theory’s emphasis on language and discourse inscribing upon and shaping the body leaves the body (and other matter) somewhat passive, suggesting the body is ‘a mere container of socio-cultural significations’ (Parisi, 2009, p.78). In Butler’s (1990) vision of subjectivity, the body and human experience is limited to the reiterations of norms within the discursive field in relation to heteronormativity that precedes the subject (Rufflo, 2009). This leaves many contemporary feminist scholars discontented with poststructuralism’s privileging of language and discourse and lack of acknowledgment of materiality (Barad, 2007; Van der Tuin, 2012; Braidotti, 2013). This criticism comes especially in light of the transgender movement, where a consideration of a new materiality of the body, e.g., transgender men with breasts are clearly more than a discursive construction. Hence, subjectivity is not solely formed through entry (articulation or suturing) into the flow of discourse but is also affected by the materiality of the body in question (and its modifications, whether additions or subtractions). So, subjectivity is always also a matter of bodily materiality and embodiment. Therefore, I am interested in avenues for this research project that are not only limited to what subjects are or how they came to be through conceptualisations of heteronormativity and representation in language and discourse, but instead I want to explore the inclusion of all matter, human and non-human, that enact to constitute the unknown, which I believe drawing on Butler (2005), is an agentive and productive space. This is because, this research also resides in the art classroom, where matter is an important component in the process of art making. And once more, the state of not knowing, or reaching a space of the unknown, is argued, as a crucial moment for artists within the making process for exploration
and experimentation (Fortnum, 2013, Jones, 2009). Writing from this perspective, Rachel Jones (2009) states:

Material intelligence would then belong neither wholly to human beings nor to matter but would emerge in the space between them. It is in this space between perhaps - where an acceptance of not knowing allows human intelligence about matter to be coupled with the guiding intelligence of matter - that the creative practices of art and thought can take place (p. 6).

Here, it would seem, that not only does ‘the space in between’ knowing and unknowing represent a space for exploration, but more importantly it may hint at an agentive process which is not entirely our own, ‘material intelligence’, a process in which human and non-human matter, are entangled to reconfigure together. In the next section, I draw on new materialist frameworks, where all matter is considered at the site of constitution, in hope to carve my own understanding of how all matter can constitute the unknown or queerness (Deleuze, 1988; Barad, 2003; 2007; Van der Tuin, 2011; 2017; Braidotti, 2013).

3.5 Post-human queer becomings

In common with queer theory, new materialism too aims to problematise binaries and hierarchies. New materialist ontology draws from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s (1988) ‘monistic materialism’ and aspects of ‘affect theory’, philosophies that wish to trouble and overcome Cartesian dualistic conceptions such as human/nonhuman, mind/body, logic/affect, linguistic/non-linguistic, to focus the attention towards the multiplicities constituting phenomena - meaning all matter, human and non-human create being (Alldred and Fox, 2017). Barad (2007) is a prominent scholar in the field of new materialism, among others (Haraway
2008; 2016; Van der Tuin, 2011; Braidotti, 2013). However, for this research study, I draw on Barad’s (2003; 2007; 2014) concepts because of her theory of agential realism, a concept which addresses the intra-actions between all matter constituting phenomena, and how it may offer openings for the constitution of queerness as something that includes all matter, which I will expand on below.

In her work, Barad (2007) proposes that Butler’s (1990) performativity needs to move beyond its delimited anthropomorphic and iterative linguistic citations towards a performativity which includes non-human and human matter – that is, a posthuman performativity. Barad (2007) states:

Matter is not immutable or passive. Nor is it a fixed support, location, referent, or source of sustainability for discourse. It does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity. Unfortunately, however, Butler’s theory ultimately reinscribes matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than as an active agent participating in the very process of materialization (p.151).

Here, Barad (2003) argues that Foucault’s (1977) and Butler’s (1990) analysis of power embedded in discursive practices does not explain ‘precisely how discursive practices produce material bodies’ (p.808). Instead, Barad’s (2003; 2007) agential realism suggests there is no separation between object and human, discourse and body, only the understanding that all matter is constituted through immanent entangled intra-actions which become together in relation to one another. ‘Intra-action’ being different from ‘interaction’ as ‘interaction’ suggests two separate objects colliding and therefore pre-existing the collision – in Barad’s (2003) concept of ‘intra-action’, phenomena do not pre-exist the intra-action. In other words,
subjects, objects, do not exist without one another as all matter is entangled. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1988) call these varied processes and entanglements between matter ‘agencements’ in French or ‘assemblages’ in English. This entanglement can be anything from – imaginary, economic, affects, cultural, political, language, corporal, discursive, mechanical, virtual- all intra-acting to produce situated phenomena. By way of illustration, take the way in which art education is an assemblage of Modernist and Postmodernist ideas, mixed with teacher and student bodies, feelings and affects, materials, art languages, school classrooms, examinations, all entangled, affected one another, and constantly evolving/changing what art education is and means in that context.

Barad (2007) was able to consider the concept of intra-action through the famous quantum physics double slit experiment (described below), where particles of light and matter changed according to whether they were being observed, suggesting that the observer was just as much a part of the experiment as the particles of light and matter. For example, depending on what apparatus was used to observe, the particles of light and matter would either behave like a wave pattern or like particles, leading to the conclusion that ‘the nature of the observed phenomenon changes with corresponding changes in the apparatus’ (Barad, 2007, p.106). Consequently, this meant that neither could be enacted at the same time, if the observer used a particular apparatus to achieve the ‘particle’ behaviour, then the ‘wave pattern’ behaviour would be excluded (and vice versa). As Barad (2014) states:

[I]t is possible for electrons to perform particle-ness under certain experimental circumstances and wave-ness under others (p.173).

But this does not mean the wave pattern behaviour cannot be achieved if looked at differently, for Barad (2007) these phenomena are ‘complementary indeterminacies’ as both are mutually exclusive (p.149). This led to Barad’s (2007) conclusion of our shared entanglement with one
another, as the mere presence of the observer, observing, changed the experiment which contributed to different phenomena, and these different separations (wave or particle behaviour) create different phenomena in the world. Therefore, according to Barad’s (2007) reasoning, there is no separate identification of a discursive or linguistic field that enacts onto passive bodies to produce subjects, and there is not something outside ourselves that can be observed or examined objectively without us affecting it. This is because, for Barad (2003), we are all an active assemblage of entangled multiplicities creating everything and affecting together indeterminately. Barad (2007) continues:

Discursive practices are not anthropomorphic placeholders for the projected agency of individual subjects, culture, or language. Indeed, they are not human-based practices. On the contrary, agential realism’s posthumanist account of discursive practices does not fix the boundary between human and nonhuman before the analysis ever gets off the ground, but rather allows for the possibility of a genealogical analysis of the material-discursive emergence of the human. Human bodies and human subjects do not preexist as such; nor are they mere end products. Humans are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming (p.150).

Therefore, a new materialist ontology is characterised by the breaking down of binaries such as human vs non-human, mind vs matter and nature vs culture, as discourse and language are just some of the components that assemble to constitute phenomena in space and time. For Barad (2007), ‘meaning’, ‘phenomena’, ‘reality’, is continually merging and emerging in a process between matter that is always unknown and forever reconfiguring and creating affects. Therefore, by embracing a relational ontology between all matter, human and non-human, ‘gender performativity’ or ‘sexuality’ or ‘queerness/unintelligibility’ is seen as a material-
discursive *assemblage* instead of *only* a citational-anthropomorphic phenomenon within a poststructuralist framework. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1984) state:

> The truth is that sexuality is everywhere: the way a bureaucrat fondles his records, a judge administers justice, a business-man causes money to circulate; the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat; and so on (p.293).

Thus, ‘sexuality’ within Baradian and (Deleuzo-Guattarian) ontology is liberated from it being human-centred and focused on sex/gendered/human object attraction in discourse and language, to conceptualising sexuality as an assemblage of unorganised multi-layered forces, comprised of bodies, affects, non-human agents, norms, desires, discourses, contexts - all intra-acting producing continual and outward a/effects.

At the same time Barad (2003) posits, ‘materiality is discursive’ in the sense that ‘phenomena are inseparable from the apparatuses of bodily production’ as, non-human matter, bodies, the environment and the psyche etc., are *not* ontological separate entities (p.822). For example, I, as a researcher, am not observing an objective phenomenon outside myself. This would be rooted the epistemological practices of *reflection*, which is arguably a common representational approach taken by the majority of social science researchers. However, the problem with the reflexive approach, is that it views matter and discourse as separate from one another and the researcher, and something that is pre-existing and can be captured. This way of thinking suggests that we can capture something that is stable and unmoving long enough to be captured by a researcher/apparatus that too is unmoving and stable (Barad, 2007). Instead, with a Baradian lens, I am always affecting the phenomena as I enact and am part of the phenomena in a web of things, that are human and non-human – I am *not* ontologically separate to the knowledge making process or from the non-human matter. Thus, non-human matter too becomes an agent that can create a change in state or for Barad (2007) a ‘becoming’, leaving
us open to the possibilities of exploring how the human and non-human constitute and affect one another (vice versa). Like Barad (2007), Deleuze (1988) too views a ‘becoming’ as a change in state or an affect. Deleuze (1988) states that an affect is ‘that which happens to the mode, the modifications of the mode, the effects of other modes on it’ (p.48). Brian Massumi (2002), who has influenced new materialism, in his translation of Deleuze and Guatarri’s (1988) text *A Thousand Plateaus*, by contributing to ideas on affect, has stated that affects are like intense forces which are pre-subjective and visceral. Massumi (2002) states:

> It is important not to confuse affect with feelings and emotions…affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, … and affects are pre-personal…An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential…Affect cannot be fully realised in language…because affect is always prior to and/or outside consciousness…Affect is the body’s way of preparing itself for action in any given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience. The body has a grammar of its own that cannot be fully captured in language (p.30).

Meaning that an affect is more like a process, compared to a coding or identifiable thing like in language and discourse. For Deleuze (1988), affects produce ongoing affects in a rhizomatic\(^\text{16}\) fashion which spread within the entanglements/assemblages to produce more affects, as affect is the ‘ability to affect and a susceptibility to be affected’ (Massumi, 2002, p.61). For Deleuze and Guattari (1988), within every assemblage of matter, there are three different lines of affects developing in a rhizome: rigid segmentarity (molar) lines, that control,

\(^{16}\) [...] the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p.21)
order and reproduce norms, or ‘territorialise’, therefore offering no changes in state; supple segmentarity (molecular) lines, that have qualities of both order and rupture; the line of flight, an abstract/radical line that ruptures and cracks, escaping the assemblage and ‘de-territorialising’ by creating a change in state, known as a ‘becoming’. All lines hold the assemblage together rhizomatically to constitute immanent phenomena/reality. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) state:

[A]s in all things, there are lines of articulation segmentarity, strata and territories; but also, lines of flight, movement deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage (p.3/4).

Consequently, we can begin to perceive queerness as an affect and phenomenon within an assemblage of things that is something post-human, (e.g., non-human entities, norms, materials, bodies, effects on bodies, smells, intra-actions, classrooms) which has direct implications for this research, as my intervention aims to generate experimentation and unintelligibility/queerness within the art classroom. However, for Barad (2003), this generation or agency by me (alone) through an intervention would be too subject-human centred, as for Barad (2003) I am just a mere component in the entanglement of matter. I hope to account for this dilemma in my methodology and analysis sections, as I discuss where some agency and affects arise within the intra-actions between human and non-human matter.

3.6 Barad meets Butler

Similar to Butler (2005), Barad’s (2003) agency is shared or distributed and found at the site of constitution. However, unlike Butler (2005), Barad (2003) locates agency within the affectual enactment or the intra-action between all matter, as no matter has priority over the
other - all matter is simultaneously constituting and affecting all other matter in an assemblage.

Barad (2003) states:

Agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity. Nor does it merely entail resignification or other specific kinds of moves within a social geometry of anti-humanism. Agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has. Agency cannot be designated as an attribute of “subjects” or “objects” (as they do not pre-exist as such). Agency is not an attribute whatsoever—it is “doing”/“being” in its intra-activity (Barad, 2003, p.826/7).

Therefore, agency is not something that humans or non-human entities have, but instead exists within the intra-action which are affectual - ‘agency is a doing or being’ (Barad, 2007, p.178). It is here, I want to build on Butler’s (2005) agency for this research project by drawing on Barad (2007), as the latter offers agency to all matter, not only to humans in language and discourse, which is particularly pertinent to this research, as the study locates itself in an art classroom, where the agency of matter is key to the experimental nature of the art making process. To draw on Jones (n.d.) again regarding material intelligence and the artist:

A material intelligence… [is thus] not just the artist's intelligence about her materials, but equally, the intelligence of matter. Both are essential to a process of making in which artist and materials are co-participants. While the artist might contribute her knowledge of physical properties and cultural history together with an experienced sensitivity to the limits and potential of the materials with which she works, the materials themselves delimit the forms they can take and shape the relations into which they enter (para.7).
Thus, like Jones (n.d.), Barad (2007) affords this research a view of agency within the material enactments of the art making process between human and non-human matter which I believe is important if we are to consider how the intervention is a co-constitution of all matter.

Barad’s (2003) agency also, unlike Butler’s agency, ‘does not require a clash of apparatuses/discursive demands such as the contradictory norms of femininity’ (p.826), but instead decentres the human and considers what is excluded from the intra-actions. For example, returning to the particle and wave behaviours of matter, if a certain apparatus is used, a particular outcome will occur. This means, that there is a temporal stability after the intra-active process- as the same apparatus, has the same outcome- if the observer looks for waves she finds wave behaviours. But it also means, this outcome, using a particular apparatus, excludes other possibilities/beings from occurring. Barad (2007) calls this process the agential cut. This is because both cannot be at the same time- you cannot observe waves and particles simultaneously, but they are both. Take for instance, a road which has been cut off – so you end up taking a different road with a view of the sea rather than a view of the mountains (although both are there, just not simultaneously visible). Therefore, particles of matter, are like the road that has been cut off, both routes are there, however only one can be seen at once depending on who the driver is. In line with this thought, Barad (2014) suggests particles of matter behave somewhat queerly, as she states:

They are particles. They are waves. Neither one nor the other. A strange doubling.

A queer experimental finding (p.173).

To explain what is excluded from the intra-actions further, Barad (2007) draws on physicist Neil Bohr, who addresses this wave-particle duality problem. He gives the example, of a person in a dark room who is tightly holding a stick to guide him and within this exercise the stick
would be understood as a ‘subject’ as it is part of him, guiding him. If the stick was loose in the dark room and not used by the person, the stick would become an ‘object’. Barad (2007) states:

It is important to keep in mind that Bohr is making a point about the inherent ambiguity of bodily boundaries and the resolution of those boundaries through particular complementary cuts/practices (p.155).

Therefore, the stick being held or not held, cannot happen at the same time in the room and this is the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ divide when the agential cut emerges from the intra-action, and for Barad (2007) our ethical responsibility lies in the consequences of these cuts and the exclusions (which can be hierarchy making) as we are a part of the entanglements and becomings. So, the iterative nature of the intra-action constitutes temporal boundaries - this can be bodies, objects, elements, and these boundaries are the agential cuts, giving the appearance of stability yet they are always becoming. It is here within the intra-action, where meaning is produced from these cuts, and for Barad (2007), as we are entangled within the matter that produces these inclusions/exclusions, it is our responsibility for the world we help to create - as we are never apart from the cuts we help to enact. Therefore, our agency is co-constituted. Barad (2007) writes:

Exclusions are constitutive elements of the dynamic interplay [intra-play] of determinacy and indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is never resolved once and for all. Exclusions constitute an open space of agency; they are the changing conditions of possibility of changing possibilities (Barad, 2007, p.179).
Thus, it is within the focus on what is excluded from the agential cut which holds the potential for new becomings, as they ‘constitute an open space of agency’. So, even though Barad (2007) condemns Butler (1990) for being too anthropocentrically focused on language and discourse, they both see agency present at the site of constitution, which is relational in nature, whether it be between subjects or within the affectual intra-action of all matter. I want to argue that both draw their attention to what is excluded (Barad, 2007), or the unintelligible (Butler, 1990), and both see these as transformational spaces. So even though Barad’s (2007) agency does not require a clash of discursive practices amongst human subjects like Butler’s (2005), I would argue that Barad (2007) still focuses on spaces that are unintelligible, as she suggests that we look at what is excluded from the enactment. Therefore, Barad (2007) does not see reconfiguration and resistance only existing within the power matrix between subjects in language and discourse. Instead, Barad (2007) sees reconfiguration as more open ended, dependent on the a/effects of the entanglements and the ever-changing material-discursive cuts/boundary-making practices of which we are a part.

3.7 Post Human Queering Conclusion

Thus, through the lens of Barad (2007), but not losing sight of queer theory’s quest for unintelligibility, questioning and subversion, I see my own research as situated as a material-discursive research assemblage comprised of institutions, bodies, voice recorders, materials, theories, all intra-acting and constituting one another. Amongst the entanglement of matter, I am one apparatus which contributes to materialising different possibilities of phenomena. I do not have agency over what happens in the intervention, as I do not pre-exist the intra-action, neither do the students/teacher/art materials/building, instead we all emerge within the intra-action. Here agency is equally enacted by all components having the capacity to affect,
resulting in multitudes of possibilities. It is here, within the multitudes of possibilities and affects where different realities can be enacted through different cuts and exclusions – I believe Barad’s (2007) reconfiguration process resides in the cuts/boundaries in which we choose to draw our attention to. This is because, Barad (2003) wants us to focus on the exclusions we help enact, as these exclusions bring about differences - ‘differences that matter’ (p.803). So, although, I have no power over what will happen with the intervention, my ability to respond to what is included/excluded within the subject/object cuts is my responsibility. Thus, drawing on Butler (2005), I choose to focus on moments of the unknown and the queer/unintelligible that I believe can be understood as the exclusions to which Barad (2007) refers, as I argue both attribute other possibilities residing in the moments of incoherence (Butler) or the exclusions (Barad). This study also attends to how the unknown and queer are constituted within the shared intra-action of all matter, human and non-human and how that may cause a change in state, or a ‘queer becoming/queering of matters’ - where matter has been changed through an encounter with the incoherence or the unknown.

In this chapter, I have outlined two theoretical perspectives and discussed the differences between them, while simultaneously attempting to reconcile them by drawing attention to a basic compatibility in terms of my own theoretical framework for this thesis. I have argued why it is important to build on Butler’s (2005) concept of constitution and agency using Barad (2007) due to the research study being located in the art classroom, where material agency is so imperative to the art making process and thus, the constitution of the students, the teacher, the researcher with the artwork itself. In what follows, I will discuss my methodology for the research in my research design chapter.
Chapter 4
Methodology
Research assemblage

4.0 Introduction

In light of my intentions to trouble school art orthodoxies alongside essentialist notions of gender and sexuality and having outlined the theoretical perspectives I am adopting in the previous chapter my ontological and epistemological implications present me with problems regarding my methodological approach. Within the last two decades, some social science scholars have argued that conventional human-centred qualitative or quantitative research methodologies are problematic as they cannot fully accommodate poststructuralism or posthumanist theories, and indeed that the two may be incompatible (Britzman, 1995; Maclure, 2013; St. Pierre, 2010; 2021). This is problematic because the qualitative and quantitative methodologies are said to be too human-centred and favour pre-existing methods. For example, Gilles Deleuze’s (1994) notion of immanence and becoming, which resonates with aspects of new materialism, as mentioned in the last chapter, are anti-method or anti-methodology, because they assume a world that is not pre-existing or capable of being held still long enough to capture or represent in systems of categorisation or signs. In other words, representationalism or representational thinking, as previously mentioned in chapter 3, categorises phenomena or thought, into linguistic classifications which are culturally influenced and normative in logic. Therefore, the Deleuzian point here seems to be one of the inadequacy of language, as a representational system for the capture of that which exceeds language and the classificatory way in which it attempts to capture that which is immanent,
emergent or ineffable, is problematic. By extension this also applies to traditional qualitative research methods in social science research – given their reliance on language (interviews data, etc.). Also, drawing on Deleuze (1994), Foucault (2003) and Derrida (1972), Elizabeth Adam St Pierre (2021), argues that the poststructuralists scholars made it clear that their philosophical concepts cannot be applied to describe or contain human experience, as their concepts are philosophical and therefore exist to re-orientate thought. Yet, whilst I acknowledge the incongruence between poststructuralist and new materialist concepts and conventional research methodologies, I find St Pierre’s (2021) total negation of research methods problematic, as this notion would invalidate most social science research, including my own, which indeed intends to both apply and analyse using poststructuralist and new materialist understandings. Yet, having said this, her perspective does have implications for the meanings placed upon the data collected. However, the way out of this conundrum is not to abandon the attempt altogether. While language may indeed not be adequate to the task of capturing the ineffable it is, arguably, up to the task of capturing the re-orientation of thought during and post intervention and the nature of the attempted troubling. Therefore, in light of the above, this project intends to trouble, and in order to trouble, I have to conduct an intervention and then find out to what extent the intervention actually troubled. Thus, the only way I can come to this understanding is by resorting to rather conventional qualitative research methods, be it interviews and focus groups- as I have to ask those involved. Hence, the study is ‘ethnographically informed’, (as per the title of the study) as the study draws on ethnography and is informed by its methods and overall approach. For example, I am a participant observer spending time with a community (in this case an art and design class), where I speak with insiders and collect artefacts with a view to understand how they perceive what is happening (Cohen, et al, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). Yet, the study is very much not an ethnography as I plan and implement an intervention. Having redrawn my readers to the tensions and distinctions, in what
follows, I hope to present how I have addressed the ontological dilemma. In the following sections, I aim to describe what I refer to as the research assemblage, drawing on aspects of diffraction and Maggie Maclure’s (2013) concept of ‘hot spots’, followed by outlining my ethics and data analysis. By research assemblage I mean, the entanglement of human and non-human matter within the research process, the events, the researcher, researched, discourses, methods etc. To end, I outline the curriculum design and intervention with the ethnographically informed methods applied.

4.1 Mapping the research assemblage

This study is aiming to do the following: trouble school art practice with a curriculum intervention by exploring gender and sexuality in more nuanced ways in the secondary art and design classroom. Hence, the study seeks to investigate to what extent the curriculum intervention troubled the students and classroom teacher. Yet, as mentioned above, this study has a particular framework that presents me with a problem. How I deal with this problem, may be to think in terms ‘diffraction’ (Haraway, 1992; Barad, 2007) and Maclure’s (2013) concept of data ‘hot spots’ (both explained below) within the research inquiry, as both allow for entanglements of matter and language, affects and difference and the ways in which these might (to some extent) be captured. However, to generate the data and therefore apply diffraction and Maclure’s ‘hot spots’, I still have to make use of existing qualitative methods, that being, interviews, focus groups and field notes (discussed in 4.7 along with the curriculum intervention), to allow me to research how the students and teacher interpreted the intervention-as seen from my research question in chapter 1 (despite this being antithetical to my conceptual framework). Below, I will explain what diffraction is and how I used it in this research and discuss Maclure’s (2013) concept of hot spots.
4.2 Diffraction

The notion of ‘diffraction’, originally conceptualised by Donna Haraway (1992), was later built on by Barad (2007), who, when using the metaphor of wave behaviour encountering an obstacle in physics, came to describe two methods of research inquiry, ‘reflection’ and ‘diffraction’. According to Barad (2007), in physics, reflection is characterised by a wave deflecting an obstacle. Thus, the metaphor for research inquiry, would be predicated on a subject and object divide, where a pre-existing subject extracts objective static representations of the world or ‘reflects back’ the world/social lives- as reflexivity mirrors back fixed positions reproducing sameness. This reflective inquiry could be characterised as describing social systems, be it patriarchy or heteronormativity. Whereas, diffraction, in physics, is characterised by the bending patterns of waves when encountering an obstacle. The diagram below, (Figure, 4:0) demonstrates a diffraction pattern, where waves overlap after encountering an obstacle forming a different bending pattern in the centre.

![Diffraction Pattern](image)

Figure 4.0: Diffraction Pattern (Tate, n.d.-a).
Haraway (1996) states:

I am less interested in the critical practice of reflection, of showing once again that the emperor has no clothes, than in finding a way to diffract critical inquiry in order to make difference patterns in a more worldly way. Reflection displaces the same elsewhere; diffraction patterns record the passage of difference, interaction, and interference (p.429).

Thus, diffraction, when used as a metaphor for research inquiry, focuses on differences and interferences and the effects of difference, or those practices that make differences and interferences. By way of further illustration, Haraway (1992) states when describing diffraction as inquiry:

[A] mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear (p.300).

By way of extension, diffraction, like the pattern above, creates something ontologically different as it focuses on the effects of difference - the bending pattern- the passage of interference- breaking the reflective research cycle. Therein, the generation of knowledge is about difference and understanding how we are a part of that generation, and how or to whom those differences matter (Barad, 2007) - through mapping where the effects of difference appear (Haraway, 1992). In other words, applying the notion of diffraction to this study, I argue this intervention, is an obstacle, that produces bending waves and that I will be attending to the interference patterns or the effects of differences produced within the wave pattern - as this
study will map the effects of the intervention. Yet, by presenting this concept, there is no intention to create a binary between reflection and diffraction, as Barad (2007) posits, within wave behaviour there is always reflections in diffractions and diffractions in reflections. That is to say, in terms of this research, I will be applying diffraction through attending to ‘where the effects of differences appear’, yet I will also acknowledge elements of reflections within the research inquiry, be it the systems of representation, such as heteronormativity or neoliberalism. For example, this would manifest through describing the emergence of certain discourses within the data.

Consequently, this study will focus on where the *effects of differences* appear within the cut, the cut being, (as mentioned in chapter 3), the phenomena we choose to draw our attention to, what we include or exclude. To use the metaphor of a path, the ‘cut’, is the path we decide to take, but there are other paths that still exist, as there are multiple possibilities, yet we have excluded those different paths this time in our cut, but they still exist. Thus, the intra-action, between human/non-human matter, always bring about exclusions (Barad, 2007). But what is important here, is that within these exclusions, other possibilities still exist, other than the path we chose. Therefore, I argue, that the reconfiguration process may reside in Barad’s (2007) exclusions, as there are different possibilities within the exclusions -we just need to focus on the exclusions we enact to create other possibilities. As elaborated on in chapter 3, as a point of ethical responsibility, Barad (2003) wants us to focus on the exclusions we help enact, or the paths we choose, as these exclusions bring about differences - ‘differences that matter’ (p.803). Therefore, I understand Barad’s (2007) ethical exclusions to be compatible with Butler’s (2005) ethical incoherence, unknowingness and un-intelligibilities, as I argue both attribute other possibilities residing in moments of incoherence (Butler) or the exclusions (Barad). Thus, I believe that exclusions can be read as moments of unrecognizability as both
Barad and Butler locate some agency here. So, for this project, I read Barad’s exclusions as incoherences, as I believe these are differences that matter. And I will attend to the ‘effects of difference’, which I argue could also be read as the ‘effects of incoherence’ within the intervention. To end this diffractive section, I will be applying Barad’s (2007) agential realism, an ontology which diffraction is based within, also mentioned in the previous chapter, as I will also focus on the effects of difference between human and non-human intra-actions in the data generated.

4.3 Hot spots

One way to map the effects of difference, or the effects of incoherence, could be through affect, which is argued to escape methodological techniques such as coding, which involve looking at data and finding a pattern or a recurring theme (Maclure, 2013). This is because, coding positions the researcher objectively outside of her research - as the researcher codes and the researched is coded - and ‘captures’ phenomena in a structuring process into neat categorisations of language/representation, leaving multiple differences and affects that cannot be labelled in system of representation/language. By way of further illustration, Maclure (2013) in her work states:

Within the schema of representation, things are frozen in the places allotted to them by the structure that comprehends them– in the double sense of enclosing them, and of rendering them comprehensible. Coding does not allow that things might [will] deviate and divide from themselves to form something new. It cannot cope with difference in itself – as movement, change and emergence (p,169).
Echoing aspects of diffraction patterns where waves collide to form new/different patterns, Maclure (2013) argues that coding cannot cope with difference - which I am mapping within my data - as representation reduces ‘complexity through the assemblage of data into superordinate categories or concepts’ (p.165). Therefore, for Maclure (2013), the coding process when met with difference, disregards the affective complexities, textures, intensities of relations/entanglements between matter and multiplicities within phenomena- as these complexities escape the coding. Thus, Maclure (2013) asks us to acknowledge ‘hot spots’ within the data which are affective relations that are ‘uncomfortable’, ‘disconcerting’ and can create a sense of ‘wonder’, and in doing so ‘threatens to undo our certainty’ as this allows ‘bodily intensities into thought and decision making’ (p.172). In other words, these ‘hot spots’ emerge unpredictably or uncomfortably, they are the odd details that can disrupt the researcher’s certainty when making sense of the data. Therefore, when I map the effects of difference appearing in the data, I interpret these ‘effects of difference’ as also affective intensities between human and non-human matter, gut feelings, serendipity, material textures, confusion, fascination or fear, felt by me the researcher, at the time of the fieldwork, and now at my table in the analysis; and also, I consider the affective intensities of those involved, the teacher, students and non-human matter. Thus, these moments of ‘stabilisation’ of the phenomena presented in my analysis chapters, are the cuts I help to enact –they are the incoherences and difference felt affectively by me, as the data affects me both during the fieldwork and at my table as I analyse/write. Therefore, these bodily intensities and affects permeate my decision/thought making opposed to a representative/sign of coding.
4.4 Qualitative content analysis without coding

I have drawn on aspects of content analysis, as I have identified meaning and concepts from the qualitative data. However, unlike traditional content analysis I have not coded the data (Cohen, et al, 2011), as this is antithetical to my conceptualisation of knowledge. As mentioned above, I have used aspects of diffraction and affectual hot spots, to disrupt normative readings, like coding, towards a diffractive reading that derives from the research assemblage, unpredictable patterns or ‘effects of difference’ producing different insights. As also mentioned above, qualitative data, is only one aspects of the research assemblage wherein I seek to account for affects and non-human matter also within the analysis.

4.5 Background/demographics of school, students, teacher

As mentioned in chapter 1, whilst working as an art supply teacher in North London during the beginning of my PhD in 2016, I came across Brill school. I decided I wanted to do the research there because the school was a standard co-ed state school, with all 1661 students coming from different starting points in life, culturally, religiously, racially and socioeconomically. Brill school is situated in a London borough, which is amongst fifty percent of the most deprived local authorities in England. The school has been Ofsted rated ‘good’ for several years, with music being the school’s specialist subject - largely due to the headteacher being a music teacher. There is no predominant ethnic group at the school, yet forty percent of students have English as their second or additional language (generally referred to in the UK as EAL). Also, ten percent of students are on free school meals. It is important to mention here, that I am describing the student demographic in terms of categories the school provides for data
collection. I understand this description to be problematic, as not only does it essentialise identity (whilst not accounting for intersecting identities), but also data such as this, can engender racist/classist discourses of a ‘challenging’ or ‘tough’ school due to its intake, as opposed to a white middle class school, which can further essentialise the marginalised identities presented. However, I do not intend to perpetuate these stereotypes here, yet I did opt for Brill school for two reasons: I made contacts there when I worked supply, which helped with having the approval for the research and I wanted as many varied responses to the intervention.

As also mentioned in chapter 1, I wanted to situate the research at GCSE level, as often the subject of ‘identity’ is explored for one of the GCSE units. Yet in my experience, this exploration can often be superficial, by investigating identity in monolithic/stereotypical portrayals, bypassing any discussion of the fluidity of the self, social construction/norms-which I hope to explore with the class. Brill school had three art teachers, the head of art (HOA) Mrs Smith, Ms Gibbins and Mrs Henderson (all pseudonyms), all of which had a year 10 GCSE class exploring the subject of ‘identity’ and the same Identity Scheme of Work was delivered to all three GCSE classes every year. As I discuss more in-depth in chapter 6, I had originally asked Mrs Henderson, when working supply for Brill school, if she would like to be involved in the research due to us striking a work friendship. However, although she was willing to be involved, due to a timetable swap, I was assigned to another art teacher in the department, Ms. Gibbins, and her year 10 GCSE class as the site for my research.

The year 10 research class had twenty-five students, of which eight were boys. This grouping was a fairly representative cohort in terms of the gendered uptake for GCSE art and design in the UK, as it has been well documented in the literature for some time, that boys’ uptake of the
subject has always been less compared to girls (Dalton, 2001; Etherington, 2013; Wikberg, 2013). Whilst it is not in the remit of this thesis to discuss the gender disparity in art and design, it is worth mentioning that art and design as a subject is often discursively positioned as feminine in UK schools. This status is largely due to essentialist ideas of gender, for example: different boys’ and girls’ ‘learning styles’- art being coursework heavy opposed to quick/straightforward Maths tests; art positioned as a subject that explores emotions/self-fulfilment, as opposed to more ‘logic-based’, non-emotive subjects; a supposed lack of employment prospects, yet the arts and culture industry contributes £10.8 billion a year to the UK economy- as seen in chapter 2; and art and design being marginalised within measures such as the EBacc, whereas other subjects like Science/Maths, are given greater importance, discursively positioning them as dominant, logical and masculine (Dalton, 2001; Etherington, 2013; Wikberg, 2013). However, as art is often discursively deemed feminine, opposed to more ‘logic-based’ subjects, projects such as mine, exploring gender and sexuality, may be more accommodated for, as queering aims to trouble established systems, knowledges and final outcomes.

The ethnicity of the research class represented the wider population of the school, with six European other, six Bengali, four Chinese, three Black British, two White British, two Turkish, one Jewish and one Thai student(s). Out of the twenty-five students in the class, fourteen had Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), some of which had behavioural and emotional challenges documented under this label. One student with behavioural emotional challenges only attended four classes, during the entire time of the research project (late September 2017-late March 2018), as she was sent to the ‘hub’ - a place to learn in a more controlled and supported environment for students with emotional/behavioural difficulties- a common feature I have seen in state schools, especially in London.
As I discuss in greater detail in chapter 6, the class teacher, Ms. Gibbins, was white British, from a middle-class background and was slightly older than me, in her late 30s/early 40s and had been teaching at Brill school for eleven years. I found this combination to be fitting for the research, as she had a good amount of teaching experience accumulated yet was excited by exploring a new scheme of work.

4.6 Informed consent from the school, teacher and class

As exploring gender and sexuality with under 16-year-olds, could be deemed dangerous by some, especially in light of conservative social/school discourses mentioned in chapter 2 and discussed further 6, this presented challenges in the process of obtaining ethical consent – and serves to highlight the difficulties of exploring queerness, gender and sexuality with young people whilst adhering to BERA or university guidelines. Nevertheless, the scheme of work I devised for the intervention does sit within the exploration of ‘identity’ and therefore within the already established Identity Scheme of Work (the project the year 10’s at Brill school explore every year). It was under the heading of ‘identity’, in accordance with the British educational research association (BERA, 2018) and IOE/UCL ethical guidelines, I sought informed consent in September 2017, from headteacher and parents via a consent letter with a return participant slip (Appendix 1), which stated I would be exploring ‘identity’ with students. The letter provided information regarding the Identity Scheme of Work, detailing the research methods conducted and stating their child could withdraw at any point. As seen in Appendix 1, the consent letter discusses anonymity when reporting, the secure storage of data and the permission to show images of the students making the artwork and their artwork in conference papers, academic journals and the PhD thesis. At the same time, I discussed at length with students what the project would involve by making sure that they understood it was a project exploring gender and sexuality within the subject of ‘identity’ and that they could withdraw at
any point. This was indeed risky, as the consent letter framed the research under the exploration of ‘identity’ and used recognisable school policy discourses such as references to ‘inclusion’ and ‘equality’ - despite the project focusing on a more specific direction. However, Ms. Gibbins and the rest of the department and the students knew about the project explicitly and its intentions from the beginning, and when I later held the Queering the Art Classroom Exhibition featuring the students’ work as mentioned in chapter 1, both Brill school parents and students attended enthusiastically. In addition, the exhibition posters were all over the school. Therefore, while I had to exercise caution, the children and the classroom teacher knew the precise focus of the identity work which was gender and sexuality. It is important to mention here, that only two students, two boys, in the class did not give consent to take part in the research. The two students still worked on the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work as this was part of their GSCE yet did not take part in the interviews and focus groups, and their class discussion data has not included in this thesis.

As well as the discussion I had with the students regarding the project’s subject, gender and sexuality, I made it known to the class ‘who I was’. For example, I informed students that I was a PhD student from IOE/UCL researching their responses to the project. I also mentioned that I was an art teacher but would be take a more supportive teaching-assistant role in their class. However, I did not tell the students that I designed the project or that I was a lesbian, as I feared that they may not be as forthcoming regarding how they felt about the project, wanting to not upset me if they disagreed or did not like aspects.
4.7 Scheme of work introduction

When I designed the scheme of work, I had to consider my conceptual framework and the practicalities of school life. Whilst I do not wish to engender a binary between the two, as ‘ideal learning/pedagogy’ on the one hand, verses ‘restrictive schools’ on the other, I do have to account for disrupting the art classroom whilst making sure Ms. Gibbins keeps her employment and have the students attain a GCSE. My conceptual framework and the practicalities of school life, were at times at odds with one another, as wanting students to explore the materials and processes in a more open abstract manner, investigating complex concepts such as subjectivity/norms/identity formation, often competed with the reality of having fourteen students in the class with SEND who could easily disengage with such explorations. Therefore, the scheme of work and research had the potential to place considerable amounts of pressure on the class teacher, as Ms. Gibbins had to make sure her students would produce something that was recognised by external GCSE examiners and make sure her class behaved within school guidelines- not to mention, the less conventional scheme of work subject. For example, in my experience, some students do not like the freedom given to them in an art lesson and wish for a more structured lesson with clear examples and outcomes, which is antithetical to the scheme of work I am proposing. This is no different for some SEND or EAL students, where art teachers often provide a step-by-step guide to an outcome to support and include those students who may struggle to understand. There are also, of course, some students who disengage completely due to not understanding a lesson or who are simply not interested in the topic/subject, leading to disruption. Thus, considering the above, it was important for me to draw on aspects of dialogic education, often described as a pedagogical approach to engender dialogue between two or more people for the co-construction of meaning/critical acknowledgement of differences, when discussing the scheme of work with Ms. Gibbins.
Drawn on by artists such as Joseph Beuys, to engage visitors in discussions regarding art and politics in the 1970s, dialogic pedagogy recognises that meaning making is social rather than individual, as the dialogue accounts for each individual’s understanding in a critical way, accounting for contradictions and troubling differences to meet a mutual understanding (Rule, 2011). Hence, this dialogic process may prevent one individual’s understanding of reality overriding others - engendering reciprocity. Whilst I do not adhere entirely to dialogic education’s understanding of knowledge production in my conceptual understandings of knowledge creation, as this is excessively human centred, aspects of dialogic pedagogy did contribute to my conversations with Ms. Gibbins during the project. For example, I wanted to respect and gain an understanding of her perspectives, her insights, her knowledges and experiences of the students/school, to develop and build mutual understanding whilst working together - to develop a scheme of work that may cater for school realities with queerness. In other words, it felt arrogant or even authoritarian, for an outsider, such as myself, to create a scheme of work for Ms. Gibbins only to ‘deliver’.

Consequently, through the negotiations with Ms. Gibbins before and during the research, the scheme of work had aspects of a typical art GCSE project and some aspects it did not (see chapter 2 for discussion on art education today). For example, like an ordinary GCSE art project, Ms. Gibbins was adamant that students recorded artwork in A4 sketchbooks, yet unlike a standard GCSE art class, the majority of the students worked outside the sketchbooks, making work collaboratively with no clear outcomes. Also, the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work was in some parts structured, not unlike typical GCSE art projects. For instance, the scheme of work had three components to it, this was to ‘scaffold’ students’ exploration - as engaging students with more complex ideas regarding gender and sexuality or art practice and process, especially at the beginning of their GCSE’s, where most are fourteen years old, could cause
considerable issues with behaviour/engagement/inclusion - to which I have referred to above. And whilst my aim was to trouble the art classroom, there is an element of the scheme of work having to ‘fit in’ as it were, to the wider structures of school life- be it, behaviour policies, fifty-minute lessons, addressing the needs of SEND and EAL students, GCSE frameworks and art department material budgets – all of which demand aspects of structure. Therefore, the three components to the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, that acted as a scaffold to students’ explorations, do in some senses compromise my conceptualisation of queering, as the troubling is in many ways still structured and safe, conforming to aspects of school GCSE art norms. Yet I argue, that within the scaffolding of the scheme of work, the project does cultivate immanence, unfolding and experimentation, as the students, teacher and materials, did not have clear directions or outcomes, as the majority of decisions were made in the moment. Below, I will discuss the three components of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work and outline the ethnographic methods I used to generate data alongside to make the invention clearer for the reader.

4.8 Scheme of work first component- overview

The first component of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work consisted of a trip to the Queer British Art 1861-1967 at the Tate Britain in the last week of September 2017, followed by two discussion lessons in the first week of November 2017, where students discussed with Ms. Gibbins the exhibition, contemporary artwork, identity construction and essentialism. These two discussion lessons were followed by six practical lessons that continued to the end of November 2017, where students responded to the exhibition, contemporary artwork and the class discussions. Students collectively came to decisions regarding their practical responses with some support from Ms. Gibbins and me. I will explain the data generation methods in
greater depth below, however for the overview of this first component, I made field notes during the Tate visit regarding the students’ and the teacher’s responses, I had focus groups with the whole class the day after the exhibition to generate discussion regarding their experiences of the exhibition. I then recorded the two discussion lessons had after the Tate visit. I also had one to one student interviews in November 2017 with eight students and my first interview with Ms. Gibbins in December 2017. Below is a table for further clarification of the time and structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late September 2017</td>
<td>Tate visit</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late September 2017</td>
<td>After Tate -focus groups with whole class</td>
<td>Focus group-voice recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Two whole class discussion lessons</td>
<td>Voice recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Six practical lessons</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November/December 2017</td>
<td>One to one student interviews with eight students</td>
<td>Interviewing-voice recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Ms. Gibbins interview</td>
<td>Interviewing-Voice recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.0: Timeline and structure of first component of the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*

### 4.8.1 Scheme of work first component- rationale

Although, I mentioned in chapter 1 and 2, that the main focus of the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*, is on material processes/experimentation with the students, to offer different avenues to explore gender and sexuality outside of essentialist or figurative representations, towards a making process that may account for the complexities of gender and sexuality-Ms. Gibbins and I felt it important that students had an opportunity to begin the project, exploring
gender and sexuality topics in a more accessible way. For instance, the Tate exhibition and the figurative artwork shown to the students during the discussion lessons (discussed further in below), provided students opportunities to engage with ideas of what queer might mean/look like, and what gendered norms or androgyny may look like, and what the Tate or art historians/curators deem LGBTQ+/queer artwork to be. Here, the initial engagement with these subject and artworks laid the foundation to trouble later on in the scheme of work, notions of essentialism, identity construction and representationalism, as the artworks presented at the Queer British Art exhibition and the more contemporary artwork the students explored in class, consisted of depicting sexuality in figurative representations and explicit iconography to present a unified visible ‘LGBTQ+’ or ‘queer’ identity. As mentioned in chapter 2, LGBTQ+ people have fought for identity affirmation through a politics of representation, as they have been traditionally excluded from certain histories in the past, therefore understandably, a large majority of artwork deemed ‘LGBTQ+’ has consisted of depicting sexuality in figurative representations and explicit iconography - yet this is what the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work aims to trouble with students, to engender a different exploration of these subjects. In other words, in order to ‘queer’, Ms. Gibbins and I had to explore with students first, what we were queering, in this case, representationalism and essentialism, therefore the artwork presented in this first section assisted with this through the explicit depictions. Below I describe the first section in full.

4.8.2 Scheme of work first component- structure

I started in Brill school late September 2017, as Ms. Gibbins wanted the first few weeks of September 2017, to spend time with her new GCSE class before any outsiders, such as me, or research intervention came in. These few weeks gave her time to settle into a new school year
and understand the dynamics of the class. I was specifically told via email to come later in September 2017 because of these reasons. In the first few weeks of September 2017, Ms. Gibbins’ year 10 class, had started the *Identity Scheme of Work*, the same *Identity Scheme of Work* that all Brill school year 10’s complete. The work consisted of technical drawings of skulls and identity mind maps, largely focused on hobbies students liked (some of this artwork from previous year 10 groups, can be seen on the wall in Figure 4.11). As I said, I was not involved in these first weeks.

At the time of the research in late September 2017, there was a national exhibition on Queer British Art 1861-1967 at the Tate Britain. This was the Tate’s first show exclusively exhibiting ‘queer’ British art, celebrating the fifty-year anniversary of the decriminalisation of male homosexuality. During the two years of art and design GCSE, students usually attend one school trip to a public exhibition therefore, due to the interconnectedness of the Tate exhibition and the scheme of work’s subject, Ms. Gibbins and I organised a trip to the Queer British Art 1861-1967 exhibition in the last week of September 2017 (see Figure 4.1 and 4.2).

![Figure 4.1: Queer British Art exhibition poster feature Gluck, as well-known lesbian artist in the early 19th century.](image-url)
Ms. Gibbins had the students bring their sketchbooks and chose three artworks they found interesting. Once the students had found their three artworks, she asked them to respond by writing and drawing. We had limited time in the gallery (not even time for lunch), due to the London traffic on the way to the exhibition cutting our time short, so choosing three artworks seemed like a manageable number at the time. Also, due to being in the gallery space, students were only able to respond to the artwork in this manner, as drawing/writing was less messy, and we were told off for taking pictures (me included). Students were also told off by the gallery staff for sitting on the floor.

Figure 4.2: Brill school students visiting the Queer British Art at the Tate Britain

The next day after the Tate trip, Ms. Gibbins’ year 10 class, had two lessons focused on what students’ thought of the artwork from the Tate together with the introduction of new artwork by me (for Ms. Gibbins to discuss), from Zanele Muholi (Figure 4.3), Gabriel Roman (Figure 4.3) and Catherine Opie (Figure 4.4). The introduction of new artwork to the students was because the exhibition at the Tate had a noticeable lack of people of colour from the artwork, due to the time period but also largely due to poor curation, in my opinion. Therefore, acknowledging the different cultural backgrounds of the class cohort, I decided to have the students engage with more contemporary work too to discuss ideas surrounding intersections
of identity, be it race, class and sexuality. For example, Zanele Muholi and Gabriel Roman’s work, both non-Western artists, explore the intersections of race and gender/sexuality, something unexplored in the Tate exhibition. And Catherine Opie’s work, whilst a white Western artist, contrasted the iconography/imagery of lesbians such as ‘Gluck’ in the Tate exhibition therefore, providing students with different visual presentations of these identities. Consequently, the two discussion lessons were focused on troubling the construction of knowledge, in particular, exploring the notion of essentialism and representationalism in the artworks presented at the Tate and in class.

![Figure 4.3: Zanele Muholi’s photographic work 2010 (left) and Gabriel Roman’s collage work 2015 (right)](image)

Ms. Gibbins was not given any structured questions by me regarding what to discuss with the students. However, we did discuss a number of elements concerning the artworks before the discussion lessons. For example, we discussed ideas of essentialism, representationalism, intersectionality and gender roles/norms within the work. As I will discuss in greater depth in chapter 6, Ms. Gibbins was a self-confessed novice when it came to the subjects of gender and sexuality- which I learnt at the beginning of the research. Consequently, I did not provide Ms. Gibbins with much direction regarding what to explore with the class, as the intervention was designed to trouble classroom teacher practice alongside troubling the students. This was
because, the intervention wanted to problematise prevalent teacher centred didactic approaches to pedagogy, which happen to be congruent with the neoliberal zeitgeist - mentioned in chapter 2.

After the two discussion lessons, the students had six lessons of practical. It is important to mention here, the amount of time given for discussions and practical lessons was planned, as after this project, Ms Gibbins had to start another GCSE unit, so we needed the project to fit within the school timetable for the year. Ms. Gibbins and I asked the students to work collaboratively responding practically to the ideas debated in the two discussion lessons. Having students working collaboratively, especially at GCSE level, is unusual despite the benefits of collaborative work which can cultivate deeper meaning making and enjoyment.
between students (Ofsted, 2008). In my experience, this reluctance by art teachers to have students work collaboratively is largely due to the difficulty assessing individual student work at GCSE and behaviour management. Yet, as I have mentioned in chapter 2, I believe the assessment frameworks can be interpreted differently and can account for diverse ways of working, one being collaborative work. From a collective class decision, yet still in part guided by Ms. Gibbins, the students decided to experiment with gender presentation through dressing up and taking pictures of one another (See Figure 4.5). For example, students worked in groups and brought in their siblings/parents’ clothes from home, and either dressed as a different gender or reversed gender roles by posing as man in an effeminate way or performed stereotypical gendered roles.

Figure 4.5: Brill school year 10 students responding to the Tate exhibition, class discussions and contemporary artwork shown.
The pictures taken from the dressing up session were later used to create further artwork by the students. What the students did with their pictures or even clothes they had brought in, was their choice. However, the majority of students digitally manipulated their pictures on Photoshop and used collage, due to computer work being popular in the class and only having five more lessons left of the first component (as Photoshop is quick) (See Figure 4.6 and 4.7).

Figure 4.6: Student work from dressing up and manipulating the picture on Photoshop.
To end, the beginning section enabled students to engage with ideas such as gender and sexuality in a more accessibly manner whilst laying the foundations for further troubling later ideas of essentialism, representationalism and a human centred exploration of these subjects in the main section.

4.8.3 Scheme of work first component- ethnographic methods

Before the Tate trip with the students, I spent four lessons participating as a teaching assistant to make myself known to the class, to build relationships and discuss the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work with the students -whilst giving/collecting consent forms. Again, I do not align my conceptualisation of knowledge with some of the conventional research methods literature (Cohen, et al, 2011), which suggests that researcher participation creates bias, as different researchers will interpret different understandings. As mentioned above, this notion suggests
there is a distance from the researcher and the researched or the observer and the observed. However, my understanding is there is no distance, I am entangled within the research process and assemblage. After these four lessons, I made sure to write down/document anything that I found interesting or that was a ‘hot spot’. As mentioned above, Maclure (2013), attributes affective intensities, textures and relations between matter as escaping representational coding. For instance, she asks researchers to acknowledge ‘gut feelings’ as she believes that they ‘point to the existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thoughts, that are far more complex than the static connections of coding’ (p.172). Therefore, building on her notion of affective intensities escaping coding and applying Barad’s (2007) notion of agential realism, mentioned in chapter 3, I too believe these affective intensities intra-act with me during the research, as I am part of the research assemblage. Thus, throughout the fieldwork, I took field notes/pictures of anything that I had an affective response or ‘gut feeling’ to, be it, what the students or Ms. Gibbins said, or the non-human surroundings, the artwork, the sketchbooks, the materials used.

During the Tate visit, I took pictures of the student work and made notes regarding conversations had between students, me and Ms. Gibbins- again responding to affective moments or ‘hot spots’ within the research process.

The day after the Tate visit, I had focus groups with the whole class. For example, I had four focus groups, two groups with mixed genders and two groups with single genders. I chose this grouping as I wanted to generate as much varied data as possible. For instance, exploring more sensitive subjects like gender and sexuality, could easily provoke different responses amongst different genders. For example, a group of all boys may react differently to a group of all girls when discussing ‘queerness’, due to aspects of toxic masculinity in UK schools, where some
boys feel the need to perform certain gendered roles in front of other boys, to distance themselves from being perceived as feminine or gay (Renold, 2015). Therefore, having single and mixed gendered focus groups, meant I could generate varied responses. Ms. Gibbins and I also chose the students who we thought would work well together, to also generate as much conversation as possible.

In the focus groups, I discussed with the students what they thought of the artwork at the Tate together with what they understood as gender, sexuality, queerness. I did so, as I thought it was important to generate an understanding of their thoughts and feelings before the project fully began. I had also planned to do another focus group with the students at the end of the project to understand how they found the overall process- I will discuss this later below. The focus group interviews took place in a spare room opposite Ms. Gibbins’ class and the focus groups were voice recoded. I made notes during the interviews -again by making notes, I aimed to account for the affective moments or hot spots that may escape the voice recordings. The focus groups were fifteen mins in length and were semi-structured, as I did not have fixed questions. I chose to make the focus groups semi-structured because, I wanted to create a sense of flexibility and have the students feel more comfortable when discussing, what some would deem as sensitive subjects, especially with under sixteen-year-olds. However, despite the interview being semi-structured, I did have an idea of what I wanted to discuss with the students, that being, to generate an understanding of their views on the subjects explored. Therefore, my theoretical approach regarding the types of questions asked, were open and exploratory in nature. The types of questions I asked in the initial focus groups were as follows:

- What did you think of the Tate exhibition?
- What did you think of the people in the artwork? Did you like/dislike the artwork? Why?
• Have you seen artwork like that before?
• Have you heard of the term queer before the exhibition? If so, where? And what does it mean?
• What do you understand gender to mean?
• Have you come across LGBTQIA+ topics before in school? If so, where?
• What do you think queer art is? Is there such a thing as queer art?
• (In the data analysis chapters, there is also a presentation of the questions I asked alongside the responses of Ms. Gibbins and the students to my questions).

The two discussion lessons, after the Tate and focus groups, were recorded. The class had six tables with a Dictaphone on each one. I participated in the class discussions yet did not lead the discussion, nor did Ms. Gibbins or the students. Instead, Ms. Gibbins and I wanted the discussions to happen in a freer manner, allowing everyone to speak—again, this was to generate as many varied responses as possible, avoiding teacher talk. For the practical lessons, I participated with assisting students, taking pictures of the work and taking field notes—again in the same way, mapping affective moments and intensities.

At the end of the practical lessons, I had one-to-one interviews with eight students - three boys and five girls. The reason for the uneven number of boys to girl ratio, was that two out of the eight boys in the class did not consent to the research, leaving six boys - two of which had attendance issues, so I feared I would not be able to interview them again further in the project. For example, I wanted to interview the same students one-to-one for three separate occasions as the project progressed, to gain an awareness of how they interpreted the project and their making process. Another boy, Leonardo (pseudonym), who I will focus on in chapter 5, was categorised as SEND and had difficulty with language due to being a EAL learner, so I decided
to not chose him to interview either. Therefore, I had three remaining boys to interview. For the girls’ interviews, I asked Ms. Gibbins to suggest five girls that were varied in ability and enthusiasm in art and design. The interviews were recorded and were fifteen mins each. Here, I asked the students to bring their artwork to the interview and discuss what they had done. Like the focus groups, I did not have fixed questions for the interviews, yet the interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I had an idea of what I wanted to generate from the interview, that being having the students bring the artwork so I could ask about their making process. Therein, the types of questions I asked the students in the one-to-one interview were as follows:

- Explain to me what you have been making in class and why?
- Why did you choose to use that material/image/artist?
- Have you been linking your work to gender or sexuality? Why?
- What are your thoughts regarding exploring these topics in art?
- Are you enjoying/disliking exploring these topics in art? Why?
- In what ways have you explored these topics through making?
- (In the data chapters, there is also a presentation of the questions I asked alongside the responses of Ms. Gibbins and the students to my questions).

I also interviewed Ms. Gibbins, for the first time, towards the end of the first component. The interview was semi-structured, as I wanted to ask her questions regarding how she was finding the project and how she thought her students were interpreting the intervention, this was voice recorded. Therein, the types of questions I asked Ms. Gibbins in her interviews were as follows:

- How are you finding the project so far?
- In what ways are the students responding to the topics of gender and sexuality?
- In what ways are the students responding to the art practice?
- Are you enjoying the project so far?
• Would you improve/add anything to the project? If so, why?

• (In the data chapters, there is also a presentation of the questions I asked alongside the responses of Ms. Gibbins and the students to my questions).

4.9 Scheme of work second component- overview

The second component of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work consisted of students bringing in objects that they thought related to gender and sexuality in the second/third week of November 2017. This was followed by a class discussion which consisted of attempting to see if gender and sexuality could be read into objects and contemporary sculpture (discussed in greater depth below). In late November 2017, after the discussion lesson, students spent a lesson obscuring the objects by creating shadow drawings. From December 2017-February 2018, the students had practical lessons, responding collaboratively to the ideas of abstraction and reading gender and sexuality into objects. In terms of research methods, I recorded the object discussion lesson, made field notes during the practical lesson and interviewed Ms. Gibbins for the second time towards the end of the making lessons. I also interviewed the eight students again at the end of this second component section. To make the overview clear, below is a table of the timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>One whole class discussion lesson on reading objects</td>
<td>Voice recording of lesson and notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late November 2017</td>
<td>Shadow drawings</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017- February 2018</td>
<td>Practical lessons</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late January 2018</td>
<td>Ms. Gibbins interview</td>
<td>Interviewing- voice recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One to one student interviews with eight students

Interviewing-voice recording

Table 4.1: Timeline and structure of second component of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work

4.9.1 Scheme of work second component- rationale

The main section of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work consisted of scaffolding the students’ explorations regarding troubling heteronormativity and representation through making – this was an attempt to trouble the previous artworks or ‘representations’ of gender and sexual identity explored in the first component. That is to say, the aim was to have students research gender and sexuality outside the figure and trouble gender and sexuality representation of any kind, to evoke the complexities of subjectivity, (especially with regards to gender and sexuality), instead of a representational subject/sign. In other words, this section had the students think about heteronormativity in the everyday, outside of the figure/human, through focusing on objects. For example, by having students think about how objects’, textures, forms, smells, sounds, materials etc, come to represent things, in this case gender and sexuality, the intervention aimed to explore how we could disrupt those representations through making. For instance, a red house brick, could be associated with masculinity, due to its texture, shape and social connotation that men build things, therein, through the making processes in art, students could disrupt these associations through practical means. For example, the brick can be broken and made into something else unrecognisable or ambiguous – the brick is no longer a brick- hence, symbolically changing its associations and obscuring the gender and sexuality representation. Here, the original object and gender and sexuality, cannot be easily read, depicted or associated, leaving opportunities for open readings and open explorations – explorations through texture, movements, materials, processes- making. Thus, this
investigation through making, allows students to study gender and sexuality in a more liberated way providing the students more freedom than representational signs or human figures. To add, the intervention also, explored ambiguous objects and contemporary sculptures, that had no intended association with sexuality and gender or clear representation of anything (see Figure 4.8 and 4.9). The presentation of these ambiguous objects and sculptures, were for students to study if gender and sexuality could be explored with more obscure objects opposed to only reading gender and sexuality into recognisable objects. In other words, lipstick can easily and stereotypically be associated with women, but what sexuality or gender, could be associated with a hanging string sculpture? (see Figure 4.9). This exercise, aimed to scaffold students’ explorations towards thinking of gender/sexuality as an assemblage of things, materials, processes, objects, that may have more fluid and ambiguous associations.

4.9.2 Scheme of work second component-structure

In December 2017 through to February 2018, the class explored the main scaffolding component of the GCSE Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work. For the first lesson of the second component, students were asked to bring in for a class discussion everyday objects based on what they thought had gender and sexuality associations. Typical objects the students brought into class were perfume bottles, lipsticks and toy trucks. Ms. Gibbins and I also brought in objects too that had more ambiguous connotations, such as boxes, buckets, sponges together with pictures of abstract artworks. The artworks shown to the students were by artists (Figure 4.8) Ruth Hardinger and Eva Hesse (Figure 4.9), whose work had no intended association with gender and sexuality. Here, we asked the students to see if it was possible to read gender and sexuality into contemporary sculptures and more ambiguous objects.
Figure 4.8: Ruth Hardinger’s sculptural work
As discussed in chapter 2 and above, asking students to read gender and sexuality into abstract artwork and ambiguous objects, that had no clear or intended gender and sexuality associated with them, was intended to scaffold students’ investigations to start them to think about gender and sexuality outside of the figure and anthropocentric notions. In other words, the aim was to cultivate readings of objects and sculptures in terms of their processes and materiality, in order to move beyond the restrictions of bodily/figurative representational artwork towards more dynamic interpretations for gender and sexuality. In order to scaffold this investigation for the students in an accessible way, Ms. Gibson and I had the student work in groups to create shadow drawings of their objects, in a bid to ‘break’ or ‘disrupt’ representation, be it gender
and sexuality associations or the physical form of the object, to produce an abstract piece of work (See Figure 4.10 and 4.11). As seen from Figure 4.11, the form of the object is obscured in a practical manner by the shadow- rendering it ambiguous and hard to read.

Figure 4.10: Brill school year 10 students making their shadow drawings with Ms. Gibbins.
Figure 4.1: Student shadow drawings, breaking representation.
Leading on from the shadow drawing lesson, the students were asked to respond through making, to the discussion we had regarding reading gender and sexuality into objects and the shadow drawings. The students were asked to work collaboratively and create 3D work - as mentioned in chapter 2, 3D work is rarely approached in UK art classrooms, therefore the intervention wanted to engender this approach to making (see Figure 4.12 and 4.13). Yet, no instructions were given beyond this point regarding what the students should create, as the intervention wanted to cultivate an exploratory approach to art practice.

Figure 4.12: Brill school year 10s making their sculptures and displaying sculptures outside of the art classroom
4.9.3 Scheme of work second component - ethnographic methods

At the beginning of the second component, there was a discussion lesson where the students read the objects and sculpture. Much like the discussion lessons in the first component, I participated with Ms. Gibbins and the students but did not lead the conversation, nor did Ms. Gibbins or the students. Instead, the discussion happened more organically and fluid between all. I also voice recorded the object discussion lesson, by placing Dictaphones on all student tables - I took field notes on any affective ‘hot spots’ that may have escaped the voice recordings.

Again, for the making lessons, I participated with assisting students, taking pictures and writing field notes on anything that had affective intensities or ‘hot spots’.

Figure 4.13: Brill school year 10s making their sculptures and displaying sculptures outside of the art classroom
At the end of the practical lessons, I had one-to-one interviews with the same eight students - three boys and five girls. The interviews were recorded and were fifteen mins. Here, I asked the students to bring their artwork to the interview and discuss what they had done. Once again, the interviews followed a similar format as before, the interviews had no fixed questions, yet were semi-structured, as my aim was to understand the process of their art making, so asked questions accordingly (Please see above questions in 4.8.3). I also had my second interview with Ms. Gibbins, towards the end of the second component. The interview was semi-structured, as I wanted to ask her questions regarding how she was finding the project and how she thought her students were interpreting the intervention, this was voice recorded (Please see above questions in 4.8.3).

4.10 Scheme of work third component- timeline

The third component started at the beginning of March 2018 and closed at the end of March 2018. Students were given the choice to build and develop on the work they had produced so far in the project or create something entirely different yet related to the themes discussed. Towards the end of March, I had focus groups with the whole class, with the same groups I had interviewed at the beginning of the intervention in September 2017. I also had one to one interviews with the same eight students as the previous components and I had my last interview with Ms. Gibbins. The structure of the third component is below in a table for clarification:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Practical lessons</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>One to one student interviews with eight students</td>
<td>Interviewing-voice recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of March 2018</td>
<td>Whole class focus group</td>
<td>Focus group-voice recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of March 2018</td>
<td>Ms. Gibbins interview</td>
<td>Interviewing-Voice recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Timeline and structure of third component of the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*

### 4.10.1 Scheme of work third component- rationale and structure

For the final component, students were given four weeks to develop/build on the work they had created so far in the project. Ms. Gibbins and I asked the students to work individually this time and encouraged students to investigate new artists if they needed ideas, to engender a less didactic and structured pedagogy. The rationale behind this component was to have students respond to the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*, in a more student-led manner. Whilst the project had been able to provide students with more open approaches to art practice, parts of the intervention still had to be structured, to enable accessibility to the topics explored and to make sure enough work could be produced for their GCSE coursework. Thus, this third component, enabled students to respond as they wished (See Figure 4.15). Consequently, Ms. Gibbins and I provided little input/scaffolding in these last weeks of the project, only giving advice when the students asked us.
4.10.2 Scheme of work third component- ethnographic methods

As before, for the making lessons, I participated with assisting students, taking pictures and taking field notes on anything that had affective intensities or ‘hot spots’.

At the end of the practical lessons, I had one-to-one interviews with the same eight students - three boys and five girls. The interviews were recorded and were fifteen mins. Here, I asked the students to bring their artwork to the interview and discuss what they had done. Once again, the interviews followed a similar format as before, the interviews had no fixed questions, yet were semi-structured, as my aim was to understand how they interpreted the project and the process of their art making, so asked questions accordingly (Please see above questions in 4.8.3).
At the end of the project, I had the same four focus groups, one group of boys and girls and two mixed gender. The focus groups were semi structured, as I intended to ask the students how they felt about the project and their art making. I chose to conduct focus groups at the beginning and the end of the project, as I wanted to generate an understanding to see if their thoughts and feelings had developed or changed in any way. Therein, the types of questions I asked in the last focus groups with the class were as follows:

- What are your thoughts on the project?
- Did you enjoy/dislike the project? Why?
- Do you learn anything new?
- Did you like/dislike exploring these topics in art and making? Why?
- In what ways could the project be improved? Why?
- In what ways have you explored these topics through making?
- (In the data chapters, there is also a presentation of the questions I asked alongside the responses of Ms. Gibbins and the students to my questions).

As seen above, theoretically the types of questions asked are predominantly exploratory, as I wanted to gauge the ways in which the practices of the art classroom were disrupted and queered. I also had my last interview with Ms. Gibbins, towards the end of the third component. The interview was semi-structured, as I wanted to ask her questions regarding how she found the project and how she thought her students interpreted the intervention, this was voice recorded (Please see above questions in 4.8.3).
4.11 Methodological conclusions

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodological approach, whilst acknowledging the dilemma of the theoretical framework previously elaborated and the implications this has on ontology and epistemology. To compensate for this incongruence, I have drawn on aspects of diffraction and Maclure’s (2013) ‘hot spots’, for the research inquiry, to highlight how ‘we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because “we” are of the world’ (Barad, 2007, p.829). Thus, the generation of knowledge is about difference and understanding how we are a part of that generation, and how or to whom those differences matter (Barad, 2007). And it is understood that this might be achieved through mapping the ‘effects of difference’ (Haraway, 1992). Consequently, I have argued that my commitment to the generation of difference, which I understand as the mapping of incoherences/queerness that matters to me within the cut enacted, is inseparable to the knowledge generated in this thesis. 

To add, the chapter has also outlined the steps taken in the intervention with the teacher and students together with the research methods chosen, and whilst I am aware, I have resorted to rather established qualitative research methods, be it interviews and focus groups- I still had to account for the experiences had by those involved. In the next three chapters, I discuss my interactions with the class, the individual students and the class teacher. I was unable to engage with all the data from this project, some data still remains unexplored, yet by diffracting the data, I believe I have mapped the effects of differences that matter.
Chapter 5

Queering Matters:
Viviana’s and Leonardo’s becomings

5.0 Introduction

Material intelligence would then belong neither wholly to human beings nor to matter but would emerge in the space between them. It is in this space between perhaps - where an acceptance of not knowing allows human intelligence about matter to be coupled with the guiding intelligence of matter - that the creative practices of art and thought can take place (Jones, 2009, p.6).

This chapter concerns itself with material moments of queerness, un-codedness and unknowingness developing from the entanglement of human and non-human matter. The chapter studies two students making process during the course of the GCSE Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work. In particular, I focus on their sculptural practice created over a three-month period. The students’ artwork evolved from a whole class intervention where students were asked to read gender and sexuality into non-representational artworks/objects and to experiment with materials and processes. Experimentation with materials featured heavily within all the class interventions, especially the main (sculpture) section of the project, in the hope of investigate the complexities of gender/sexuality instead of an approach centred on representationalism. As I have mentioned in chapter 2, my intentions were to trouble and queer the art classroom by introducing topics usually not broached in schools, and to implement these subjects using an intervention that too aimed to trouble conventional school art practice through attempting to foster an experimental process. By contrast with traditional pedagogical methods,
which often underpin more didactic approaches to learning, applying the Deluezian (1994), Butlerian (2005) and Baradian (2007) theoretical frameworks explored in Chapter 3, could hold potential for learning that is not invested in prior knowledge or defined outcomes. As it could be argued that traditional practices explored in chapter 2, might limit the cultivation of new learning/knowledge/ways of being – certainly as far as the queer research perspective being adopted. Instead, I argue over the course of this first analyse chapter, the intervention worked with art’s materiality when intra-acting with human agents to generate difference and new thought through its experimental functionality. Thus, I am particularly invested in, as Rachel Jones (2009) states at the beginning on this chapter, ‘the space in between’ or put differently, the ‘unknown’, as this space I argue, is where the reconfiguration process may reside to open new ontological spaces for the art classroom and new ways of being.

But of course, this is no queer utopia. Inevitably, the students needed to attain a GCSE and be recognisable as art GCSE subjects, and Ms. Gibbins intelligible as a teaching subject within the norms of the school and exam board assessment criteria. Thus, we cannot escape the subjectification process of power, as we need to be recognised by one another to be viable subjects (Butler, 2005). Despite this tension, we can aim to locate some agency within the intra-action of human and non-human matter and consider the ethics of how we respond to matter of which we are a part of. How the issue of ethics comes to matter within posthuman ont-epistemologies may be difficult for some to comprehend, as this implies attributing agency or ethical relations to non-human entities, yet Karen Barad (2012) argues that questions concerning ethics are interwoven into ontology and epistemology. In other words, Barad (2012) deals with this potential difficulty by arguing that matter and meaning are inseparable. She remarks:
Ethics is therefore not about right responses to a radically exteriorized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part. Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are part, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities. Even the smallest cuts matter. Responsibility, then, is a matter of the ability to respond. Listening for the response of the other and an obligation to be responsive to the other, who is not entirely separate from what we call the self. This way of thinking ontology, epistemology, and ethics together makes for a world that is always already an ethical matter (p.69).

Hence, Baradian (2012) ethics acknowledges that human/non-human matter have a responsibility to respond ethically to one another, as we are all entangled within the intra-active processes of becoming. For Barad (2012), it is within this process of intra-action, how matter comes to matter, deeming ethics inseparable from all bodies. Put differently, for Barad (2012) we are all responsible for the relations between things, as the ‘the other’, meaning human or non-human matter, is not entirely separate from ourselves, as we are all interwoven in the relations between materials, human bodies, plants, paint, gas, liquid etc. Barad’s (2012) ethical responsibility when responding to matter, is a concept I wish to explore through examining the operations of intra-action between human and non-human matter. Within the data excerpts and artwork below, I study intra-actions which may hold potential for reconfiguration of the self/becoming and new imaginings for queering the art classroom.
5.1 Viviana’s Becoming

At the beginning of the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* GCSE unit, I conducted focus groups with the year 10 students, with a view to generate data in which the class expressed their thoughts and feelings regarding subjects such as, sexism, gender conformity and LGBTQ+, as the intervention focused on exploring gender and sexuality through art. The focus groups took place after the Queer British art exhibition at the Tate in late September 2017. Here, I was able to connect with the students before the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* began, to account initially for any growing responses or understandings over the course of the project.

Having asked the students their thoughts on gender and sexuality, in one of the focus groups, a girl called Viviana, agreed with another girl called Oman that ‘coming out’ as gay is, in their words, ‘fashionable and trendy at the moment’ and that ‘a lot of people are jumping on the bandwagon’. Daphne Patai, (1992), describes comments such as these as having ‘surplus visibility’ (p.36), where the presence of the minority, who have previously been invisible, now are visible, causing an effect of excessiveness compared to the already normalised majority. In this context, the heteronormativity of the school, goes unnoticed by Oman and Viviana as this is not seen as excessive compared to being gay in the school. Significantly, Oman and Viviana’s comments are a reminder of Michel Foucault’s (2000) concept of sexuality, as sexuality is ‘something that we ourselves create. It is our own creation’ (p.163), meaning, the more we speak sexual identities into existence, the more we create, the more we become. In this case, perhaps a greater number of students in Brill school could be identifying outside the heterosexual norm, as non-conforming gender and sexuality subjects are more spoken about within contemporary discourse. For example, many young people have access to these topics
through online and media platforms, whether it be LGBTQ+ YouTube bloggers, ‘out’ celebrities or other online sharing platforms. Yet, I argue the ability to decipher the information presented in these hidden curriculums online, can go unaddressed at home and in school, and as a result perpetuate overgeneralisations of marginalised groups. In his work, Sheng Kuan Chung (2007), contends the art classroom offers opportunities to deconstruct lesbian and gay stereotypes in media images, as subjects like art can raise aesthetic sensibilities and social awareness amongst students. Whilst I agree with Chung (2007), the art classroom can certainly foster these conversations through unpacking essentialist images—(after all this was one aspect of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, see chapter 4), the main section of the project aimed to build upon the unpacking of stereotypes in images, towards an investigation of gender and sexuality through making. Nevertheless, I continue to my next meeting with Viviana below.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 5.0:** Marlin and Viviana posing with their collaborative sculpture

For the main section of the project, component two, students were asked to work collaboratively, which is a rarity in schools, as schools usually operate along individualised
assessment frameworks as mentioned in chapter 2 and 4. The students were given the opportunity to think through making to explore ideas of breaking heteronormative connotations. For example, students were asked to bring in everyday objects that they believed had associations with gender and sexuality, to later investigate through materials and processes those associations. Students were allowed to respond to the themes however they wanted. The majority of students created 3D sculptural work which largely rested on obscuring the heteronormative associations they attributed to their objects. Below excerpt is from January 2018, when I had a one-to-one interview with Viviana about making her sculpture with a boy called Marlin (See Figure 5.0):

**Tabitha:** What was the idea behind your final sculpture with Marlin because you said it was a mixture?

**Viviana:** So, there’s this one section where there’s cardboard and Modroc over it but the cardboard got wet. So, the Modroc in it like folded and creased. And you can say that was a happy accident ‘coz we didn’t intend for that to happen we wanted it to be a flat surface. But once the imperfection happened, once we saw that the water like kind of not melted but kind of, you know. The structure of it like was compromised. So, it like fell down and it drooped, and it created a different surface, like the ridges and bumps. It created a different shadow, and it made the piece that little bit better ‘coz you know it was just that little difference the imperfection which actually improved the sculpture to the point where like you can see the detail and like from where the Modroc dries, it’s almost falling off and just the little pieces like that, that change it.
Here, I can derive from Viviana’s utterances, that the materials pushed Marlin and Viviana in unexpected ways during the making process of their sculpture. As it would seem from the above excerpt, that Viviana has understood that despite her and Marlin’s efforts to control the Modroc, a predetermined plan of theirs - ‘we wanted it to be a flat surface’, the materials did not conform to their wants, leading Viviana to think differently about how to make the sculpture. Therefore, rather than Viviana and Marlin imposing their ideas onto the materials, a fairly anthropocentric view from a Baradian perspective, they realised that they were merely one component in the making process and decided to work with the material processes instead of against. Figure 5.1 captures the Modroc folds and creases to which Viviana refers.

Returning to Barad (2003) by way of reflecting on this, agency is relational in nature, as agency is not owned by an individual subject but instead exists within the affective
relational practices between matter (in this case Vivanna, Marlin and the Modroc). For example, we can see the agency of matter and its affective relations, with Viviana’s ‘happy accident’. Just as Rachel Jones’ (2009) quotation suggests at the beginning of this chapter, the ‘happy accident’ echoes the unknown, serendipitous or queer space, as Viviana and Marlin let go of knowing, intentionality and perfection and embraced the unknown. In other words, Viviana begins to realise the material’s agency as something positive and therefore is happy allowing the Modroc to do what it wants, or perhaps in a Baradian (2007) sense, Viviana is responding ethically to the matter, as she is allowing it a space to become. Put differently, the matter fighting back, the Modroc’s ‘intelligence’ was the event that reconfigured the space and guided Viviana to think differently, to ‘emerge in the space between’ – as Viviana was able to become and emerge with the matter. She was the affect and she was affected (Masummi, 2002), as she reached new understandings regarding what counts as an ‘imperfection’ through affecting the Modroc and the Modroc affecting herself. Therein, the experimental nature of this part of the project, by which I mean, having the students explore in an unstructured fashion their everyday objects through making, enabled the materials and processes to affect Viviana and vice versa through the intra-actions. I believe Viviana’s ‘happy accident’, ignites what Maclure (2013) refers to as an affective ‘hot spot’ – as the affects of matter intra-acting with Viviana, unable to be fully captured through any coding process, not only sparked new avenues for Viviana and her art practice, but equally sparked fascination and wonder in me- the researcher. As Maclure (2013) states:

At any rate, we learned to welcome and pause at these moments, which could not be planned for, but emerged unpredictably in project meetings, or as surprises at the point of writing papers and articles. They were almost literally hot-spots, experienced
by us as intensities of body as well as mind – a kind of glow that, if we were lucky, would continue to develop. I would suggest that the act of dwelling in such moments and watching-making them grow like crystals, outwards from the edges, is part of an ethical obligation to relieve research subjects–especially, for our research, children–from the banality and the burden of the ethnographic and other codes that hold them in place (p.173/4).

Therein, I am to ‘dwell’ on this affective moment or ‘happy accident’ within the research assemblage and continue to make it ‘grow’ by mapping the e/affects. The interview continues:

**Tabitha:** So, these, these imperfections as you like to call them that are bringing out different effects in the sculpture. Are you, can you see a link between gender and sexuality, or can’t you?

**Viviana:** So, I’m not sure but like maybe how you intend things to be how you, you know. How you intend things to be when it doesn’t happen, how it’s not necessarily a bad thing how's it, it can like be good like the. I don’t know how to phrase this but like. So, you see like in real life and in gender and sexuality how if you want it to be one way and that one way doesn’t happen it’s not always a bad thing. It’s good in most cases when it’s not the norm. Or what you wanted it to be.

**Tabitha:** And I guess creating something new?

**Viviana:** Yeah. Creating something new.

In the excerpt above, it would seem as though the entanglement of matter or research assemblage - Viviana, the materials and processes, the discourses of gender and sexuality recently explored, other students’ views and me the researcher etc- may have reconfigured Viviana’s thoughts towards gender and sexuality. For instance, instead of Viviana feeling as though ‘coming out’ as gay is ‘jumping on the bandwagon’, her earlier thinking, three months prior, is now replaced with the idea of creating something new out of difference. As mentioned in chapter 4, Barad (2007), when discussing how differences materialise and come to matter, uses the metaphor of ‘diffraction’. Here, diffraction, creates something ontologically different
from reflection as it maps where the effects of difference appear (Haraway, 1992). Therefore, the difference that appeared within matter was the unintended slip of the Modroc, the ‘hot spot’ which enabled me to map the effects of difference, that being Viviana to see a new possibility. This effect of difference was made even more evident when Viviana, in her next sculptural work (after her collaborative work with Marlin, the last section of the project), decided to continue with the idea of material and its processes creating new potentials or the effects of difference coming to the fore.

As I have outlined in chapter 3 and 4, how I conceptualise knowledge production within this thesis is in line with posthuman and poststructuralist understandings, in that knowledge is in a constant becoming or being produced and negotiated intra-actively between matter. From the excerpt above, we can see an example of how the researcher, me, generates knowledges intersubjectively with Viviana due to the nature of my questions, which is also amongst the entanglement of materials, artworks, processes, schools, teacher and students etc. Following Barad (2007), the production of knowledge is unstable, contextual and unfolding, therefore, had this research been within a different context, i.e., different school, different researcher/students, different knowledges would have been produced as different intra-actions would have been exercised. Furthermore, I cannot say that I know myself or the matter/subjects I interact with, as my subjectivity also is in a state of becoming and full of contradictions, therefore the knowledge I claim to produce and know is questionable (Buter, 2005; Barad, 2007). Thus, it is important to acknowledge how I influence the situation not only with Viviana, who is clearly pushed to respond to my question regarding gender and sexuality and how this may connect to her art practice, but also how I have made a cut in the Baradian sense with regards to what data I decide to tell here. For example, I have included an excerpt that I think demonstrates a clear link between the topic and art practice, but of course there were students
who did not respond so eloquently or positively like Viviana to my questions (as seen later in chapter 7). Yet, as we are never apart from the cuts we help enact and therefore should be held responsible for the world we help create, I believe for the excerpt to be an ethical cut as it ‘maps where the effects of difference appear’ (Haraway, 1992, p.300) and these differences I believe matter (Barad, 2007). I now continue with the data.

Following on from her collaborative work with Marlin, Viviana continued to experiment on her own with the materials and processes in her sculptural work exploring the ideas of difference creating something new. I would catch Viviana running about the classroom, mixing up plaster, covered in powder, not talking to anyone, completely fixated on making. I would go over occasionally to ask if she was OK and so did Ms. Gibbins. Yet, whenever I went over to her, she would just assure me that she was fine by saying, ‘I’m just going for it, not sure what I’m doing but I’m just going for it and seeing what happens’. I contend, Viviana’s ‘acceptance of not knowing’ (Jones, 2009, p. 6) allowed for the process of intra-acting through experimentation, as nothing existed pre-collision. In other words, Viviana did not have a defined outcome or a particular established knowledge she wanted to recreate- e.g., drawing a representational work of a human face using aspects of formalism. Instead, Viviana let go and allowed herself and the matter to experience the immanence of affects by working and intra-acting together. For example, the warmth of her hands mixing with the plaster, the plaster warming and cooling as she placed cardboard within it, the wax sticking to the Modroc and it slipping with her hands - these were all moments of intra-active becomings - as Viviana was made in the process, as too the process was made with her. Not only was the material entering into unknown or incoherent space but so was Viviana. Here we can see a queering of *all matters*, as all matter reached a state of unknowingness. This was reiterated through Viviana’s idea of repetition:
Tabitha: And then why did you repeat the forms?
Viviana: I repeated the forms so that I would get mistakes, so that I can get new ideas and I can see what I could have done. So, umm, if it doesn’t work then you can find a new way to do it. And then you can use a new material, you can try umm try to make that material work or pair it with something else so that it works.
Tabitha: Hmm and then say with the video it’s a lot about process, you’ve videoed the process of you making that.
Viviana: I did.
Tabitha: And then how are you seeing, are you seeing process as linking to gender and sexuality or identity?
Viviana: Yeah, because it’s never a static thing, because umm, with my process I developed overtime, so my first stump and my last stump they are very different. And that relates to like a person, you’re not the same person a year ago, or several years ago or last week, so you’re constantly changing, you’re never static.

Figure 5.2: Viviana’s video work and voiceover

The excerpt is reminiscent of Jack Halberstam’s (2011) notion of queer failure, where conventional understandings of success, namely heteronormative - much like the happy gender conforming gay celebrities on LGBTQ+ display boards in schools- exclude others who do not conform in such ways. Thus, Halberstam (2011) exchanges the view of nonconformity as a failure and heteronorms as success, with the idea that failure creates new pathways of being
that too can be successful. For example, the ‘stability’ of gender and sexuality is as a result of its iterative nature, as norms are upheld by individuals in order to be recognised as viable subjects, femininity = women. Yet due to the iterative nature of the norms, stability is in fact a fallacy, as the norms are always open to slippage, rupture and failure. Here, Viviana’s artwork where repetition is so important (See Figure 5.2), ‘I pour, I mix, I tap, I repeat’ shows that things ‘failing’ is not necessarily a problem. Viviana, although prompted by me, clearly is able to extrapolate on the parallels in a new and more confident way as she is relating failure to gender and sexuality, as her work states, ‘Here, I ask you to read into my sculptures genders and sexualities that fail to repeat a form, a body, a norm’, this avowal seems to suggest that gender and sexuality diversity is also the result of repetition, failure and new ideas which defeat the norm and creates something new. In Viviana’s voiceover (See Figure 5.2) she interweaves the material processes that she uses to make her plaster sculptures by repeating, ‘I pour, I mix, I tap, I repeat’, with asking the viewer to read genders and sexualities into her sculptures. Here, I believe Viviana is clearly connecting the ‘mistakes’ of her art practice with the ‘sexualities that fail to repeat a form’. Therefore, Viviana’s understanding shifted from ‘jumping on the bandwagon’, a more pejorative reading of gender and sexuality, to a more fluid understanding - ‘you’re never static’, just like Viviana’s experimentations. At the end of the last interview, I had with Viviana in March 2018, her last comments struck me as aligning with Barad’s (2007) ethics of responsibility.

Tabitha: Hmm mm yeah, are you saying that the process of repeating these forms has helped you come to that realisation? (referring to the connection Viviana made with gender and sexuality)
Viviana: Yeah.
Tabitha: The process of making.
Viviana: Yeah, because if you don’t have mistakes then you know there’s not much, every art piece will have a mistake in it in some way but it’s just the way you react to it. You can either throw out the whole thing and start again or you can accept that and develop it, make it better, or keep it the way it is because it will add a certain emphasis to the whole piece.
Tabitha: Hmm ok. Are you happy with the work that you produced?
Viviana: Yes.
Tabitha: A little bit on why?
Viviana: Because it’s very, it’s portrayed the ideas that I’ve wanted it to, and so, you know, I’ve learnt a lot about how, what works and what doesn’t so for my next piece I already know, I have the knowledge to know what will work and what won’t and then the piece I do after that, I’ll have even more. It will just progress like that.

It would seem, Viviana has the ability to understand matter and how she is a part of its creation, as she says, ‘it’s how you react to it’. Yet, Viviana’s ‘reaction’ is not about, as Barad (2012) states, having ‘the right responses to a radically exteriorized other’, by which I believe her to mean, responding to the other through acceptable discourses yet still seeing the other as separate/not a part of yourself, but instead Viviana conveys an ethical understanding of the ‘relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part’. In other words, Viviana understands her role within the entanglement of matter and her shared becoming. For example, we can see this shared becoming when Viviana states, ‘You can either throw out the whole thing and start again or you can accept that and develop it, make it better’, together with her acknowledgement of her own growth through making, ‘I have the knowledge to know what will work and what won’t and then the piece I do after that, I’ll have even more. It will just progress like that’. Therein, Viviana’s response during the making process is ethical in the Baradian sense, as she intra-acts with the Modroc through ‘listening for the response of the other’ - the other here being the Modroc. This is because Viviana can see that the other (Modroc) is ‘not entirely separate from what we call the self’, as she understands that the Modroc will respond how it wants and thus has to choose her response to it to develop/progress in the making process -therefore recognising a shared agency or a shared becoming (Barad, 2012, p.69). As Barad (2012) has stated above, ‘even the smallest cuts matter’, perhaps the smallest cut here is Viviana’s ability to respond to how she contributes to what matters in terms of the making process. Thus, Viviana’s explorations with materials are her thinking process, as she and the
artworks are made in the process of the process. Here, I argue, within the intra-action of human and non-human matter, art becomes something that does, instead of something that is- that is to say, the art making process is what makes us and vice versa.

Figure. 5.3 Viviana’s Sculptures pieces- The Stumps.

I do not want to focus on the final outcome of Viviana’s work too much, a decision I have made throughout these analysis chapters, as I fear discussing the outcome of work enforces the idea of what art is, deflecting from the doings in the art making process between human and non-human matter. However, we can see clearly from Viviana’s voice over and video\(^\text{17}\), that she was subsumed in the ideas of repetition, material agency and process. Viviana filmed the process of the work to capture these moments of intra-acting with materials, the on-going

\(^\text{17}\) Video can be found: https://vimeo.com/273736196
making, the ‘constantly changing’. Applying David Getsy’s (2015) queer readings of abstraction discussed in chapter 2, Viviana’s work evokes a site of in-betweenness as her work rests outside of representation and definitive description (See Figure 5.3). The work, a mixture of plaster and cardboard, captures a hybridity of something and nothing, an incompleteness and a completed, it is both rough and smooth, fragile and hard, recognisable but confusing. If we seek to find gender or sexuality in Viviana’s sculptures, it may be limiting to suggest only looking for male or female, gay/straight classifications, as any categories fixed to the work do not do the work justice. This is because there is no logic to the sculptural forms, no final destination or linear order, just continual states of becoming something, but nothing. In Viviana’s video work and with her presentation of the buckets she used, we can account for her capturing the process of formation itself. Viviana’s ‘stumps’ remind me that we are all continually becoming something throughout our lives and that we are all in a constant process of formation and flux. Therefore, when investigating Viviana’s work, we can see the potential for considering a wider range of possibilities for gender and sexuality that speak beyond binaries and static categories or even the human. The ambiguity in the artworks tells me that there are no answers or essential truths, just continual interpretations and readings (Getsy, 2015).

5.2 Unintelligible becomings: When matter troubles discourse

As I have outlined in chapter 2, art in schools has long been criticised for replicating bodies of knowledge which reinforces the idea of what it means to learn art. This form of art practice has constructed art teachers and students to become certain types of subjects, mainly neoliberal due to the growing academisation of schools facing pressure to compete in league tables. This privatisation has meant that art practice is rested on teaching students to pass exams, instead of
exploring what the art making process can do. As we have seen from Viviana’s excerpts, art/matter when mixed with human agents has the ability to generate new thought and allows us to be a part of the process of what it means to become and create ourselves in the process. This was because, the physical act of human matter and non-human matter intra-acting through the making process -Viviana and the serendipitous Modroc -offered contact to the ‘in between’ space or the unknown/queer space and made Viviana think differently. In other words, when we encounter something that is different, incoherent or unknown, even a Modroc slippage, we are compelled to feel and experience differently. Thus, the process of making art has the capability to generate the space of the in-between, the pre-subjective, the queer, the unknown through its experimental functionality which can produce the effects of difference. Therefore, the intervention encouraged the GCSE students to use art’s functionality by experimenting with the materials and processes, which in turn acknowledged what the art making process does, instead of a presupposed idea of what art is. This meant that the artwork produced by the students escaped the usual production of work seen on the art GCSE course at Brill school. In the excerpts below which still centre on Viviana’s work, I want to focus on how the intervention created, not only moments of unintelligibility or difference within student and teacher subjectivations, but also how the intervention generated unintelligibility amongst non-human matter through its abstract and non-representational presence. To put it simply, I want to explore how the intra-actions of non-human matter came to puncture and trouble the discourse leading to new ontological states - I do this through mapping the effects of this difference. Again, through dwelling on the ‘happy accident’ or affectual ‘hot spot’ experienced with Viviana, I am following the growth of this intensity through the data, as I map where the intensity takes me (Maclure, 2013).
During the project, I interviewed the class teacher, Ms. Gibbins, three times. I will explore her interviews in greater detail in the next chapter, but for now I want to focus on an excerpt that concerns Ms. Gibbins and Viviana. My second interview with Ms. Gibbins took place 3 months into the project December 2017 (just under halfway) after year 10 parents evening. During the interview, Ms. Gibbins had mentioned Viviana’s concerns over the quality of her sketchbook compared to other students (see Figure 5.4 Vivian’s sketchbook).

**Ms. Gibbins:** I mean for some of them, Viviana at parent’s evening was stressing about her sketchbook saying it’s not, every page isn’t nicely titled and I was you know, really able to put her at ease and say it’s not about you know having a beautiful title at the top of a page, it’s about the content and the process that you’ve gone through and I think that’s perhaps something that she may have been stressing out about when she chose whether she was going to do GCSE art or not.

As I have mentioned in chapter 1, one of the reasons I chose Brill school, is that their art department was very much entrenched in established art knowledges, i.e., traditional canons, presentation and representationalism. I argue, the above excerpt is an example of Brill school’s art practice because since Viviana started in year 7, she was under the impression that a beautiful sketchbook is what was valued in the department. So, even though Ms. Gibbins has assured Viviana in her own words that ‘it’s about the content and the process’ instead of ‘having a beautiful title at the top of a page’, Viviana has gone through key stage 3 and arrived at the beginning of year 10 believing that if her sketchbook is not aesthetically pleasing or neat, she will not achieve the grade. Ms. Gibbins acknowledges this thinking as common amongst students, as many consider not taking art for GCSE because they believe they ‘cannot draw’ (or feel that art has no relevance within the word of work) - statements I have heard many times when discussing with students their options for GCSE. What I want to consider here is, how assessment frameworks construct teacher and student subjectivities to create a certain type of art practice connected to achieving grades. I argue, Viviana’s sketchbook presents a material
juxtaposition between learning to conform and reproduce a body of knowledge which can be taught and assessed, as opposed to learning to become, which is less quantifiable, more unknown and experienced differently by subjects. Viviana’s sketchbook is unintelligible within certain interpretations, be it formalism, or the culture of the school art department/assessment criteria. Potentially, Viviana’s ‘different’ sketchbook risks her viability as a successful art student as she has produced work that does not conform to Brill schools’ usual art practice or exam board sketchbook exemplar (OCR, 2016a; 2016b). As seen in chapter 2, the exam board exemplar, excludes students with different learning styles and art practices that are outside of these frameworks, suggesting that only learning or thinking can occur within those frameworks. This could happen to Viviana or students like her, who do not conform to these systems, despite, I would argue, Viviana learning in relation to new ways of being and thinking. Viviana was fortunate to have a teacher like Ms. Gibbins, who understood her process of working, as not all art teachers, art GCSE examiners or exam boards acknowledge this. Although, I distinctly remember from my fieldnotes that Ms. Gibbins being concerned that she had marked the students too generously and asking Viviana to add a ‘bit more writing’.

Figure. 5.4 Viviana’s book- unintelligible within the interpreted framework
Nevertheless, Viviana’s sketchbook was further up for negotiation when it was presented in the Queering the Art Classroom Exhibition at Sutton House, Hackney 2018 (see chapter 1). Even though, the exhibition of the students’ work was not part of the research project, I did make a note of a comment from an acquaintance of mine, as I thought it was important to include it here as it ignited another affectual ‘hot spot’. This hot spot emerged as the comment irritated me pushing me to have a bodily reaction, and the comment also sparked with the previous hot spot experienced with Viviana’s ‘happy accident’. My acquaintance was a fellow art teacher from another London school, who made a point to come over to me and say:

Debbie: I just spoke to Jackie (head of art at Debbie’s school, who also came to the exhibition) and her and I both thought the books were marked too high. Someone got an 8, and their book wasn’t really an 8.

Yet, the only student that achieved an 8 was Viviana. For Michel Foucault (1977), technologies of power, such as assessment frameworks, impact and create certain types of subjectivities. Within this process, knowledge becomes legitimised, such as formalist skill, through how well subjects can perform and meet the demands. In this case, Debbie and Jackie’s understanding of artwork that deserves a high grade and is therefore valued, is one that meets the assessment criteria – an object can be recognised and understood. However, Viviana’s sketchbook work is unintelligible within Debbie and Jackie’s epistemological frameworks of art teaching. Here, I want to consider how the very presence of the sketchbook, its messy pages, falling off, bits of Modroc and scribbly writing disturbed the discourse of what a successful sketchbook should look like through its difference. The materiality troubled the idea of what should be valued in this context. By placing discourse on to the material object, i.e. Ms. Gibbins awarding Viviana a high grade for her sketchbook, the material punctured the established epistemological
framework and exposed it through its material difference. In other words, the sketchbook’s material unrecognizability punctured the discourse that was placed onto it, ‘a grade 8’, as the material escaped the framework. The grade 8 did not seem to fit with Debbie and Jackie’s epistemological understanding of what a grade 8 is, or for that matter, what counts as ‘good’ art. Deleuze (1994) expands on this notion of difference and unrecognizability creating a change in state:

The new, with its power of beginning and beginning again, remains forever new, just as the established was always established from the outset, even if a certain amount of empirical time was necessary for this to be recognised. What becomes established with the new is precisely not the new. For the new - in other words, difference - calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable terra incognita (p.179).

From this perspective, to focus on what is known and what is recognised limits thought, or the potential to become differently. I argue the material object/sketchbook pierced the discourse within the intra-action, as it prompted my acquaintance and her head of art to question what they know and recognise, and reassure themselves that they were more knowledgeable when it comes to art teaching, and that I should be told that Ms. Gibbins had marked too generously.

-I argue this is a further example of where the effects of difference appeared, the difference being the materiality of the sketchbook and the effects being their reactions (Haraway, 1992). For Foucault (1977) this is also an example of how subjects discipline themselves and others. Instead of an exterior power telling Debbie and Jackie what they should believe, they discipline themselves from within, as they are legitimatised as teaching subjects through following the
established epistemological frameworks. However, this line of thinking unfortunately excludes Viviana’s learning and constricts art practice from evolving in schools.

Another example of the unintelligible material troubling the discourse, or the queering of matters, is when I overheard a conversation between the head of art (HOA) Mrs Smith in Brill school with a year 7 student in February 2018. The year 7 student was her son who also attended the school. It is important to mention, that the HOA and Ms. Gibbins, did not get along despite having worked together for over 10 years. Ms. Gibbins explained to me that it was mainly due to the HOA not giving her A level for consecutive years and being very controlling over the schemes of work. The schemes of work tended to focus on Esher, Picasso, Matisse for key stage 3 and at GCSE for identity, Chuck Close, Erich Heckel and Gillian Wearing.

The HOA came into Ms. Gibbins’ room after school whilst I was helping tidy at the back of the room. At the time we were making the sculptures with the class, so the room was messy and busy with cardboard and plaster. The year 7 boy, who was doing his art homework at the time, pointed to Viviana’s sculptures and asked the HOA, his mother, ‘why aren’t we doing this kind of art?’. She simply replied, ‘But is it art?’. Her reply, igniting yet another ‘hot spot’ as the affects of the ‘happy accident’ burn and grow pushing forward to this moment, affecting my thoughts and decisions, as I take notes. It is possible to analyse this statement as a dig at Ms. Gibbins’ student’s work (Viviana) due to the ongoing rift between the HOA and Ms. Gibbins, or we could consider that this off hand jovial remark holds a greater significance. I argue that the material presence of the unruly cardboard, bits of falling off plaster, confusing stumps, subversively parading as art, punctured the known and the recognisable for the HOA towards the terra incognita. The question, ‘But is it art?’ – suggests a disconnect between the epistemological frameworks understood by her and the material pieces in front of her. This
disconnect is the space that is pre-subjective, unknown, incoherent and affectual- meaning, it is the space before recognition or even thought, as it is felt before it is known. I suppose my invested interest in unintelligible matter puncturing the state of affairs - is due to the matter demonstrating that the human subject is not the only entity to generate newness, thought or create different e/affects. But in fact, (all) matter formation is dependent on the other (Barad, 2007; 2012), intra-acting through experience and affect to cultivate a change in state. If we are to think about queering the art classroom, or queering in general, we cannot afford to focus on only unintelligible subjects within discourse and language, but on how the intra-actions of non-human, human and unintelligible matter can disrupt the regulatory, pushing us into the unknown and incoherent. Now having followed the spark of the hot spot and watched and made it grow (Maclure, 2013) through mapping the effects of its difference and affectual intensities, I now turn to another student to whom I map a becoming with material.

5.3 Finding a space within matter

In this chapter so far, I have made use of new materialist and queer discourses to analyse one student’s becoming. In this next section, I hope to draw upon Judith Butler’s (2005) ethical relationality, as I believe some of her concepts align with Barad’s (2007) ethical matterings. This alignment is due to both scholars’ propositioning agency as arising within moments of relationality between matter. However, for Barad (2007), agency arises between all matter, human and non-human, through intra-action (as seen with Viviana), and for Butler (2005), agency arises within the discourse between subjects. Although, I align myself with Baradian ethics when analysing the data generated from the study, as I believe that all matter contributes to the creation of being and thus production of agency at the site of constitution. I do nonetheless argue that Butler’s (2005) ethics is especially pertinent to this data, as she accounts
for how we as subjects enact ethical violence upon one another and suggests how we might ethically navigate this violence through creating moments of incoherence and unknowingness—a concept that has been arising from the data throughout this project.

According to Butler (2005), in ‘Giving Account of Oneself’, the subject is a ‘self-narrating being’, who, when in the face of the other, is asked to give an account of itself, to be interpellated into a coherent subject- and vice versa (p.11). Butler (2005) proposes that it is within this exchange, between the self and the other, that we must suspend the desire for ‘complete coherence’ in order to relate to one another more ethically (p.42). For Butler (2005), we perform ethical violence upon one another when we ask the other to be known or coherent to us within normative socialised frameworks. Butler (2005) names this scene of address between the self and the other an ethical violence because the recognition leads to the subjectivation of the self, a process which can be restrictive as it pulls us away from, what Butler (2005) declares, ‘becoming human’ (p.136). Butler (2005) implies ‘becoming human’ as a state of being without social conditioning- the pre-subjective. However, our chances of ‘becoming human’ are momentary within this process, as all matter, once created, is made known and coded back within discourse. Yet, temporality of the unknown space can still give rise to agency and therein a change in state, an area to which this study positions itself.

While Butler’s (2005) concepts would be too anthropocentric for Barad (2007), as Barad would question ‘becoming human’ as this does not account for the relations between all matter, this does not mean we cannot explore how all matter (not just subjects, like Butler), may contribute to ethical violence within the intra-active process and how all matter can contribute to unknowingness and changes in state leading to ethical relationality. To make myself clear, Barad (2012) positions her ethical relations within ‘listening for the response of the other…who is not entirely separate from what we call the self” (p.69), suggesting that all matter
contributes to the process of becoming and thus implying that we should think and respond in less anthropocentric ways- unseeing ourselves separate to other matter. Whereas Butler (2005) locates her ethics in moments of incoherence when faced with the other, perhaps seeing two separate entities, to ethically relate and become human. This is a subtle difference, but for the next data excerpt involving another student, I want to explore how Butler’s (2005) incoherence and Barad (2005) entangled matter can work together and contribute to an ethical queering of matter.

In my time spent with Ms. Gibbins’ year 10 art class, I came across another student, a boy called Leonardo. Leonardo was a statemented student and an English as a second language learner (EAL). A ‘statemented’ student – is a category within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) structure in the UK. With society in the UK becoming progressively more heterogeneous, successive UK governments have committed to providing high quality education for students with SEND, that is, those students identified as having learning difficulties/disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most of their peers. Since the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978, the education of students with special needs has undergone a radical change in the UK, and this continues to evolve. Currently the UK government defines SEND students using two categories: (a) SEND support – whereby students may require ‘extra or different help … from that provided as part of the school’s usual curriculum’ (DfE, 2018); (b) Statement of special educational needs or Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan – where a formal assessment has been made and ‘a document is in place (i.e., a statement or EHC plan) that sets out the child’s need and the extra help they should receive’ (DfE, 2018). As Leonardo is a statemented student and an EAL learner he would fall into category (b) within this SEND structure. Yet, drawing on the social model of disability and aspects of Crip theory (McRuer, 2006), disabled people are deemed disabled or ‘abnormal’ due to the barriers in society, not by their differences. In other words, disabled people are made
abnormal or disabled due to fitting them into our frameworks, the frameworks of the able-bodied. Therefore, in light of the social model of disability, the SEND DfE model presented above, which is the notion that a child may require ‘extra or different help’, could push against the social disability model in some circumstances. For example, in art and design, art teachers often create differentiated resources for SEND and EAL students vis-à-vis separate tasks or step-by-step guides to help them meet the standards along the other students. Yet, whilst this is seemingly well-intentioned, I argue that this practice is problematic, as it still resides on the SEND student having to fit the structure of the majority and can only be recognised as learning through these frameworks -therein falling short of the social model of disability. In the excerpt below, I aim to provide a different understanding, which may align with aspects of the social model of disability by applying Butler’s (2005) ethical framework, in that Leonardo may be allowed to exist outside of these frameworks whilst being recognised as learning in a different manner. But first, I will describe Leonardo.

Leonardo was small for his age in comparison to his peers- having not hit puberty quite yet. He had braces on his teeth, and he had what would be considered a strong Portuguese accent. When speaking he sometimes got his tenses muddled and words in a non-standard order. He did not like writing and avoided it as much as he could. Any writing he did tended to be hard to read and consisted of large letters, spelling mistakes and slanted lines, but I did notice he enjoyed the making process in art. I got the impression that he was liked by his peers however, in the group interviews I had with him and other students, some of the boys would snigger at what he said due to the incoherence of his utterances or his confusion over the questions asked. He was seated in a lesson plan with other children who all had special learning needs however, Leonardo appeared to need more help. For the first couple of months of the project he did not have a teaching assistant (TA) with him, which meant that Ms. Gibbins felt she needed to
support him more and felt stretched across the large class of students with complex needs (see chapter 4). It is relatively unusual to have a TA in art and design, mainly due to the assumption that statemented children do not need much help in art or in other ‘non-academic’ subjects, opposed to more ‘challenging’ subjects like Maths or English. (This is also another way for schools to save money as they can employ fewer TA’s). However, Ms. Gibbins, after persistently asking the school for a TA for Leonardo, eventually was given one to support him for the rest of the year. I did not interview Leonardo one-on-one over the course of the project, like I did with other students, as I made a decision that an interview, because of his language and learning difficulties, might be too much for him. I now review my decision as problematic, as from the outset, I had labelled Leonardo and performed, what Butler (2005) would say, a certain kind of ‘ethical violence’. In other words, I did not suspend my desire to know him, instead I felt as though I knew him based upon the discourses and norms that labelled him as special needs and EAL within the context of schooling - a child who ultimately needed an adult to help him. The data excerpt below features a section of the interview I had with Ms. Gibbins, at the end of the project in March 2018 which accounts for Leonardo’ position in the project.

Figure 5.5: Leonardo’ sculpture 2018
Tabitha: They’re still. I’d be interested to see what they are like in year 11.
Ms. Gibbins: Yeah. Me too. I’m worried.
Tabitha: Yeah.
Ms. Gibbins: But we’ll work through it. We’ll see how it goes.
Tabitha: Why are you worried?
Ms. Gibbins: Because I feel, your injection of new to the way that we’ve taught this scheme of work is, you know, there’s a lot of you in it. And you’re not going to be here next term (puts on a comical sad voice). Not going to be here next year. And I’m going to be, you know, I, I, I want to try and capture all of the best bits of the way they’ve responded and the enthusiasm that the majority of them have been showing. Umm, I’m. And, and, an. And make sure that they use that when they move into, you know the next scheme of work and adorn, decorate and embellish, the cultural scheme of work in year 11. Umm so that they’re not all just making armour and all of the rest of the stuff that we always see turn up, the uniform that we see turn up. The other thing that I will say is. I was looking at again, I was looking at Leonardo’, the statement, you know he’s got a statement. And I was looking here at his little artefact and I just think, there would be some of the highest achieving kids in the class might come to that conclusion in their work and although I don’t think Leonardo actually gets what he was doing. He just became obsessed with peeling paint and the glue gun. He got there. And his sketchbook, you know, support teacher, you can see evidence of her working with him trying to explain how he’s getting to those places and you know. He’s moved up a grade. And he's. He’s doing alright and I think, you know, there’s an awful lot of art out there that is done purely for the process of it and I think students like Leonardo, that’s probably why he chose art because he likes to get the paints out and the clay out or whatever and I think that ought to be encouraged as well. I think there’s an awful lot of art students who feel that at the end of year 9, do I want to do art GCSE, well I can’t draw, so I’m not going to do it. But you know, would massively love just a couple of years playing around with materials, experimenting and trying stuff out and I think that’s what Leonardo has accomplished.

Similarly, with Ms. Gibbins, I too remember Leonardo’ fixation when making his sculpture or ‘artefact’ (See Figure 5.5). He seemed to exist in a space where thinking was making, feeling was action and being was doing. Each picked off bit of paint was carefully glued on top of another suggesting meaning in each placement. To anyone watching Leonardo make his sculpture, it may have only looked like he had become ‘obsessed with peeling paint and the glue gun’, and, he may well have not known ‘what he was doing’ - however Ms. Gibbins raises important points regarding the predicaments with the majority of subjects in education, as learning is reduced to established knowledges and normative frameworks of assessment, which
leaves many students unaccounted for, art and design being no exception. Yet I want to argue in this thesis that art and design given a different lens may hold the capacity to recognise students like Leonardo.

By way of extension, we could understand Leonardo’ sculpture through established epistemological frameworks, such as formalism, by demonstrating how his work is not meeting particular standards, or, it could be understood through aspects of queer theory, by describing how his work broke gendered representation for example (in line with the interventions explorations). This would indeed legitimise Leonardo’ sculpture and within a school context, enable him to ‘move up a grade’. Alternatively, we could consider that this approach would rest on interpreting and fitting his work into norms, discourses and established knowledges. Here, it could be argued, we would be demanding Leonardo to make himself and his work known to us through what we can comprehend, an ‘ethical violence’.

As mentioned previously, the GCSE/A level frameworks tend to lead to a dominant linear process for making - beginning with observational drawings, progressing to different media such as charcoal, oil pastels to ‘experiment’, then later developing to a written analysis in a sketchbook relating to an artist, leading to a ‘final piece’. As Ms. Gibbins comments testify, this framework leaves ‘an awful lot of art students who feel that at the end of year 9…well I can’t draw, so I’m not going to do it (art)’. Therefore, what is unaccounted for, within this matrix of regulation and conforming to frameworks, is supporting spaces for learning as a process of becoming that does not fit a framework - a space that is unknown (Atkinson, 2011). Yet, as Jo Freeman (2013) argues in her paper The Tyranny of Structurelessness, regarding the women’s movement of the 1970s, even if certain power structures have been removed purposefully by a group to eradicate hierarchies and dominance, as suggested above with
supporting spaces of learning that do not fit a framework, this does not mean other power structures are absent in informal structures. Freeman (2013) suggests that whilst the women’s liberation movement wanted to place great emphasis on leaderless and structureless groups, informal groups were still being formed through friendship bonds which can influence decisions and thus seek to exclude other people in the group. Therein, Freeman (2013) contends, it is important to make certain structures visible, so people can be held accountable or be voted in/out, and advocates for a more democratic structure within the structure. Whilst this study does not involve a group lobbying for equal rights, like the women’s movement, it does involve a group of people bound by certain power structures, whether it be formal (school rules, assessment, teacher/students/researcher power dynamics) or informal (friendship groups, my bond with Ms Gibbins, teacher favourites). Therein, as stated in the methodology section, in the scheme of work overview, I have aimed to bridge the divide between these differing structures, by scaffolding parts of the intervention to be structured and unstructured - the unstructured parts largely left to art making as a way of engendering experimentation with materials and processes. Moreover, I argue these unstructured parts, within the art making process of the intervention, allowed students like Leonardo to exist differently within the overarching school structure. For example, by reflecting on Ms. Gibbins’ comments towards Leonardo, through a new materialist lens, and utilising Butler’s (2005) ethics, we might begin to account for how Leonardo intra-acted with the materials and how the materials intra-acted with Leonardo, which created a space for him by detaching the demand that he be known. Instead, the relationship between the matter - human and non-human, allowed Leonardo, within the entanglement of matter, to find a place for himself within the material. Unlike previous scheme of work, where Leonardo was asked to produce predicted outcomes and demonstrate techniques and skills, and therefore asking Leonardo and the material to make themselves known to the teacher e.g., requesting Leonardo to hold a pencil in a certain way, so
that the pencil is asked to produce a particular tonal outcome (an ethical violence), a radically different pathway opens. A pathway of experimentation, process and an encounter with the unknown or incoherent. Drawing on Butler’s (2005) language, the ‘other’, in this case, the non-human matter (glue/paint), did not require Leonardo to make himself known through certain frameworks of recognition, but the paint/glue instead worked with his hands, his movements, his temperature, his affects, guiding Leonardo to allow certain things to happen, thereby guiding Leonardo in learning to become outside of a normative framework. In this instance, I would argue that Leonardo has achieved more than his peers, as he was able to enter into a space that did not consist of him constantly asking me or Ms. Gibbins whether he was doing the ‘right thing’, but instead through the process of making and using materials constituted his chance of what Butler (2005) describes as ‘becoming human’ (p.136). In other words, Leonardo was able to enter into a space, where the other (the paint/glue), did not ask that he be recognised or make himself known, and neither did he demand the materials make themselves known to him; alternatively, he was allowed to be as incoherent as the materials-engendering, I believe as ethical encounter. Therein, within these temporal moments between matter, the frameworks of which Leonardo must perform to be recognised, that being, the reproduction of certain school art orthodoxies in line with assessment, were disrupted, as the systematic barriers of the able bodied, that make Leonardo ‘SEND’ were dissolved- perhaps adhering greater to the social model of disability. Here, I contend the art making process is what makes us- as Leonardo was not separate from the materials he used. There was a mutual incoherence of becoming. Put simply, he was made through making and making is made through him. By way of further extension, within this space he became not one thing or the other, he was not recognisable as a typical art student as he did not ‘know what he was doing’ according to the subject, and he was not recognised as SEND/EAL because he did not have to show established skills/techniques that demanded that of him. Instead, he was able to just be, to become
somewhat queer through existing on a borderland. It is here, I believe, during the process of human and non-human matter intra-acting – by not demanding each other to be known through systems of representation/sign/framework - that a post-human ethical queer encounter was created.

As stated above, as I made a decision not to interview Leonardo due to his SEND status, I performed a kind of ethical violence upon him, in the Butlerian sense, as I did not suspend my desire to know him, instead I judged him on the established/normative frameworks that made him SEND. And too, my analysis above of Leonardo is my own interpretation of his art making process and may not be shared by him, which to some may raise pertinent ethical issues regarding providing opportunities for SEND students to have a ‘voice’ (Lewis & Porter, 2004). Yet, I argue, through exploring Leonardo’s encounter with a queer post-human lens, Leonardo was given a voice, a voice that allowed him to communicate non-linguistically through his material engagement. A voice, that did not require him to communicate linguistically in structures (be it an interview) that he finds difficult to comprehend and express. Hence, an interview with Leonardo to discuss my interpretation of his art making, would not be appropriate for him due to his difficulty with communicating linguistically. Here I contend, in some ways my decision not to interview Leonardo due to his SEND status was ethically considered, as he was able to communicate to me and others (Ms. Gibbins) through different means, that being non-linguistically through his making process. Therein, through shifting our gaze, Leonardo and his artwork, was positively received and understood, as he was able to be seen.

Both Viviana and Leonardo’s encounters are reminiscent of Jan Blommaert’s (2008) work in which he revisits Basil Bernstein, a prominent sociolinguist. Blommaert (2012) states
Bernstein’s work accounted for ‘the ways in which differences in how people talked often led to differences in the value attributed to their talk’ (p.1). That is to say, institutions such as schools, courts or banks impose normative language structures which can exclude people who do not communicate in such ways, leading to certain types of people, namely economically deprived, to be misunderstood and unheard. To illustrate this point, Blommaert (2012) gives an example of a South African woman who lost her son during the apartheid riots and was asked to give her statement on the event. In her narrative, she spoke what could be considered as non-standard English, as it was far from formal English and difficult to comprehend within normative language structures. However, Blommaert (2012) arranged the woman’s narrative differently by dividing it into stanzas, episodes and verses, and by doing so shifts the narrative from an unclear factual account into an emotionally clear avowal and in turn, gives the woman a voice. Thus, if we begin to shift our gaze to look at Leonardo or Viviana with a queer post-human lens, a lens that accounts for failures, misrecognitions and those spaces of non-linguistic communication, we can begin to recognise those unseen and those who slip through a normative institutional framework, like a school. It is through this lens, that we stand to see again.

5.4 Queering Matters Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how two students came to know and become differently through the process of making. Arts experimental functionality when coupled with human intelligence was able to cultivate difference - meaning that all matter, human and non-human, entered a space that was pre-subjective and unknown through the process of experimentation. I argue that Viviana responded ethically to matter by reaching an understanding that she was only one part of the process of making. Viviana allowed herself to be guided with the material’s agency, in this case the Modroc, as she too was relationally intertwined in the processes of
becoming. During these processual moments of flux between matter, Viviana was reconfigured, opening new thoughts to occur. This I believe was a queering of all matter, as each part changed in state to an unknown or pre-subjective space.

When Viviana’s becomings and artworks were interpreted in a normative way, they existed outside of established epistemological frameworks commonly known within art and design teaching. This type of interpretation and teaching practice could have rendered Viviana’s learning and art practice as unintelligible and therefore not valid within that framework. This was also true for Leonardo, who existed outside of normative frameworks that were asked of him, which performed an ethical violence upon him, only to find himself being able to exist within the materials, a space where the matter does not ask him to conform to something he is not, but only asks to evolve and becoming with him. If we do not cultivate areas within the art classroom that allows for moments of unrecognizability which may bring about a change in state, we prevent students such as Viviana and Leonardo from being recognised in schools, not to mention hinder art practice in and of itself. This chapter clearly demonstrates not what art is but what the art making process can do. In other words, the art making process makes ourselves in that process. Therein, I believe art and design as a subject can only evolve in schools utilising the discourses brought forth here.

I have also begun to ask the reader to question what I present as knowledge in this chapter, as I am in a constant in a state of becoming, unable to fully account for myself, let alone knowing and accounting for others (Butler, 2005). Thus, the data I present as knowledge is somewhat arbitrary, yet I hope that you the reader, will be jolted out of the idea that I am an all-knowing researcher to create disruptions of normative reflexive tellings. In the next chapter, I focus on
Ms. Gibbins’ interviews during the project and how entering into the unknown brought about new ways of thinking and being for her.

***Important note*** parts of this chapter were published in Millett, T.V.P. (2019). Queering the art classroom: queering matters. The International Journal of Art and Design Education, 38(4), 809-82
Chapter 6
Ms. Gibbins Undone

Perhaps most importantly, we must recognise that ethics requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human (Butler, 2005, p.136).

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will delve further into Judith Butler’s (2005) ethical framework to explore the interviews I had with the classroom teacher, Ms. Gibbins, over the course of the GCSE project. Butler’s (2005) concepts have long been implemented to acknowledge and trouble inequalities within the education system to account for those who are misrecognised and to offer insights into the construction of subjectivity in these spaces (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Teague, 2018). The theories of subjectivation and performativity have informed much of this thesis, as it could be argued it is at the site of constitution between the self, the other and non-human matter, where inequalities can materialise but also where the reconfiguration process may reside too. It is this relationality between the self and the other and non-human matter where I want to draw my attention to when exploring the data generated, in hope to highlight moments of ethical relationality, unknowingness and queerness of matter which may open new ontological spaces for the art classroom and the self.

Although Ms. Gibbins did not physically make artwork like her students, she was still involved in the creation process, in which I argue in the chapter, contributed to an ethical relationality
between herself, her students and the materials, all giving way to her undoing (Butler, 2005) and possible new becomings. In what follows are excerpts from my three interviews I had with Ms. Gibbins in December 2017, January 2018 and March 2018.

6.1 Ethical violences

I had only met Ms. Gibbins a week before the GCSE Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work was due to launch - towards the end of September 2017. The late meeting was due to a timetable swap where the original art teacher, Mrs. Henderson, who I had agreed to do the project with (in January 2016 during my time working in the school on supply), had to teach sixth form instead of the GCSE class. Still, I was more than happy to work with Ms. Gibbins despite the teacher swap, as she was slightly older than me, in her late 30s/early 40s and had been teaching at Brill school for 11 years. In addition to teaching art, Ms. Gibbins was head of year for sixth form and took part in the school choir. I later learned she was an avid singer and enjoyed singing in a folk band outside of school. Ms. Gibbins worked alongside two other art teachers in the department, the head of art (HOA) Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Henderson. Halfway through the project, I learnt that there was a rift between Ms. Gibbins and the HOA, as Ms. Gibbins was no longer given the A level photography class, due to her having had below average results one year. Ms. Gibbins had explained to me her disappointment at not receiving the appropriate support or training for the A level photography, even though she had asked for it at the time. Ms. Gibbins was quite a shy and conscientious woman and I could see that the department tensions troubled her greatly, though with that being said, in front of the class, she was very confident, and students respected her greatly. All interviews were conducted in her classroom outside of lesson time, either before or after the lessons. Ms. Gibbins’ art classroom door was usually open, unless there was a class on, when I was interviewing her.
In my first meeting with Ms. Gibbins she pointed out to me, she had no idea about ‘these topics’, implying the subject of gender and sexuality. This comment initially ignited an affective hot spot, as at the time, the comment felt pressured, an almost change in speed with an intensity that carried a gut anxious feeling or an annoyance, something that coding cannot fully recognise (Maclure, 2013). I of course, felt the intensity of this relation, as the affects that intra-acted with this comment, the timbre of her voice, the rushing of students passing by, the school bells and sounds, her movement and mine, the classroom smells, all entangled with my concerns that she would not want to continue with the project or make it awkward in some way. I wish to dwell on this hot spot and watch it grow outwards as I meet with Ms. Gibbins again. By way of extension, in my experience, I have found this statement quite a typical view held by teaching staff regarding LGBTQ+/gender/sexuality topics, as there tends to be a rather essentialist assumption that there are specific knowledges regarding LGBTQ+ subjects/people, and Ms. Gibbins, though surrounded by gender and sexuality issues on a day-to-day basis, thought she knew nothing of. This rather essentialist view is not only held by people who do not identify as LGBTQ+, but also by people who consider themselves LGBTQ+ too- we can see this within LGBTQ+ charity discourse in schools, where the teaching of identity labels is paramount to the ‘understanding’ of gender and sexuality diversity. Nevertheless, I want to explore Ms. Gibbins’ comment further with Butler’s (2005) conceptualisation of the subject. Butler (2005) positions the subject as never ‘fully stand(ing)’ apart from the social conditions of its emergence’, as the process of subjectivation requires the subject to perform and internalise a set of norms (p.7). Within this process, the subject forms ‘passionate attachments’ by desiring the norms and values in order to become a viable subject (Butler, 1997, p.7). In Ms. Gibbins’ case, she relies on pedagogised norms - delivering established knowledges in her art classroom, be it the colour wheel or tonal shading - to be recognised as a legitimate teaching
subject by her students and fellow staff/employers. Not knowing about ‘these topics’ as she mentioned, could potentially risk her recognisability as a teacher. As Butler (2005) states:

Sometimes the very unrecognizability of the other brings about a crisis in the norms that govern recognition (p.24).

Meaning that, the other, in this case the topic of gender and sexuality, a subject usually not broached in schools, let alone a whole school project based on the subjects, brings about a crisis to the norms that govern Ms. Gibbins as a recognisable teaching subject, through its unrecognizability. The concept of teacher recognisability was also prominent in my first (December 2017) and second interview (January 2018) I had with her, as she stated that the projects within the department from key stage 3 to GCSE were prescriptive and structured since she had started there 11 years previously. When I asked her how she was finding the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work intervention, she said:

Ms. Gibbins: I think it’s going really well. I think that it’s really different from what we have been doing previously, with year 10s. We’ve been very structured, and we have been doing very similar projects since I’ve worked here for a long, long time and I think that it’s exciting to have a new kind of avenue to go down. And I think it’s actually teaching them skills that we don’t necessarily include in what we are doing at the moment in that they are learning about processes in art that we don’t usually teach about and coming up with new pieces and really focusing on a subject and approaching that subject from lots of different angles, which is what we don’t necessarily tend to do. I think they are responding brilliantly, it’s a very big mixed class. But I think the ones that can handle it are really flying at the moment.

It would seem, the interjection of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, which cultivated a more experimental approach by focusing on the ‘processes in art’ and ‘approaching the subject from lots of different angles’, highlighted the rigid structure of the previous 11 years and perhaps called into question the projects that had gone before in Brill school art department. As I have mentioned in chapter 2, formalism, linear ways of working and representationalism have dominated much of the secondary art curriculum, meaning that student work tends to be
regularly assessed in accordance with particular kinds of skills that hold representational value. From my experience working in art departments in London and Cambridge, a teacher might approach the GCSE unit of Identity by asking students to draw a self-portrait. The self-portrait would be assessed on how representative it is to reality through its use of formalist principles, line, tone and shape. Learning here, can easily slip into reproductive regimes by transmitting traditional knowledges and predictable outcomes from teacher to student. For instance, Brill school had previous GCSE work on display, the Surfaces and Identity units and past sketchbooks, almost prescribing and setting an example for the outcomes for future GCSE classes (seen in Figure 4.10 in chapter 4). This practice is not uncommon in UK secondary school art departments. Yet working within such parameters can be problematic, as it tends to construct certain types of subjects, where teachers and students are only made recognisable through adhering to the assessment and school art frameworks, which ultimately limits art practice in schools. In other words, teachers become recognised as ‘good’ teachers, if their students are made intelligible through ‘good artwork’ which is essentially the application of specific skills recognised by the school interpreted assessment. What this means is, other students like Leonardo or Viviana from the previous chapter, or other teachers for that matter, are made unintelligible by failing to achieve a certain skill level - ‘I can’t draw’ is a commonly stated phrase heard from art students across the country, if not worldwide. Thus, different ways of making are excluded within these interpreted school art frameworks, which seek to exclude certain students and teachers.

Even though it would seem that Ms. Gibbins through teaching the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work came to a certain understanding that previous years were quite prescriptive, this does not fully account for the operations of power that may have led her to become a recognisable teaching subject. In her second interview (January 2018) with me she continues thinking through the prescriptiveness of the previous schemes of work:
**Ms. Gibbins:** Um, since I’ve worked here, and I wouldn’t, I feel very conscious saying this because you know my head of department might not take it very well. But since I’ve worked here it’s always been *Surfaces, Identity,* and the artists who we have looked at have changed moderately but they’re- I think we almost prescribe in a way, artists that um, encourage that kind of teenager response.

Ms. Gibbins is wary of discussing the previous schemes of work in a critical manner as she does not want to be overheard by the HOA. It is here we are reminded of the spatial constraints on speech which are in operation in institutions like schools and in the research itself. For example, the interviews had time constraints as I conducted the interviews before/after the lessons which added to a sense of urgency, leaving Ms. Gibbins less time to get ready for her next lessons or do other work. And Ms. Gibbins’ art classroom had spatial constraints, due to how schools operate in these spaces in time, i.e., anybody could have walked into Ms. Gibbins’ room at any point during the interview, looked through the window in her door or overheard our conversation. To draw on Barad (2007), this entanglement of matter, the building design, the interviewee/researcher, the timetables, the students, authority figures (HOA), all contribute to constituting phenomena, such as the idea of being watched or overheard - thus, constraining what Ms. Gibbins can/cannot say.

Ms. Gibbins’ anxiousness with regards to being overheard also reminds me of Michel Foucault’s (1977) conceptualisation of governmentality, a process in which power operates to govern populations and produce technologies of surveillance, constituting subjects. In his book *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault (1977) explores how sovereign societies in the 18th century transitioned to become disciplinary societies in the 19th century. Foucault suggests that power transitioned from a ‘top down’ approach, where one person held the power - the sovereign, to a disciplinary approach, where power is not held by one person but instead is enacted through institutions and people. To help conceptualise disciplinary power further, Foucault utilises Jeremy Bentham’s architectural design called the Panopticon. For example, the architectural
model enables people to see what others are doing at any given time by partitioning the space. Take for instance the windows on classroom doors in schools, the partitioning of space is used to surveillance people, as the headteacher, parents or other teachers could at any moment be watching and looking in. The feeling that anybody could be watching at any given time, produces subjects who watch themselves through self-disciplining effects. Therefore, surveillance is happening not just from one person but a series of people watching everywhere -this is a form of disciplinary power. Ms. Gibbins does not want to be seen as troubling the previous schemes of work and so continues to deliver the established department projects year after year, as, it could be argued, due to disciplinary power, she wants to be recognised as a trusted team member and art teacher. In other words, if Ms. Gibbins did not deliver the structured and established schemes of work containing art knowledges, such as formalism, the students might not meet the assessment criteria and she would then ‘fail’ as a teacher, in the normative sense, and could consequently lose her employment.

Indeed, much of the discourse surrounding assessment is part of a wider picture of neoliberal reform legislated by consecutive UK governments in schools since the 1980s, mentioned in chapter 2. Foucault, in his Collège de France lectures 1977-78, accounts for this shift in marketisation by governments whereby once public domains, like schools, become sites for production of human capital. For Foucault, once public services become market driven by fostering competition through market-based technologies (assessment/standards/targets), this is how individuals are constituted as neoliberal subjects, as they seek to meet/embody those standards- a neoliberal governmentality. Foucault (2008) writes:

Ability to work, skill, the ability to do something cannot be separated from the person who is skilled and who can do this particular thing. In other words, the worker’s skill really is a machine, but a machine which cannot be separated from the worker
himself, which does not exactly mean, as economic, sociological or psychological criticism said traditionally, that capitalism transforms the worker into a machine and alienates him as a result. We should think of skill that is united with the worker as, in a way, the side through which the worker is a machine, but a machine understood in the positive sense, since it is a machine that produces an earnings stream (p.224).

Put differently, the neoliberal subject or ‘machine’, competes with other neoliberal subjects as to how much human capital they can accrue so as to be attractive to the markets. This can be seen through self-investment in training and skills programmes or meeting assessment targets and appraisals. Within this process, the neoliberal subject is solely responsible for their own choices and performance within that system, or to use Foucault’s language ‘dispositif’, making the system and its exploitations obsolete.

The encroachment of neoliberalism in schools has given birth to new subjectivities, in particular neoliberal teacher subjectivities as mentioned in chapter 1 and 2, which have largely focused on requiring knowledges related to teaching performance, effective data management and school routines (Gray and Morton, 2018). The implications of this new neoliberal teacher, has meant that those who are new to the profession, or even those more experienced in the profession, may only approach teaching practice within this discourse, preventing other pedagogical practices from emerging or remaining, as subjects who accept those identities ascribed to them (Gray and Morton, 2018). According to Butler (2005), it is within these recognitions and practices, where ‘ethical violence’ occurs, as we demand the other to be known to us coherently through normative frameworks, like a neoliberal one, and vice versa. So even though Ms. Gibbins has expressed that she feels the previous GCSE schemes of work were prescriptive, she still continued to deliver them in order to meet the demands and norms in her department/school, which are maintained by assessments, and thus be seen as a coherent
teaching subject. If she were not to meet certain assessment/appraisal criteria, she would be seen as a failure within the ‘dispositif’ and most certainly take this failure as a personal one, much like she did with the A level photography, as the ‘machine (which) cannot be separated from the worker himself’ (Foucault, 2008, p.224).

Significantly, Ms. Gibbins had shown a passionate attachment (Atkinson, 2011; Butler, 1997) to certain school art norms as she later went on to say in the second interview, that the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* was missing particular skills compared to the usual GCSE year 10 project *Surfaces*, where students learn ‘foundational skills’ in materials:

**Ms. Gibbins:** I’m thoroughly enjoying it. It’s all brand new and I think that actually we need a bit of brandnewess sometimes to kind of get our, you know keep us on track as well. Keep me a bit up to date. We’ve talked about the *Surfaces scheme of work* that we start with. I think there’s one benefit to that scheme of work which is, I treat it as a bit of a foundation again where they pick up acrylics for the first time because we don’t use acrylics, they are introduced to different media and materials for the first time, I would only say there are times when we are teaching this project where I would have liked to have had maybe a lesson or two in between where they were really focusing on, not on anything to do with the project but on their skills of using those materials and media because the overall project has been hanging over their heads we are constantly referring to that and not necessarily to the skills we want them to pick up.

Like Ms. Gibbins, many art teachers push for students to handle the materials by learning a variety of skills to enable students to express themselves adequately against a topic. And due to this common teaching norm in art education, Ms. Gibbins although realising that the previous schemes of work have been somewhat prescriptive, still believes that the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* missed vital skills. Whilst this is a legitimate argument, as there is no real harm in teaching certain skills to students. For example, learning the processes of a darkroom for photography or understanding the equipment in printmaking could be useful to know, like grammar in a sentence, and does not necessarily mean that outcomes are always predictable. Yet, I do believe it is important to consider a few differing arguments. One, the
common idea (Atkinson, 2011) that learning a particular technique within a framework somehow facilitates self-expression is somewhat contradictory, as this generates material limits/techniques on what the student can produce and supports the idea of an essential self - a concept I mentioned in chapter 2, that has long been troubled by poststructuralist discourse negating any idea of unique or original expression (Addison, 2007; Atkinson, 2011). Also, what techniques exactly should the students learn? The idea that there is a ‘right’ technique or understanding of a process/art history/equipment, lends itself to the reproduction of Eurocentric frameworks/canons leaving a wide variety of different practices around the world unexplored. The Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work was designed to trouble school art orthodoxy and this, I believe, cannot occur through the reproduction of established techniques, knowledges or skills. Yet, what is interesting here is how subjects, in this case Ms. Gibbins, become passionately attached to norms (the established skills from the Surfaces Scheme of Work) performing sometimes an ethical violence upon themselves, which can prevent different ways of being and doing, in this case, pushing for new ways to approach art making with students—perhaps underpinning Atkinson’s (2011) suggestion that art teachers refuse mourn the past as mentioned in chapter 2. However, it is important to clarify that creativity and difference can still thrive in the constraints of a particular form and not all work created in that form is an ethical violence upon the doer. In fact, one can still create something inspiring within the genre of photo and hyperrealism per say, or write a radical sonnet, without being repressed by norms. For example, Ron Meuck’s hyperrealist sculptures still align with certain aspects of formalist discourse yet unsettle norms through overemphasising detail, size and shape. But within an assessment driven school context, these ways of working, through the reproduction of forms, such as the self-portrait or apple using tonal shading, all support and work alongside, very neatly, the assessment frameworks which I believe hinder any difference and experimentation from occurring.
Not only does Ms. Gibbins have the demands of the department and herself asking her to maintain a coherent identity, performing a certain ethical violence upon her, she too requires others to do the same. As Butler (2005) states:

Suspending the demand for self-identity, or more particularly, for complete coherence, seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require others do the same (p.42).

Thus, from the excerpt from the second interview below, I have begun to interpret the ways in which Ms. Gibbins performs Butler’s (2005) ethical violence on her students as she ‘requires others do the same’ and how this desire for ‘complete coherence’ could start to unfold when faced with difference (p.42).

**Ms. Gibbins:** But I feel like there’s enough content in this project for it to be the length of two units if we were to work in the skills and the materials. They are creating three very different final pieces all on one theme and I think actually if you would have come in January, we would have just done the *Surfaces* project, they wouldn’t be half as mature in their approach as they are now, and I think that that’s come as a really delightful surprise about the group.

What is significant here, is that the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* seems to have punctured the previous state of affairs with its difference, as Ms. Gibbins is realising that the repeated *Surfaces Scheme of Work* is not challenging enough for her current students to study after the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* intervention. This is where an *effect of difference* appears (Haraway, 1992). Ms. Gibbins also mentions that the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* asks the students to develop different approaches to art making than the *Surfaces Scheme of Work*, as she believes her students would have not been as mature if they started the *Surfaces* before *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*. However, yet again, Ms. Gibbins is still adamant that *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* was lacking skills as she
mentions, ‘if we were to work in the skills’ suggesting the project needed an enhancement. Ms. Gibbins continues:

**Ms. Gibbins**: That like I said, I’m now thinking how am I going to challenge this lot, how am I going to build up a new scheme of work. I can’t go back to the Surfaces scheme of work. It’s very prescriptive and it doesn’t challenge them enough. And I think if I’d have started with Surfaces and you’d have come in January having had this long term of working on that project. Not to say they don’t come up with good results and results that have gained students GCSE’s in the past. I think that they would have found it a challenge because they would have been used to…It’s almost like the key stage 3 schemes of work that we do are structured in a very similar way to the projects that we do at GCSE they are just given a bit more freedom at GCSE. Whereas this is totally different. I think that there is some really mature stuff here that we don’t necessarily approach with our year 12s and 13s. And I just think that that’s brilliant and that just goes to show that perhaps as teachers how we might underestimate what they are capable of at this age and maybe that’s changed. Um and it you know, maybe that’s, it’s obviously partially my fault, and my, I say fault, my, that you know the way that I’ve been teaching and taught to teach art so.

It would seem that Butler’s (2005) ethical violence is exercised here, as Ms. Gibbins, did not suspend her desire ‘for complete coherence’ of her students in the past. Instead, one could argue, that Ms. Gibbins projected onto her students what she thought they were ‘mature’ or ‘capable’ enough to learn, therefore maintaining her ‘self-identity’ as a responsible teacher and ‘requiring others do the same’ (Butler 2005, p.42). This is not an uncommon practice amongst teachers in secondary schools, as conservative societal discourses of the corruption of childhood innocence creates anxiety around what students should or should not know, supposedly safeguarding children for the future good of the community (Edelman, 2004). As Lee Edelman (2004) comments:

Good education thus always intends and assures the social good by negating whatever refuses that good and so endangers the Child, even if that danger inheres in the very nature of the Child (p.129).
Meaning, that what we understand as a ‘good education’ tends to deny young people certain information, as society deems this information too dangerous for them to comprehend/explore, even if that understanding resides in them anyway. For example, whilst there is no explicit curriculum to follow for art and design, as the National Curriculum does not suggest focusing on particular artists, time periods or genres/movements, a common practice for UK art and design departments is to choose a specific area to study or an art practice which is ‘suited’ for a particular year group. In my experience, Cubism is chosen for key stage 3, not for the movement’s once radical and political agenda, but for the movement’s formal elements and how easy students can recreate a Cubist collage. Whilst choosing specific movements in Western art history for certain year groups based on age is not always the driving force behind the decision, as other discourses could be present (art teachers’ refusing to mourn the past, conformity, assessment frameworks or what is valued within the department), I do argue teachers tend to limit students based on their age and misjudge what students already know. For example, students often acquire unfiltered prior knowledges from their peers, the internet and media - these points I will return to later in the chapter. Although there is no explicit evidence in this data excerpt, that Ms. Gibbins is concerned with issues such as the corruption of her students’ innocence due to their exploration of gender and sexuality in art and design, these ideas were not entirely absent from her thinking. My field notes show that on occasion she would refrain from saying the word ‘sexuality’ when addressing or discussing with the class the project, opting for the safer word ‘gender’. For instance, instead of asking the students to discuss the objects in terms of ‘gender and sexuality’, she would sometimes ask the class to discuss the object’s ‘gender’. I have to mention that moments of wariness such as these, when discussing gender and sexuality with young people, are present in us all. I was distinctly aware during the intervention that I was a lesbian researcher having students under the age of 16 discuss gender and sexuality with me alone in a room- I discuss this further in chapter 7.
However, returning to the excerpt above, Ms. Gibbins does mention how teachers ‘underestimate what they (students) are capable of at this age’, thus enacting a certain ethical violence upon her students as she has assumed what they are capable of knowing and understanding. This assumption of what it means to be an adolescent, or this ‘ethical violence’, constructs the parameters of what Ms. Gibbins’ students are able to explore in the art classroom and more importantly, prevents Ms. Gibbins and her students from knowing and being differently. Therein, I argue, the intervention exposed the structures or limits that Ms. Gibbins had placed upon her students and herself, the exposure being, where the effects of difference appeared (Haraway, 1992). Her comment, ‘I can’t go back to the Surfaces Scheme of Work’, perhaps marks a shift in her thinking and the beginning of teaching art and design differently in her classroom and therein an opening of Ms. Gibbins experiencing herself differently - a becoming. Ms. Gibbins continues:

**Ms. Gibbins:** But I think that, and I definitely think that especially with this new project coming up, I mean it’s a step into the unknown, it’s exciting. Umm so I think that generally a really positive thing and I’m feeling challenged by it, which is a good thing but then you are stuck with constraints of being a teacher and how much time you have actually got to do things and it’s very easy to kind of have the project that you do at the beginning of the year 10 and tweak it instead of actually trying to step out there.

That is to say, through Ms. Gibbins realising that she had underestimated her students in the past and acknowledging that she is ‘feeling challenged’ by the prospect of teaching art differently, she is beginning to reach a space of incoherence, a space where she has little assumptions of what her students are able to understand and a space where she is feeling challenged within herself over her teaching practice. Therein, by allowing her classroom to be queered, she too is queered, as her experiences mirror her students’ experiences. This shared learning transformation links well with aspects of critical pedagogy, where education becomes a collective action between all participants instead of a more authoritarian didactic relationship.
between teacher and student (Freire, 1996). Further, Ms. Gibbins clearly states, ‘it’s a step into the unknown, it’s exciting’, echoing Butler’s (2005) words from the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, where the unknown position holds a space of change, a space of reconfiguration, a space where we may begin to relate differently with others and with ourselves. Therefore, the puncturing, to the use the language of Atkinson (2011), of Ms. Gibbins’ understandings of how art should be taught is the becoming of the incoherent self and as Butler (2005) articulates it is precisely in these moments of incoherence that ‘constitutes our chance of becoming human’ (p.136).

6.2 The undoing of Ms. Gibbins

In the third interview (March 2018) I had with Ms. Gibbins, ideas of student learning capability, teaching beyond established/usual art subjects and ‘stepping out there’ or ‘into the unknown’ were mentioned again when I asked her how she found exploring the subject of gender and sexuality in class:

**Ms. Gibbins:** I mean it’s obvious isn’t it? They’re teenagers, this is the kind of stuff that it is current, they’re dealing with right now, they’re kind of becoming more and more aware of, and I’m, you know I would never, it’s a different insight into, into the kids and it's interesting. I, struggling to answer the question. But I, I feel genuinely touched that there are at least a couple of girls that you’ve spoken to you, first of all if I was teaching them this time last year, I would have been unlikely to have known anything about anything that they’re thinking about in their lives based on their gender and sexuality. But second of all. I said this before. This is a platform for them to go wide open, chuck it all out there, without actually them saying anything about themselves umm and I think that’s, you know, not that it needs to be kept a secret and I think that they, probably obviously discuss these things amongst themselves. But it makes them aware that it’s ok to talk about, and it’s ok to discuss things, gender and sexuality, whatever it is, in your artwork. It might be to do with the family, you know personal experience, isn’t it? A lot of artists’ work is about their personal experience and their life and I just feel, you know, just absolutely chuffed that that’s been an opportunity for them and that they’ve been so open to it.
Ms. Gibbins implies that exploring gender and sexuality with adolescents is worthwhile as ‘this is the kind of stuff that it is current’ to their lives as ‘they’re kind of becoming more and more aware of’ their own gender and sexuality. And that exploring gender and sexuality in art was ‘a platform for them to go wide open, (and) chuck it all out there’, suggesting a different way of investigating these subjects beyond PSHE lessons/assembly, by exploring gender and sexuality non-linguistically, or as Ms. Gibbins states, ‘without actually them (students) saying anything about themselves’. Also, Ms. Gibbins was particularly ‘touched’ by some of her students who in the one-to-one interviews with me had said they were ‘bisexual’ or had a ‘gay’ brother. She had found this declaration had given her a ‘different insight’ to her students and in turn was on ‘a path of discovery along with the kids’ as she was not the expert in the room.

As mentioned in chapter 2, many educational researchers invested in LGBTQ+/sexuality and gender curriculums would agree with Ms. Gibbins, arguing that schools have a responsibility to deliver a more contemporary curriculum that recognises students as actively becoming sexual beings who receive information outside school via the internet, peers and media, and a more inclusive curriculum that recognises students outside of the heterosexual norm, as traditionally the curriculum has privileged more dominant groups. For example, in some UK art departments there tends to be an overreliance on white heterosexual male European artists and in sex and relationship education (prior to summer 2021 new policies), important topics such as sexual consent, same sex relationships and female pleasure remain largely unaddressed.

Ms. Gibbins continues:

**Ms. Gibbins:** I think there’s a lot of, there’s a lot of, we’re in a big time of change at the moment, there’s a lot of you know, if, unless it’s something that is directly affecting you in your life, it’s not something you would necessarily know much about or discuss much about and so there’s a lot of kind of, it’s difficult for people to discuss those kinds of things or approach them whilst talking to kids, when you’re teaching PSHE it can be an awkward conversation and I think actually, we’re not directly dealing with, this is a PSHE subject, we’ve dealing with art and this is what we can talk about in art and in fact there’s a lot of subjects that we can talk about it, giving the kids as much freedom, without directly, err you know pressuring them into
discussing things. I don’t know if that makes sense? (Tabitha: Yes, well…) I’ve certainly been brought out of my comfort zone discussing things with the kids, not in a bad way, you know, I’ve never, it’s something that people don’t normally discuss too much particularly when it comes to you know working with children. Sorry I interrupted you.

It would seem by interpreting Ms. Gibbins’ comments, LGBTQ+/gender and sexuality subjects, if approached at all, are rarely mentioned outside peripheral subjects such as PSHE. If sexuality is addressed in PSHE, teachers tend to find it ‘difficult’ to ‘discuss those kinds of things or approach them whilst talking to kids’. I argue that Section 28 of the local government act 1988 and the presumed innocence of children and safety only within heterosexual culture, is felt here as Ms. Gibbins highlights the uneasiness that many teachers face when discussing these topics with students. It is worth mentioning that Ms. Gibbins would have been a student herself whilst the act was in place and became a teacher only three years after it was repealed in 2003, which could have contributed to her ‘awkward’ feeling when discussing the subjects in the past. As mentioned in chapter 1 and 2, there has long been an association linking homosexuality with sex and paedophilia (Herek, 2018) which has meant schools when addressing LGBTQ+/gender and sexuality in PSHE or assembly, usually link the topics to victim discourses to strategically create an environment where LGBTQ+ can be addressed without associating it with sex (Monk, 2011). Not only does this misrecognise teenagers as sexual beings but misses the opportunity for much needed sex education and exploration in subjects outside of PSHE/assembly that may shed light on gender and sexuality differently for the students and teachers. I argue that this is where the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, when explored in art, has some merit. Instead of investigating the topics in awkward conversations in PSHE, Ms. Gibbins and her students experience the affordances that art can offer in addressing these issues. Ms. Gibbins was cautious at the beginning of the intervention, as she had mentioned to me, she had no idea about ‘these topics’ and perhaps felt concerned her art classroom could become another awkward PSHE lesson conversation. However, I
argue, during the intervention her feelings altered, as Ms. Gibbins began to realise the potential
the art classroom had for exploring gender and sexuality, and how art classroom can
accommodate the awkwardness when discussing these subjects with young people. Our
conversation continues:

Tabitha: Yeah, err, yeah, you’re right, when you say you’ve been brought out of
your comfort zone, is it just because it’s not normally spoken about, only in PSHE
lessons? And then to have it....
Ms. Gibbins: Well yeah, it’s not, it’s not anything that’s been in the forefront of
discussions that I’ve had in my life and I…I don’t. It’s, you know, it’s the nature of
the way the media has worked, and the way society has worked and a reflection of
the way I have been brought up. I’m not, I’ve never been, you know, had any kind of
issues with anybody else’s sexuality or gender. It’s never been something I’ve really
discussed, but it’s something that I’ve had to talk about, as a teacher it’s almost like
you’re expected to have a knowledge on things, as soon as you open your mouth,
there’s a feeling that you’re the expert in the room. And I suppose I wasn’t the expert
in the room and probably some of these kids, well, absolutely a lot of these kids are
way more advanced in knowing some of the stuff that they know. It’s, it’s, it’s put
me on more of an equal standing, I think. A path of discovery along with the kids, as
opposed to me imparting my ‘wise’ knowledge on them.

Ms. Gibbins has implied that her students were able to think through gender and sexuality in a
non-linguistic fashion and we have seen this illustrated in the previous chapter, as Leonardo
and Viviana were able to come to realisations/experience themselves differently, through the
materials and processes of art making. Therefore, unlike essentialist and awkward PSHE
lessons, usually taken by a non-specialist teacher, exploring these topics in curriculum subjects
like art, can offer unique opportunities for teachers and students that differ from
PSHE/assembly days which could be more useful for all. For example, Ms. Gibbins mentions
again her lack of knowledge, much like she did on our first meeting, regarding the subject of
gender and sexuality, as she states above, it has never been at ‘the forefront of discussions’ in
her life and how she is on ‘more of an equal standing’ with her students as she is not ‘the expert
in the room’. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Gibbins’ statements regarding a less teacher centred
approach due to the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*, interlinks with social
reconstructionist and critical pedagogies. For instance, Paulo Freire’s (1996) concept of the banking model of education is still incredibly relevant today, as neoliberal discourses support the banking education notion, that an educator’s role is merely to deposit information to students which is then regurgitated for assessment targets, in turn regulating ‘the way the world “enters into” the students’ (p.20). Within this banking/neoliberal model, the students are presumed ‘to know nothing’, never discovering ‘that they educate the teacher’ (Freire, 1996, p.21). Ms. Gibbins comments alongside Freire’s work are important to highlight, as they show Ms. Gibbins is learning alongside her students as she believes she is not the ‘expert in the room’. And unlike filtered PSHE lessons which dictate to the students what they can/cannot know with regards to gender and sexuality, limiting their exploration and denying their prior knowledges, Ms. Gibbins is discovering that her students do know things and they can and are teaching her. Thus, exploring these subjects in main subjects can be illuminating for both teachers and students as each subject will have distinctive opportunities for investigating gender and sexuality, leaving a whole host of undiscovered avenues to explore for all.

Yet I argue, there is more happening here than simply Ms. Gibbins and her students being on an ‘equal standing’ of discovery in art and gender and sexuality. We cannot forget, harking back to Barad (2005), that human and non-human matter, or Ms. Gibbins, her students, me and the art materials, are all being constructed together during this process and still as I write this now – as all affected and still are affecting one another through this research assemblage. Thus, all matter is on an equal path of discovery of reconfiguration and creation. I argue that here, all matter is contributing to teaching and learning within this intra-action – Ms. Gibbins, her students me and the materials.
Returning to Butler (2005), not only do we ask others to maintain a coherent identity, but we also ask ourselves as well through holding passionate attachment to norms, so we remain a viable and recognisable subject. Yet, if we are able to withhold this need for complete coherence from the other and ourselves, we may begin to relate more ethically. Butler (2005) states:

But could it be true that I would not be in this struggle with norms if it were not for a desire to offer recognition to you? (p.26).

Therefore, I contend, Ms. Gibbins through engaging with Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, which asks of her to sustain the ‘desire to offer recognition’ to her students as she had to refrain from being an ‘all knowing’ and coherent teaching subject, has entered into a space that is less predetermined, a space of discovery, a space that she has not entered for perhaps eleven years. Here, Ms. Gibbins has become, in a sense, vulnerable as she has become open to not being ‘the expert in the room’ and through doing so, has become to think differently about teaching art and what she could stand to learn from her students and the materials and processes of which art affords. This I claim, is the ethical meeting that Butler (2005) proposes, where all matter ceases from recognition for a moment to enter the unknown, where all matter is on an ‘equal standing’ through construction, and this is I believe is what was cultivated due to the intervention.
6.3 Ms. Gibbins undone

This ethical meeting was illustrated towards the end of my last interview I had with Ms. Gibbins in March 2018, when I probed further her experience of learning alongside her students—ignited a palpable hot spot in the field (Maclure, 2013).

Tabitha: You mentioned you were learning about the topic alongside the students. (Ms Gibbins: Yeah) Um in the last interview. How do you feel now its further along in the project for yourself?
Ms Gibson: Again, its still, I’m still learning. (Tabitha: Yeah). And the kids are teaching me a lot, um, as far as kind of teaching is concerned and like I said the processes of teaching the GCSE, I need to, I need to see more artwork and I need to kind of, I’ve kind of slipped into a, you know, comfortable phase in my teaching career. And I think I need to kind of challenge myself and get them thinking. I think that idea of looking at more contemporary ideas and more kind of contemporary artists is important. And I admit that I need to get myself out there a little bit more and learn some more but, I mean the artists that you’ve introduced have all added to my knowledge and my understanding and again I’m still learning, and you know I’ve done a lot of research as it’s gone along to kind of get my head around.

Tabitha: What are your reflections on the project?
Ms. Gibbins: Well, umm. I, I, just think it’s been absolutely brilliant. I think not only for the kids but for myself as a teacher, it’s made me reflect on my own practice, there’s me talking about me and my and not the kids. But it’s made me reflect on my own practice, umm and it’s made me think about the nature of teaching art.

Tabitha: Ok, is there anything you would like to add? At all.
Ms. Gibbins: Hmm just a massive thank you.
Tabitha: Thank you for allowing me to come into your classroom.
Ms. Gibbins: It’s been a pleasure.
Tabitha: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much.
Ms. Gibbins: Err I’m getting emotional. Wells up

Significantly, I see contradictions emerging in the excerpt. When I asked her to reflect on the project, she first went to speak about herself, ‘I think not only for the kids but for myself as a teacher, it’s made me reflect on my own practice’, then she was quick to criticise herself, ‘there’s me talking about me and my and not the kids’. This automatic reaction, where she felt she should be responding to my questions in terms of the project and the students’ learning, is
common for teachers, who are usually taught that a teacher’s concern is always with the students’ learning. However, here she discusses herself and the way in which the intervention has affected her. This is because, ‘herself’ is one of the places where this change or becoming has taken place, perhaps impacting Ms. Gibbins more than her students. Therefore, I contend, the interviews with Ms. Gibbins, illustrate the transformative effect of queering educational practice for teacher subjectivity and teacher sense of self. Very rarely, do we consider the impact on teachers when discussing queer or LGBTQ+ interventions in schools, we are always concerned with the students, but perhaps we should turn our attentions elsewhere regarding this.

I want to remind the reader again of the Butler (2005) quotation at the beginning of this chapter and one line in particular, ‘our willingness to become undone’ (p.42). It would seem that Ms. Gibbins during the project has felt at times challenged, excited and confused. For example, Ms. Gibbins states in the above excerpt, that she found it a ‘challenge’ wrapping her ‘head around’ the project which then later made her reflect on her ‘own practice’ and ‘nature of teaching art’. And she also admitted she has ‘kind of slipped into a, you know, comfortable phase in my teaching career’. I believe these avowals show the process of which Ms. Gibbins has undergone during the project. She has been faced with engaging in an intervention designed by an outsider, who has come to her classroom and asked her and her students to discuss/explore subjects that are not usually broached by her or in the art classroom (together with making artworks outside of typical GCSE classrooms). Over the course of the project, not once did Ms. Gibbins object to a particular lesson or question negatively a way of approaching the topics. She also did not blame the lack of time teachers have or the HOA for not having developed the schemes of work for the past eleven years. Instead, Ms. Gibbins was open, open for trying new things, for being challenged, for learning with her students- she was open to sharing ideas with me, even sharing
that she has slipped into being a comfortable teacher - an avowal that might be difficult for some teachers to admit, as this implies a less innovative and exciting approach to teaching. Ms. Gibbins was willing, ultimately, to become undone. She was willing to detach from the passionate attachments that caused her to become a coherent teaching subject to her students and herself. Ms. Gibbins gave herself a space to become incoherent and I argue, she allowed herself to become somewhat queer. Ms. Gibbins, her students and the artwork/materials, were all being created within this process, but being created differently - being created amongst the incoherence. Here, Ms. Gibbins undoing, is where the effects of difference appear (Haraway, 1992).

Furthermore, we can see how being made differently, can in a sense be painful in and of itself, as it pierces and troubles the idea of who you think you are and who you think you are to other people. For example, Ms. Gibbins, wells up at the end of the interview perhaps releasing this pain and affect - she is undone. She is changed. She is affected. She is beginning to teach differently. She is beginning to relate differently to her students and herself. This was a notable ‘hot spot’ for me, affecting me within the moment, not fully captured in the data above. The hot spot grew from my first meeting with her, ‘no idea about these topics’ to spark with another affective intensity of her being moved. I remember at the time feeling emotional too as she started to well up. I felt slightly awkward/shocked but also affected by the moment - it was a gut feeling experienced (Maclure, 2013). I realise feeling this moment now as I write, that I too to an extent was undone. I learned about her experience, but I also learned about the nature of research. This began as my project, my intervention with students, without thinking about the transformative affects it would have on the teacher and my contributions to her undoing. I had been on every part of the process and journey that Ms. Gibbins had been on. We had created the intervention together, I had been in all her lessons, spoken to her at length about the subjects
and engaged with her students. This was as much as my making as it was hers. Therefore, my slightly embarrassed reaction, was perhaps not a strict undoing as it was hers, but a reaction to a learning moment, a becoming within myself- an affective intensity realised.

6.4 Ms. Gibbins Undone Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the classroom teacher, Ms. Gibbins, came to experience herself differently over the course of the project. I contend that the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, cultivated a site of unknowing and incoherence, which led the classroom teacher to be confused and challenged pushing her to learn alongside her students. Utilising, Butler’s (2005) ethical framework, I was able to contend that Ms. Gibbins, through sustaining her ‘desire to offer recognition’ to her students and herself, by refraining from being an ‘all knowing’ and coherent teaching subject, was able to ethically relate to her students. This ethical relation was demonstrated as Ms. Gibbins had begun to realise that she had performed an ethical violence upon her students, by simply asking her student to be regular students. In other words, Ms. Gibbins had assumed in the past, what her students were capable of learning and understanding, before knowing them or listening to them, but more importantly before allowing them a space to become. A space where she does not demand that they be known to her or she to them through the discourses of what is means to be a student or teacher. This ethical relation became possible as all matter, Ms. Gibbins, her students, me and the art materials, were able to intra-act in a space that was less determined. By way of illustration, instead of Ms. Gibbins asking her students to perform in a particular way of which she had done for the past eleven years, or her students ask her to be a particular kind of teacher - or more importantly, ask herself to be a particular kind of teacher - all parties were open to the
process of becoming differently. I believe I have mapped the *effects of difference* (Haraway, 1992) through accounting for these becoming and undoings in the data - hence, I have brought together both Butler’s (2005) and Barad’s (2007) ethical frameworks. In the next chapter, I explore the whole class reactions to the project further with a view to account for other new becomings in the incoherent space.
Chapter 7

Affective tones and intensities

Introduction 7.0

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In which tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition (Deleuze, 1994, p. 139).

In common with Gilles Deleuze’s (2004) quotation above and the theme running throughout the thesis, this chapter concerns itself with encounters of the unrecognisable, the unknown and the queer which force us to think, feel and be affected. In the first part of this chapter, I argue these encounters occurred within the intra-action of human and non-human matter engendered by the intervention in which there was a piercing of established epistemological frameworks by non-human matter. Put differently, it is where the material troubled the discourse within the intra-action, as the matter, e.g., material object/artwork/thing, was unrecognisable due to the discourse placed upon it, leading to a space that was pre-subjective and affective, or as Deleuze (2004) suggests, something that is ‘sensed’ rather than recognised. Therefore, I argue this chapter maps the effects of difference that Haraway, (1992) and Barad, (2007) believe matter,
as what we research is enacted and entangled with how we research and the knowledge and worlds we create. As stated in the previous analysis chapters, I am particularly invested in the unknown/incoherence as a site where the reconfiguration process begins thus opening new ontological spaces for the art classroom and new ways of being.

So far, I have looked at two individual students’ engagement with the intervention, one student, Viviana, who took to the project well and the other student, Leonardo, who was able to experience himself or be seen differently from his SEND status. I have also focused on the intervention’s impact on the classroom teacher and how she was able to come to new realisations about her class and herself as a teacher. Therein, all data I have presented thus far has shown positive moments of the intervention, which is not uncommon, as for researchers, there tends to be an overreliance on presenting data in neat and successful excerpts. With this being said, I must be honest to the research assemblage and convey that queering the art classroom can be a much messier and unsettling process, than the data hitherto may suggests. As mentioned in chapter 4, Maclure (2013) argues that coding cannot cope with difference, as affects, texture and intensities are reduced to representational and rational categorisations. And as I am mapping the effects of difference, I believe it important to account for the affective complexities that are ‘uncomfortable’, ‘disconcerting’ or filled with ‘wonder’ (Maclure, 2013, p.172). In other words, for this chapter, I will present moments of ‘disconcertion’, or ‘uncomfortable affects’, as by doing so, I acknowledge the affective tones that escape representation by accounting for the messiness within the project and undermine my researcher ‘self-assurance’, regarding the extent to which a ‘queering’ took place (Maclure, 2013, p.172). Therefore, I will discuss three incidences, the first from November 2017, where students discussed on their classroom tables the intervention without adults fully present, by which I mean, Ms. Gibbins and I were in the classroom but unable to hear the student conversations as
we went from table to table during the discussions- yet captured by the Dictaphone (see chapter 4). This data excerpt is particularly interesting considering the other data I have presented involves me asking questions directly to the students or Ms. Gibbins. The second and third data excerpts, centre on the focus groups at the end of the project in March 2018, where students who did not engage with the project so positively shared their thoughts on the intervention with me. To end this chapter, I change focus, by accounting for the affective capacities the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* had on one student in particular, with whom I shared an affective ‘hot spot’ (Maclure, 2013).

**7.1: Table Talk**

Figure 7.0: Ruth Hardinger and Eva Hesse’s work that was shown to the students.

In November/December 2017, at the beginning of the second scaffolding section of the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*, the class explored reading gender and sexuality into everyday objects. As mentioned in chapter 4, the students were asked to bring in for a class discussion everyday objects based on what they thought had gender and sexuality associations. The majority of the objects brought by the students were perfume bottles, lipsticks, anime models and toy trucks. Ms. Gibbins and I also brought in objects, which had more ambiguous
connotations, such as boxes, buckets, sponges together with pictures of abstract artworks (Figure 7.0). The artworks shown to the students were by artists Eva Hesse and Ruth Hardinger, whose work had no intended association with gender and sexuality. As mentioned in chapter 2 and 4, asking students to read gender and sexuality into abstract artwork and ambiguous objects, that had no clear or intended gender and sexuality associated with them, was to scaffold students to read ‘queerly’ as the investigation probed students to look differently at an object or artwork. Most students were able to associate heteronormatively by suggesting that fairy liquid bottles could be feminine because of the curved shape and malleable material as well as the social connotations with stereotypical women’s work. However, when we came to associate more ambiguous objects or artworks with gender and sexuality, this seemed to cause quite a disturbance amongst the students. I have included the students’ conversational excerpt below, as an example of Maclure’s (2013) affective intensities or ‘hot spots’. This is because, whilst the students were reading the artworks/objects, their reactions were felt non-linguistically throughout the room, as well as their reactions being voice recorded. For instance, the affective textures of the students’ booming voices and laughter, the palpable moments where Ms. Gibbins appeared flustered due to the students’ noise/unruliness, the bodily intensities of the students’ movements as they clashed their chairs laughing, pulled faces and shouted across tables, showing the pictures to their peers. Also, my uncomfortable feeling at the time, as I was concerned that the students’ reactions to reading the objects/artworks, could hinder their engagement with the overall project and cause issues/pressure for Ms. Gibbins. All of these moments are examples of affective intensities that existed alongside the linguistic excerpt I present below, yet not fully captured in the voice recording. Therefore, drawing on Maclure (2013), I wanted to account for this ‘moment of disconcertion’ by acknowledging how gut feelings or affects, may ‘point to an existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thoughts, that are far more complex than the static connections of coding’ (p.172).
Thus, by presenting the excerpt below, I hope to account for this complexity and convey how unsettling phenomena can still be generative, if viewed with a post human-queer lens. Below is the excerpt from the students’ discussion:

**Ms. Gibbins:** Right folks, take 10 minutes to consider the objects on your table and the artworks... could you link gender or sexuality to the objects? What are your thoughts? You have 10 minutes...

**Minina:** No-one! This whole gender thing is getting out of hand. No-one says *oh it’s a circle is a girl!* *Oh, it’s a square!* It’s. No-one does that!

**Raphael:** Are you seeing gender? Are you saying the box is gender?

**Minina:** Yeah, nobody can see a box and say *oh it’s a masculine box* because it’s a square. No-one!

**Henry:** Oh, look at how feminine this bottle is.

**Tina:** How are we meant to link this to identity I don’t understand?

**Raphael:** Oh my god look how feminine this voice recorder is.

**Tina:** How are we meant to link this to identity?

**Minina:** Is it even on?

*Picks up Dictaphone*

**Raphael:** Look how feminine this, what is that?

**Minina:** What, what, what, no-one.

**Raphael:** Guys, look, look, it’s green. Look at how masculine it is because it’s green.

**Minina:** Literally no-one like associates...

**Henry:** I think this art is trash, I don’t like it. How can you associate that random thing to gender?

**Tina:** If you can link these artworks with gender and sexuality, you can link these with anything. I could link this with a bucket.

**Tina:** It’s literally they take a piece of wood and make this.

**Raphael:** Exactly, art requires skill, they just... clearly didn’t put effort into it

**Raphael:** ...the thing is they planned TRASH! They planned absolute trash.

**Tina:** You can literally get this from the tree store.

**Raphael:** It’s not difficult it really isn’t. You can buy it online. The only thing they could do is explain it. As long as you explain it it’s fine, that’s what I hate about modern art. You can put a trash can on the floor, if you can explain it, it becomes art. It’s stupid.

**Minina:** But if you can explain it...

**Raphael:** I could put a trash bag on the floor and say it represents the dumping of all our human associations put it in the middle of nowhere for all of us to look at, this is how depressing the world is, so everybody sees it. Nobody really does anything about it, it just sits on the floor.

**Tina:** Modern art is strange.

**Raphael:** I hate this. This art sucks. I didn’t even hate it this much before, I just hate it more. *Laughs to himself*

**Henry:** They don’t look right. That’s just like. Why are they slimy? How is slime gender?
Here, I can derive from the table conversation, that the five students were incensed or perhaps embarrassed, by having to read gender and sexuality into the artwork and objects on display. The above excerpt is a typical example of the conversations had on each table at the time of the exercise. The students had two prominent reactions or applying Deleuze’s words at the beginning of the chapter, ‘affective tones’. The first affective tone released by the students, ‘mockery’ or ‘bravado’, stating that the ‘gender thing is getting out of hand’ if you ‘can link these artworks with gender and sexuality, you can link these with anything’, and the second, ‘hatred’ and ‘confusion’, as ‘art requires skill’, thus deeming the artwork as ‘trash’. First, I want to unpack the sarcasm and contempt that the students had at having to queer the more ambiguous objects and artworks by associating them to gender and sexuality. The students’ understanding of reading gender and sexuality into objects was first demonstrated when they brought everyday objects from home to class. These objects mainly rested on heteronormative readings, i.e., lipsticks and toy cars, interpretations that are largely recognised and known within common or mainstream discourse surrounding gender and sexuality. Yet, Ruth Hardginner and Eva Hesse’s work, together with the everyday objects that had no clear or stereotypical associations with gender and sexuality, were unintelligible within the students’ understanding of gender and sexuality. This misrecognition happened because, the presence of these objects and artworks troubled the discourse of what gender and sexuality is or should look like for the students due to the objects/artworks’ unrecognizability. For example, the objects presented to the students, ranged from buckets with string placed upon them, foam on top of wood and material on metal cans, and the artworks shown were Hardinger’s cement mushroom shaped blocks and Hesse’s wax string latex. By placing the discourse of sexuality and gender onto ambiguous objects/artworks, a discourse usually associated with the human body or objects which are human centred i.e., a ‘lipstick’, the strange concoction of materials...
punctured the students’ established epistemological framework, e.g. ‘How can you associate that random thing to gender?’. This puncturing happened because the association of ambiguous objects/artworks exposed their assumptions of what gender and sexuality could be associated with e.g. ‘No-one says oh it’s a circle is a girl!’ by its obscurity and affective material difference, e.g. ‘They don’t look right. That’s just like. Why are they slimy? How is slime gender?’.

In other words, the lipsticks and toy trucks did not cause a stir amongst the students, as these are items that were known to be associated with gender and sexuality, yet when the discourse of gender and sexuality was placed upon the ambiguous objects and artworks, the material’s unrecognizability, the abstract shapes, the differing mediums and the relationality between juxtaposing objects i.e. the string on the bucket or foam on the wood, all pushed through the students’ understanding of what gender and sexuality can be or how it could be explored e.g. ‘If you can link these artworks with gender and sexuality, you can link these with anything. I could link this with a bucket’. Hence, the students reacted with laughter and mockery as this was an encounter that was, as Deleuze (1994) states above, ‘sensed’ rather than known. As what is known, in this case the lipstick or toy trucks, was not met with the same reaction as the ambiguous objects/artwork. This is because, the lipstick did not cause the students to experience or think, instead the lipstick and toy trucks confirmed what they already knew and symbolised an affirmation of their epistemological frameworks when it came to gender and sexuality, i.e., women have lipsticks, lipstick is a gendered object. However, when the students encountered the ambiguous objects/artworks, it forced them to experience, it forced them to think, it forced them to laugh/hate, as it forced them to ‘sense’, e.g. ‘I hate this. This art sucks. I didn’t even hate it this much before, I just hate it more. Laughs to himself’, it brought them out of what they understood, it troubled their discourse of gender and sexuality. Thus, I believe
this affective intensity experienced by the students is what it means to map where the effects of difference appear (Haraway, 1992), as the material encounter with its difference became an ‘affective tone’, as the material troubled their understandings of gender and sexuality.

As mentioned in chapter 3, for Barad’s (2007) concept of matter, there is no separation between object and human, only the understanding that all matter is constituted through immanent entangled intra-actions. Therein, embracing a relational ontology of matter, ‘sexuality’ would be a material-discursive assemblage of bodies, discourses, material objects, instead of only citational-anthropomorphic within a poststructuralist framework. Therefore, it could be argued that within the research assemblage, the teacher, researcher/me, the students and the objects/artworks, the discourses of gender and sexuality, all became constituted within the entangled intra-action of matter, to engender a queer assemblage. Put differently, the objects/artworks were no longer known and understood, as buckets and string but constituted as something else through the students’ reactions to them when they were considered something else, and the students were constituted as something else, as they had an affective experience to the objects/artworks. Thus, I claim, it is within this moment that there was a mutual queer becoming, as within this assemblage of matter, all affected and was affected (Massumi, 2002) – all was made different in some way, all matter was queered.

The second student ‘affective tone’, I want to explore from the excerpt above, is the hatred and confusion towards the artwork/objects, as they did not fall in line with what the students are familiar with or perceive as abstraction or skill in art to be. As mentioned in chapter 2, art education in schools often aligns itself with specific knowledges and practices, that sit within recognisable Western canons and often focus on representational and formalist frameworks. These school art practices often produce certain learners and teacher subjectivities which result in orthodoxies of what it means to teach/learn art and what art is or should be. In my experience,
although certain contemporary artworks can be popular in schools, what tends to be unexplored in the art classroom by teachers, are practices/art, such as performance art, sound art, video art, social practice/participatory, collaborative, installations and of course, minimalism\(^{18}\) or postminimalism\(^{19}\) (which Eva Hesse’s and Ruth Hardinger’s work sits within), as this is often thought to be too challenging or problematic to broach with students in the context of assessment - and can be generally quite difficult to comprehend. In other words, the incorporation of the art practices, like the examples stated above, would mean schools would have to think progressively about assessments and professional development but also what children are capable of learning in light of their modern cultural worlds (Atkinson, 2011; Grant, 2019). So, when the students were shown Eva Hesse’s and Ruth Hardinger’s postminimalist work, which I argue is outside of the typical recognition of art in schools, it was met with such hatred and disbelief at the lack of ‘skill’ and questioned over its value to be even be considered artwork by referring to it as ‘trash’. I believe the students reacted in this way because it fell outside of what the students have been exposed to in their art education thus far. Yet it is important not to lay the blame entirely at the art classroom, it is quite societally widespread that some contemporary art is seen as a ‘con’ in which anyone could make. Take for instance, Rachel Whiteread in the 1990’s winning the K Foundation prize\(^{20}\) for worst British artist of the year for Artwork House (1993) which was considered by many, especially the media, as trash, at the same time as winning the Turner prize for best young contemporaries.

Yet, I contend, within the research assemblage a learning happened, as the artworks/objects still enabled an encounter for the students to move into a new ontological and epistemological

\(^{18}\) Minimalism or minimalist art refers to abstract art that is composed of squares, rectangles developed in the 1960s (Tate, n.d.-d).

\(^{19}\) Postminimalism refers to abstract art that is beyond minimalist art, often characterised by everyday objects or soft materials focusing on process not necessarily a final product (Tate, n.d.-e).

\(^{20}\) The K Foundation was formed by a pop band called ‘KLF’. The foundation awarded Rachel Whiteread £40,000 as part of a publicity stunt. They also burned £1 million in cash in 1994.
space, as the work disrupted and troubled their previous forms of understanding regarding what art is or what art can be - ‘modern art is strange’. And this disruption was met with the emergence of affective intensities, as pushing through frameworks of what one knows can be painful and uncomfortable. It can be met with challenge and disbelief, as it is not an easy process to be affronted with what one does not recognise. I argue, it is within these moments where new subjectivities can emerge and where students and teachers may begin new ways of exploring art practices in the art classroom, as uncomfortable practices may challenge what art can be. Therefore, by exploring artwork/objects in this way with students, I argue the intervention reoriented the learning process from ‘what to learn’, in terms of, bodies of knowledge, be it art or skills, to, ‘what it means to learn’ or ‘experience learning differently’.

In other words, I purposefully chose this data, as I believe it was a moment that embodied affective connections between matter and pointed to uncomfortable affects (Maclure, 2013), be they, the unruliness of the students’ reactions or my concerns about how the project was being received by the students (at the time). Yet, I hope to have demonstrated in the above analysis, that within these uncomfortable affects, learning is still being achieved, yet it is a different learning, a learning outside of a framework, a body of recognition - a queer learning perhaps. For instance, the object/artworks queer reading lesson, might not be recognisable as a ‘good’ lesson by Ofsted or senior leadership team (SLT) standards, as the students spent time the majority of the class time discussing, or rather shouting, with each other the artwork/objects and showed no visible/accountable progress\textsuperscript{21}, yet the students were still affected in some way - a learning was still occurring. Here, I want to contend that perhaps ‘what it means to learn’, is what it means to be affected. Yet affected, in all the senses – one being disconcertion/confusion. So, by experiencing disconcertion, I argue, we may stand to create ourselves in the process - as we are constituted differently due to the unsettlement. Therefore, it can be asked, can a queer

\textsuperscript{21} Teachers are often asked by SLT and Ofsted to have the students show visible signs of progress in a lesson and thus a lesson is assessed on this merit.
learning be a learning that generates uncomfortable affects, that allows for a messiness or an unruly learning? A learning that is outside of school frameworks and systems of recognisability or established knowledges- a pedagogy based on affects? In the next section, I explore further the uneasiness of evolving subjectivities and becomings when I interviewed the students at the end of the project in March 2018.

7.2: I realised it’s more like Tate Modern art, than art.

Figure 7.1: A student drawing shadows from their everyday gendered objects and a shadow drawing

Following the exploration of more ambiguous objects mixed with Ruth Hardinger and Eva Hesse’s artwork, the students went back to their gendered objects brought from home, i.e., lipstick, and produced shadow drawings to obscure the objects representation (See Figure 7.1). The aim was to queer the heteronormative connotations connected to their objects to create less defined readings in a practical manner. From here, students worked collaboratively in pairs to create a sculpture in response to their shadow drawings. There was no fixed or intended
outcome for the sculptures and the students could use any materials of their choosing (See Figure 7.2). The majority of lessons started with practical work and with very little teacher talk or input. The students made the sculptures over a four-to-six-week period and their sculptures were half a metre to a metre in height.

Figure 7.2: Student sculptures responding to gendered objects

Below is an excerpt from a focus group of girls in March 2018 who all worked together to make their sculptures - I was reflecting on the project with them and asking how they found exploring gender and sexuality through art. As mentioned in research design chapter 4, there was a focus group of all girls, due to the gender disparity in the GCSE class, as more than half of the class was female (a common disparity). This gender imbalance led Ms. Gibbins and I, to choose students that we thought would work well together to generate conversation, and this
so happened to be this group of girls. Again, I have purposefully chosen this extract, as I remember at the time of the focus group, which is not accounted for in the voice recording, an overwhelming atmosphere of contemptuousness, as the girls appeared to not like the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*. Hence, I aim to acknowledge this uncomfortable and unsettling affects in the field (Maclure, 2013), as it threatens my certainty regarding the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work*’s educational merits alongside treating this moment of disconcertion as productive in analysing the data below, again using a posthuman queer lens.

**Tabitha:** So, what about exploring it through art then?

**Ellie:** I thought it was fun in theory, but then it just turned into a disaster because it was so stressful. I didn’t actually know what was going on. Like it took me, it took me like so long to realise what kind of art it was because I wasn’t sure what it was and then I realised it’s more like Tate Modern art, than other art.

**Tabitha:** Oh, are you talking about the sculpture bit?

**Ellie:** Yeah, just like, after that it got easier, but it was still like mega stressful, I didn’t know…

**Lila:** Like portraiture, we were doing like that and then photography. That was pretty simple, because it’s like something we all know already. But when we were doing sculpture, it’s like difficult to like to find a rhythm. It’s like, me and my partner, we spent like all our time in art, we just like had our lunch while we were doing because it was very time consuming.

**Tabitha:** So, from what I’m understanding, correct me if I’m wrong, you found maybe the portraiture figurative work a bit easier to get on board with? Is that right?

**Tanjana:** Easier but not easy.

**Tabitha:** But not easy. Why wasn’t it easy?

**Tanjana:** It was like confusing. I was like. She like wait. If we are talking about the sculpture part, she was like, I don’t know, like big blocks are like masculine or something, and curve are like feminine. And I was like.

**Ellie:** I think I’m still trying to understand that. I didn’t understand what was going on.

**Lila:** Also, because we were looking at these things, for like inspiration, I suppose but then we weren’t allowed to copy it. We weren’t allowed to imitate it. And so, we kind of had to show our own way of doing it. And it was a bit difficult.

From the excerpt, we see a continuation of the perplexity and confusion that followed queering Ruth Hardinger’s and Eva Hesse’s artwork and exploring art practice in a less prescriptive manner. For instance, the students seemed to express wanting to get the work ‘right’ when
there was no indication as to what right was, thus causing confusion. As mentioned earlier and in chapter 2, UK school art education tends to favour a linear way of working, meaning the creation of artwork can follow a tick box structure in accordance with the exam criteria/exemplar (OCR, 2016a). In my experience, teachers and students often know the next steps when making the artwork. For instance, a typical example of this linearity can be seen in the OCR (2016b) art and design exemplar book of candidate’s work (Figure 7.3), where the student investigates the artists’ work, in this case David Hockney’s photo collage and replicates the work for their ‘final piece’- which comes under objective A04 ‘present’. Here, the idea often interpreted by art teachers and students (and exam boards), is to present a final outcome based on the students’ investigations showing a clear link to the artists’ work- a pastiche. Even though, as mentioned in chapter 2, the language surrounding these objectives is much vaguer and could be interpreted in a more open manner.

Figure 7.3: OCR (2016b) art and design exemplar book of candidate work
Alternatively, what the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* intended to do was ask the students *not* to be typical art students, meaning they were asked to not ‘copy it’ or ‘imitate the artists’ work’. Instead, they were asked to explore the materials, processes and forms with no fixed outcome -a way of working with which they were unfamiliar, causing frustration as there was no clear direction. A very notable, comment from a student, ‘I realised it’s more like Tate Modern art, than art’, perhaps capturing the disparity between the artists/artworks they often research in their art education thus far (and how they usually investigate with those artists) compared to the different types of contemporary artwork shown in the intervention and what was asked of them. Perhaps, this moment is an example of why art departments need to explore in greater depth different types of art practice, or ‘Tate Modern art’, in order to deconstruct notions of what can be ‘skill’ or ‘abstract’ in art and design. Therein, having a more plural approach can enable art departments to investigate art practices/work with students that validate artwork/artist which rest outside normative school art frameworks and prevent students making a distinction between ‘Tate Modern art’ and ‘art’.

**Tabitha:** So, was that the difficult part is, not copying this artwork? And doing your own thing? Was that the…

**Mandy:** You had to understand it, and then you had to like make sure you understood it properly, so you wouldn’t be imitating it.

**Mandy:** But creating your own.

**Tabitha:** Ok, ok, I think I understand what you’re saying. So, you’re saying that, you didn’t understand why we were looking at these artists to begin with to do with gender and sexuality.

**Ellie:** She just said explore it and I was like… I think everyone was just confused.

**Laughter from Tanjana**

**Tanjana:** It’s like at the beginning of the year, she just said umm, Ms was like we’re talking about gender and sexuality, but I still don’t understand what you mean like, like honestly, I already know like being straight, being gay, being bi and genders as like being male, being female or being transgender but then isn’t it like transgender saying they swap genders, when you were always that gender in the first place? That’s what I don’t get, we didn’t really have an understanding and we weren’t told before we went into the topic.
Significantly, the students were also not given information explaining what each identity label is in terms of gender and sexuality, as the intervention wanted to limit essentialist identity politics discourses and the transmission of ‘knowledge’ from teacher to student, and instead have the students focus on investigating gender and sexuality through materials and processes for themselves. This exploration was indeed ‘a bit difficult’ and ‘mega stressful’ as the students had to ‘show our (their) own way of doing it’. Yet, I argue a pedagogy based on discomfort, may lead to the students entering into a new ontological possibility as the disruption to their previous forms of understanding or art practice, is crucial for thinking or acting differently. In other words, Butler’s (2005) ethics explored previously in the last chapters, suggests that we demand the other to be known to us coherently through normative frameworks and we too hold social norms in place through our passionate attachments to the norms which in turn constitute ourselves and the other. I argue, the passionate attachments in the excerpt would be the students’ ties to linear and normative ways of working or teacher delivery, as they were upset and confused with Ms. Gibbins when they ‘weren’t told before they went into the topic’ what to do but instead asked to ‘explore it’ for themselves. I believe this to be an indication of the discomfort experienced by ‘not knowing’ (Fortnum, 2013), as Ms. Gibbins’ instructions presented unfamiliar ground to what the students are used to when making their artwork at school. Thus, it is only when we encounter something that propels us out of recognition and logic, in this instance normative of ways of making artwork in school, that we stand a chance to detach from these norms and perhaps open new ways of relating to ourselves and others. Butler (2005) writes:

To be undone by another is a primary necessity, an anguish, to be sure, but also a chance – to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to
be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient “I” as a kind of possession (p.136).

So, instead of the encounter with ‘the other’ being, in a Butlerian perspective, within an anthropomorphic citational framework, ‘the other’ in the context of the students and Baradian understandings would be an encounter with the materials, practices and processes that gave ‘anguish’ and prompted the students ‘to vacate the self-sufficient “I”. This affect occurred as the students were not met with recognition, be it the portraiture which is ‘something we (students) all know already’ and they were not met with logic, as the ‘big block are like masculine or something’, but the students were met with something that was unknown, unintelligible and illogical. This is why the students ‘found it difficult to like find a rhythm’ because they, like Ms Gibbins in the previous chapter, were becoming undone in the process. The students were detaching from the “I” that held passionate attachments constituting them as ordinary students. The school art norms (formalist representational discourses) and the societal norms (equating gender and sexuality human figure), all unfolded to constitute the students differently - this constitution is where the effect of difference appears (Haraway, 1992). Again, it is here that the material (the other) and the students encountered one another through the making process causing an ‘affective tone’ (the students’ anguish), through the intra-action, which led to new becomings for the students - as it disrupted their previous understandings. And yes, it is unfortunate (but perhaps inevitable) that not all new becomings are felt positively by those involved. ‘It was so stressful’, as one student said; yet this does not mean it was any less fruitful. On the contrary, it still caused a stir, a puncture, a reconfiguration to the ordinary state of affairs in the art classroom and therefore holds some pedagogic value. Still, it is important to note, the students’ unknowing is additionally painful, and perhaps provides a tension in the intervention, as the students throughout their time in school are assessed on what
they know in accordance with the criteria/assessment. So, projects such as the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* disorient the learning by making it unclear as to what should be learned or presented to achieve the grade- causing further discomfort for the students and the teacher. For example, in chapter 5, Ms. Gibbins had felt concerned she had over-marked the students’ work, due to the work’s more ambiguous nature, compared to previous years where the artwork the students had produced followed more straightforward approaches connected to the assessment e.g., observational drawing skill. Yet still, I argue here, the students entered into a new ontological state despite that state being somewhat troubling causing an uncomfortable affect that could be felt by all, especially by me in the focus group. And perhaps now Butler’s (2005) remarks hold some weight, as through the ‘anguish’ of being ‘undone’ we stand to be ‘moved’, whether that be a positive or negative process - it is still an affective intensity. Thus, when encounters with discomforts or unknowingness arise, new learning and art practice can emerge and hold potential for new subjectivities/phenomena to come to the fore. Of course, causing discomfort and the parameters within which it can be entertained in schools can raise significant ethical issues. Yet given the intention was to trouble and queer the practices of the art classroom, the voices of the students can be read as positive within a queering perspective. Hence, I claim that through analysing moments of discomfort or disconcertion by applying aspects of queer theory, I have highlighted the productive possibilities for the pedagogy in the art classroom. That is to say, my intention was to trouble the students and within this intention I cannot guarantee their responses to the troubling or the outcome, which is inherently messy and may create discomfort, yet this does not mean we should not queer. Therein, the findings offer alternative avenues for pedagogy in the art classroom, as in a neoliberal view of education the outcomes have been stated before the teaching has even begun.
7.3: It’s much harder to paint a feeling than to paint a rock

Although half of the class found it difficult to investigate gender and sexuality through ambiguous forms and disliked making artwork that had no specific outcomes, there were some students that seemed to enjoy working in this way and debated with the students that did not like the experience so much. I present this excerpt, as again I believe it accounts for the messiness within the research process, the uncomfortable moments, when students disagreed with one another and may demonstrate the affective intensities that emerged during project.

The excerpt below is from another student focus group held in March 2018. At the time of the interview, the students had finished the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work and had just started their new project Surfaces with Ms Gibbins. Here I asked students to summarise their feelings on the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work:

Tabitha: How did you find the project, overall. Your reflections.
Marlin: Fun.
Tabitha: Fun?
Marlin: Interesting. It’s an interesting project to do.
Tabitha: Why is it interesting?
Marlin: I don’t think many schools do it. ‘Coz umm, we know people from other schools, and they did like natural forms and stuff like that so interesting to do something different to everyone else.
Tabitha: And did you find the topic ok?
Charlotte: Yes.
Minina: It was interesting. I think because, like Marlon said, like other schools doing things like natural forms and stuff, this one is more sort of like conceptual, like you can, you can make things like represent things more, like.
Marlin: It’s much harder to paint a feeling than to paint a rock.
Minina: Yeah.
Tabitha: Yeah. So, you liked that it was a bit more conceptual.
Minina: Well, I found it interesting. But in like Surfaces, that we are doing now, is more sort of like, like you see a surface and then you try and draw it, it’s not like the idea behind that surface.
Babita: It was more based on like society around, which is more interesting ‘coz, when you think about society, you talk about people and how they talk, not really art forms in a way…and how it’s like threaded through.
The students knew they were a part of a different GCSE project due to a number of factors, i.e., my presence in the classroom, consent forms, voice recordings/interviews and the project’s title *Gender and Sexuality*. Yet how the project differed in its content and delivery to a standard GCSE project was not communicated to the students by me or Ms. Gibbins. Though, when asked to reflect on the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* the students insinuated a difference between the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* and other school projects. For example, the students mentioned a similarity between their friend’s project in another school *Natural Forms Scheme of Work* and their new project with Ms. Gibbins, *Surfaces Scheme of Work*, implying that both rested on more traditional school art principles. For instance, Minina states, ‘like you see a surface and then you try and draw it, it’s not like the idea behind that surface’, suggesting the *Surfaces Scheme of Work* teaches students how to reproduce artworks of objects/surfaces in a representational manner compared to the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* where students were able to explore outside of this framework. This point is also affirmed in chapter 6, ‘Ms. Gibbins Undone’, where Ms. Gibbins had told me that she delivers the *Surfaces Scheme of Work* for students to gain ‘foundational skills’ in various techniques. Also, Marlin too comments, ‘It’s much harder to paint a feeling than to paint a rock’, implying that the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* was more difficult than his friend’s *Natural Forms Scheme of Work* project as ‘painting rocks’ is less challenging than exploring trickier subjects such as ‘feelings’ something that Marlin seemed to think the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* investigated.

**Raphael:** I think it was taken a bit far in, the way that it looked at, yeah it was about society and I’m not really into that personally, but I can understand why it’s a thing. I mean the problem with it though, when we are doing the first sculpture, we had to make it browns and greys and blacks, just because any other colour would be oh it’s implying it has a gender but what if we were to use every colour, it wouldn’t really say very much then, would it?

**Marlin:** It implies, LGBT, doesn’t it?

**Raphael:** Would it?
Minina: Rainbow.
Marlin: Well, it’s a rainbow.
Raphael: Well, ok, what if I just use pink and blue then? You see pink and blue everywhere, what does it even look like, you can’t tell.
Marlin: It would be weird.

Interestingly, the idea that the *Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work* had something different about it compared to other art and design curriculum schemes of work, was furthered by another student’s response, Raphael, who thought the project ‘was taken a bit far’ as he disliked the making process of the sculptures (and, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, Raphael disliked the Eva Hesse and Ruth Hardinger’s artwork in class saying it was ‘trash’). In the comments above, Raphael had also complained he felt restricted by Ms. Gibbins, who had suggested to the class to think about the materials and colours they use when making the sculptures. Even though Ms. Gibbins did not explicitly tell the class what they could/could not use in terms of materials/colours, Raphael still felt as though he was unable to use multiple or bright colours/materials for his sculpture. In fact, most of the students used muted tones for their sculptures without any direction from myself or Ms. Gibbins (See Figure 7.4). Therefore, it is possible that Raphael felt pressured to use muted tones for his sculpture to fall in line with the rest of his peers or felt forced by his partner as the sculptures were collaborative, or maybe, this was the only material available. Nevertheless, it would seem that working collaboratively in the project, may have prevented Raphael communicating what he wanted to with regards to the colours in his sculpture.
Figure 7.4: Student Sculptures
The students’ choice to use muted colours could have been attributed to a more open-ended interpretation of gender and sexuality, as their work focused on ambiguous objects/Ruth Hardinger and Eva Hesse’s artwork and obscuring gendered objects, i.e., shadow drawings of lipsticks. Perhaps using muted colours was a conscious effort by the students to communicate a non-representational object/sculpture or an artwork that could have multiple interpretations—a queer object maybe? Yet, I do not want to claim an object/sculpture as queer, as this would go against queer itself, as to pinpoint or describe a static unmoveable definable thing is not very queer at all (!) But what strikes interest is Marlin’s response to Raphael’s muted colours complaint, as Marlin did see the sculptures and the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work as something other than looking at representation, especially identity categories of representation—‘LGBT’. As Marlin states, making a sculpture that was multicoloured would imply LGBTQ+ as it would be perceived as a ‘rainbow’, a traditional symbol associated with LGBTQ+ advocacy. Here, Marlin seems to defend the muted colour choice justifying the sculptures as searching for something outside of categories and symbols of identity. Marlin’s rainbow comment together with his ‘painting a rock vs feelings’ statement, suggests that Marlin was able to explore these subjects in an affective dimension through art that cannot be fully captured in language. In other words, Marlin associates ‘painting rocks’ with skills and representation/reproduction and similarly he associates ‘rainbows’ with representations or signifiers of LGBT people, whereas he attributes ‘feelings’ and ‘muted colours’ to something else. Yet the ‘something else’, which I argue is an affect emerging from Marlin’s experience with the project, as the unsaid is not fully verbalised- as an ‘affect cannot be fully realised in language’ (Massumi, 2002, p.30). From the same excerpt, feelings are discussed further:

Tabitha: Umm ok, so some of you said that, when LGBT subjects or gender and sexuality is mentioned in schools it’s normally in PSHE lessons and assembly days, so what was it like exploring it in art?
**Babita:** It made it a lot more comfortable to talk about because we did it every week. So, we also got a better understanding about gender and sexuality in general and the emotions towards it.

**Tabitha:** Do you feel more comfortable talking in front of your peers about gender and sexuality?

**Babita:** Yeah.

**Charlotte:** Yeah.

**Marlin:** Yeah, definitely. Like ‘coz we had to do it so much now it’s decent to study about.

**Minina:** Yeah, I think it looked at it differently to how you would look at it in PSHE ‘cause like, sort of, instead of like, like, saying there are this many genders or whatever, you sort of stop looking at things in terms of gender and sexuality where it’s like, on PSHE you sort of look at it like more in terms of gender and sexuality.

**Tabitha:** Hmm mm, yeah. Anyone else?

**Charlotte:** We learnt more about the feelings around it. Because in art you can’t exactly show something like that really clearly, it was less about the labels and more about the feelings around it.

Categories of representation were further discussed when I asked the students how they found exploring gender and sexuality in art compared to more peripheral subjects such as PSHE/assembly/tutor groups, where these subjects are usually addressed in schools (if at all). As I have mentioned in chapter 2 and chapter 6, schools tend to discuss gender and sexuality/LGBTQ+ under victim and tolerance discourses which can perpetuate norms and essentialisms through labelling and categorising. From the comments above, one of the students, Minina, echoes this school practice as she states that in her PHSE lessons, the school focuses on labelling ‘many genders or whatever’, whereas through investigating gender and sexuality in art, the students were able to ‘stop looking at things in terms of gender and sexuality’, hinting at a less distinct way of discussing these subjects. This unclear exploration of gender and sexuality was further agreed by Charlotte who stated that art was ‘less about the labels more about the feelings around it’ because in ‘art you can’t exactly show something like that really clearly’. Babita too, also agreed that she started to understand the ‘emotions towards it’, ‘it’, being gender and sexuality. In fact, all students in the focus group, apart from Raphael, had mentioned exploring gender and sexuality in art and design enabled them to consider
‘emotions’ and ‘feelings’ and described how art has the ability to question these subjects in less defined ways. It is important to take note of Raphael’s comments not only because he showed clear disdain for the project but also because there was an affective hot spot awakened in the dispute with Marlin (above), as the awkwardness filtered throughout the room, not fully captured in the voice recording/excerpt. However, as stated above, perhaps a queer learning is an uncomfortable one, I contend that even though Raphael disliked the project, he was still changed in some way, he was still affected, he still thought ‘it was taken a bit too far’, he still was learning. Notably, neither Ms. Gibbins nor I discussed emotions or feelings with the students when addressing Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, which was not intentional; instead, we focused on art processes or breaking representation. For example, we did not discuss how a gay person may feel if bullied or stereotyped, instead we explored with students the material processes in art that may disrupt ideas of representation. What is curious here is that the students through the investigating and making the work, were able to experience ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’. And whilst Massumi (2002) is clear to make the distinction between an emotion and an affect (seen in chapter 3), I contend the students in fact experienced the affects, due to the material encounters had, seen clearly with in chapter 5 with Viviana. For instance, in the examples earlier in this chapter, the students may have interpreted this affective experience into the language of ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’. As their affective encounter, as stated by Deleuze at the beginning of the chapter, was one that was ‘sensed’ ‘opposed to recognition’. My point being, when students encountered artworks of recognition or made work that they recognised, they did not discuss feelings. For example, the Surfaces Scheme of Work, was one of recognition, as it was similar to other projects they had done, as the project sat within representational and formalist discourses. However, when the students discussed the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’ emerged, as it was an exploration that was ‘sensed’ rather than known, as the research encounter was one of
something less known or as the Minina said, they ‘stopped looking at things in terms of gender and sexuality’. And whilst I agree that the subjects of gender and sexuality are arguably more emotive than ‘painting rocks’, perhaps affecting the students on this premise as well, I also claim the students were accounting for the affective intensities experienced during the project—an experience that was different from an emotion. Hence the statement, ‘It’s much harder to paint a feeling than to paint a rock’—it’s much harder to capture and comprehend an affect in language, an image or otherwise.

7.4 Beyond words

In the focus group discussed above, I argued affective tones were experienced by the students in the project, as students began to discuss feelings, emotions and being able to explore the subjects of gender and sexuality in less defined ways, suggesting an encounter that could be sensed rather than known. In the above excerpt, Babita had also said the project helped to understand the ‘emotions’ towards gender and sexuality too. Similarly, in my first interview with Babita, towards the end of the first scheme of work component in November 2017, notions of feelings and being able to explore these subjects in a non-linguistically manner seemed to coincide with her understanding of her sexuality, igniting an affective ‘hot spot’ within the data. I have included Babita’s work and interviews, as the affective hot spot experienced is a site where the effects of difference appear, and how those effects can be materialised in matter, that being art making/artwork. Below is the excerpt from the first interview together with her collage artwork we were discussing (Figure 7.5).
Tabitha: Did you feel comfortable exploring gender and sexuality…in class?
Babita: It was fine because in fact I’m actually bisexual. *(slightly lower pitch on bisexual)*. Tabitha: Ok. *(Quick ok after she said bisexual)*
Babita: So, I was quite alright with doing it myself, since it’s also helping me myself figure out who I am.
Tabitha: Oh really? Can you say a bit more about that?
Babita: I always thought of myself to be feminine and I haven’t thought about changing that, about that changing so far. *(lower tone)* But beforehand, a while ago, I was thinking about, I guess I had feelings/crushes on girls and stuff *(nervously giggles)* …But after a while I just realised that I’m probably just bisexual.
Tabitha: So, you said you felt pressure to…did you feel pressure to not be feminine?
Babita: No, because I think everybody has sides that are both masculine and feminine, some sides just show more. So, during that time I was feeling more from masculine side.
Tabitha: So, it was quite interesting that you said, through this project, my coat keeps falling, I’m just going to leave it there, so through this project, how did it help with your own sexual identity?
Babita: It’s helped me to realise sides of me…
Tabitha: Hmm, through looking at the artists or…?
Babita: The artists and helps me see things that I didn’t notice about myself before. Like more often nowadays I like wearing more feminine things, trying makeup and stuff but at the same time I still like to still wear comfortable boyish clothes, when I come home, I don’t dress into anything cute or girly, just put on my brother’s old clothes.
Drawing on Maclure (2013), the avowal of Babita’s bisexuality, was a tangible ‘hot spot’ within the research assemblage, as it did not emerge through conventional coding, but emerged through an affective relation that existed between myself and Babita at the time. The glow of the hot spot, experienced by us was a palpable bodily intensity that represented a disrupting of boundaries, those boundaries being, Babita’s homosexuality within the heteronormative school environment, the intervention rupturing notions of childhood innocence, and the affective presence felt of my own sexuality, a gut feeling of uncomfortableness, as I suddenly, through Babita’s avowal, was now placed in a room with a young girl telling me her sexual feelings. That is to say, even though, the students consented to the research and even though Ms. Gibbins and (now) most of the school understood the project’s themes, and even though there was an overturn of Section 28 in 2003, I still felt the affective weight of her statement because of my own sexuality- being a lesbian, in a school environment can still feel precarious due to the omnipresence of heteronormativity and the notion of childhood innocence being corrupted (Edelman, 2004). Therein, in this moment, there was a change in state, there was an intensity that emerged, there was an affect that could be sensed- I argue, by both Babita and me. I believe this is where the effects of difference emerged within the research assemblage, but it was our difference (Haraway, 1992). It was our difference within the heteronormative discourses that surrounded us, where the intensity appeared. These affective intensities are merely accounted for in the language presented and voice recording, only when Babita lowers her voice and giggles to my quick replies, can I begin to account for the intensities felt. Nevertheless, what Babita seemed to suggest, is that when she took part in the dressing up exercise, at the beginning of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, this exercise helped her reflect on figuring out ‘who I am’ through realising ‘sides of me’ - her different sides being both masculine and feminine. Yet Babita suggested in the past, when she had ‘crushes on girls and stuff’, she had felt more of her masculine side and consequently felt the need to ‘change’ and
be less feminine, before realising, she could be both. Therein, by being both masculine and feminine, Babita realised she is ‘probably just bisexual’ as now she enjoys feeling ‘girly’ through ‘trying make up’ and feeling ‘comfortable’ in ‘boyish clothes’ or her ‘brother’s clothes’. What struck me from Babita’s comments were two points; one, she equated gender presentation with sexuality, as she implied that she was ‘probably bisexual’ because she felt both masculine and feminine. A somewhat heteronormative understanding of the relationship between gender and sexuality, as having crushes on girls was likened to being masculine, whereas drawing on Butler (1990), gender can be performed in any manner of ways, having no relationship to sexuality at all. For example, a masculine presenting woman could like men, or even could have a sexuality that is a fetish. Two, Babita understood she could go back and forth between being masculine and feminine, as sometimes she liked feeling ‘girly’ and wore ‘feminine things’ and some days she wanted to feel comfortable and wore ‘boyish clothes’.

And whilst, it is widely accepted in feminist theory, that gender is a social construction and rests within the performatives, perhaps adhering to elements of Babita’s enactments of her masculine and feminine sides when wearing gendered signifiers—clothes, gender is not so stable or unitary, or can even be captured long enough to have two sides, but rather gender performative exists within the temporal relations and constitution with the other (Butler, 2005). Significantly, wearing ‘boyish’ clothes was equated with feeling more comfortable, this could be because some clothes that some men wear, are less fitting than other clothes typically associated with women (dresses), or it could be because her masculine side, feels as though it being expressed more when she does this. Nevertheless, what is significant is how she understood her bisexuality as having different sides of herself and that she found a way to swap between the sides through the signifiers of gender, be it clothes or make up. As said in chapter 5, I have made the decision, throughout the analysis chapters, to not focus on the final outcomes of the student artwork, as I fear focusing on outcome of work solely enforces the idea of what
art is, deflecting from the *doings* in the art making process. However, despite having said this, we can attribute the two different sides of Babita presented in her first artwork. As in her collage, there is a blend of her wearing a stereotypically feminine signifiers, a flowery headdress, with another image of her hair tucked under a wool hat wearing, perhaps her brother's less fitted Nike T-shirt. Therein, the final image, is left with a mixture of the two sides, a figure of both masculine and feminine traits, one figure with their eye looking down and the other figure looking into the camera. The interview continues:

**Tabitha:** So, are you seeing sexual identity as the way you look then or dress?  
**Babita:** I don’t see it in the way people act because from when we went to Tate it couldn’t tell if anybody was queer so instinctively and quickly, so I don’t see how you can tell if a person is gay by the person, or queer if they act.  
**Tabitha:** So, how are you finding exploring gender and sexuality in art so far?  
**Babita:** It’s really good because you don’t have to express it verbally which in part people can find hard to do. Lots of people can be still in the closet but they can express themselves like how artists did in Tate.

Even though Babita, in some instances, equated her own sexual identity with dressing ‘girly’ and ‘boyish’, she seemed to understand that one could not ‘tell a person is gay’ by the way they ‘act’, and found the artists at the Tate exhibition that the class visited, intriguing as their sexual identities were not so visible. Of course, the curation of the Queer British Art 1861-1967 at the Tate Britain, had artists which both visibly presented recognisable gay iconography, for example, Hannah Gluckstein’s androgynous self-portrait, or Simeon Soloman’s Sappho painting, and artists that had more coded desires due to the time period - for example, that of Laura Knight painting herself painting nude female models. Also, by the time of the interview, the class had been presented with Catherine Opie’s and Zanela Mohali’s work, with clear gay iconography of ‘butch’ lesbians and lesbian couples. Yet significantly, Babita, was drawn to the artists with more coded desires, like some of the artists from the Tate, as she suggested she enjoyed exploring the subjects of gender and sexuality in art and design, as one could still
remain ‘in the closet’ whilst still expressing oneself in non-verbal and in less obvious ways. I interpret Babita’s statements, as speaking about herself, as it would seem Babita’s enjoyment of exploring the subjects in art and design, was due to her being able to create an image that remained somewhat coded, aligning her work with some of the artists in the Tate, as she could express her bisexuality without saying it verbally -therefore, perhaps hinting, she was in some sort of ‘closet’. Here, I argue, that this is where the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work may benefit the students who are exploring their sexual/gender identities, as studying it through art may offer ways to investigate these subjects outside of the usual anti-bullying discourses, by providing those students a learning that may help ignite different understandings and explorations of themselves- as Babita states it ‘help me realise sides of me’.

For the final component of the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work in March 2018, students were given four weeks to develop/build on the work they had created in the project. Ms. Gibbins and I asked the students to work individually this time and encouraged students to investigate new artists if they needed. However, a few students still needed extra support, therefore Ms. Gibbins and I wrote eight to ten, artists on the board to help them with their investigations. I interviewed Babita for the last time in March 2018, regarding the artwork she created and her making process. Babita had researched the artist Lucy Orta, who was one of the suggested artists on the class board, as I believe Orta’s work to capture less defined readings (as discussed in chapter 2). Below is an excerpt from the interview and her artwork (Figure 7.6), I had asked her to describe how she came to produce the work:
Babita: So, I took images which are things, which are in-between a dress and a table. Which is similar to what Lucy Orta does in her study Body Architecture. Where she looks at things that are in-between bodies and in some circumstances tents for people, for refugees that are living in the survival things. So, I put together pieces that would go together in both ways and did like a photoshoot with that.

Tabitha: You said there’s this in-betweenness to your work, it’s not a skirt, but it’s not a table, but it’s a bit of both, it’s wearable umm so how does that connect for you with gender and sexuality and why were you drawn to the ideas of the body and then looking at more in-betweeness?

Babita: Well, the body, is the first thing you look at when you meet them, the first thing you see is their body. And you always base your first image of them on their body, who they are, so, instead of looking at the shape of their body and basing it on that, I wanted to do something else.

Tabitha: Something else?

Babita: Yeah, so you’re not one or the other, you could change from in-between, or you could be both. Which is likewise, you could be, like in this case, you’re a person but you’re also an inanimate object, so more for that one, you’re a person but you’re also a table at the same time.

Tabitha: How did you find the making process?

Babita: Umm well making it can be quite personal, if you’re working with yourself as part of the art, you’re basing it on yourself and you’re putting it out there for people to see, so it can get quite personal whilst you’re making it, because you’re showing yourself to everyone through these like themes of gender and sexuality.
Significantly, Babita was drawn to Lucy Orta’s work, as Orta’s artwork, although having no intended link with gender and sexuality, captures an ‘in-betweenness’ of ‘things’, be it bodies with tents or wearable sculptures (Figure 7.7).

Here, I believe Babita, builds on her first artwork, as she is interested in exploring the in-between and perhaps drawn to this theme due to her bisexuality. As Babita suggested, she understood that there are cultural assumptions placed on ‘their body’ which can judge who a person is, ‘who they are’, and so instead wanted ‘to do something else’ with her artwork. Here, I argue the ‘something else’, is to explore the subjects of gender and sexuality outside of typical representations, as she was previously interested in more coded work at the Tate and expressing her bisexuality in non-verbal and less defined ways. For example, Babita suggests that her self-portrait table dress, captures an in-betweenness of states, ‘so you’re not one or the other’, ‘you could change from in-between, or you could be both’, ‘you’re a person but you’re also an inanimate object’, perhaps hinting at her own understanding of her paired identity of both masculine and feminine sides. To add, in her first work, where she only used recognisable signifiers of gender presentation for her collage, ‘flowery headdress’, she now, for her table dress explored using inanimate objects. This addition of objects could be influenced by the second component of the scheme of work where the class read sexuality into objects, or it could
be influenced by Orta’s tents, nevertheless, Babita chose to explore gender and sexuality in this way, which ultimately rests on a different avenue to investigate these subjects, where the image could not be judged so readily into sexual categories or representation, or as she states referring to perhaps artwork that has sexuality depicted in more explicit ways, ‘you always base your first image of them on their body, who they are’. Therefore, I argue, Babita was able to speak of her sexuality in this piece, that enabled her to capture the different sides of herself, in more nuanced ways than her previous work of art, as she does not use culturally recognisable depictions of sexuality and in-turn captured a queerness in her image, as the image can render multiple readings and possibilities. Drawing on Barad (2007) and Deleuze and Guattari (1988), it would seem Babita through the making process, has conjured a sexuality assemblage as she has captured perhaps the constitution of sexuality and phenomena itself. Her work and her understandings her work, capture the intra-action of phenomena, the objects, her body, the camera, the table, etc, which all seem to depict the very intra-action process itself. In other words, Babita’s work suggest there is no separation of human, discourse, object, texture, capturing our shared entanglement within one another - all intra-acting to become. Here, the becoming, is that of a bisexuality assemblage captured in an image. Having discussed Babita’s previous interviews and artworks, it is understandable then, that the project enabled her to understand the emotions towards gender and sexuality, as it was through the making process that she was able to explore the sides of herself beyond words, conjuring perhaps affective intensities. As she suggests making the artwork was ‘quite personal’ because ‘you’re showing yourself to everyone through these like themes of gender and sexuality’. It is within this process of making the artwork, where she was allowed to ‘show’ herself yet not show herself at all, thus exploring these subjects in less define ways with students through making, may demonstrate another avenue for young LGBTQ+ students, or all students, without exposing themselves completely.
7.5 The Material troubling discourse conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the intra-action of human and non-human matter (students/ambiguous objects/Ruth Hardinger and Eva Hesse’s artwork etc), can bring about an affective tone and intensity. I argued new becomings occurred when the discourse of sexuality/gender was placed upon unintelligible matter (ambiguous objects) leading to the puncturing of epistemological frameworks, such as the students’ idea of what sexuality is/looks like. This piercing of understandings and established ways of knowing by the other, in this case the materials and processes of making and ambiguous objects, can be met with frustration/confusion as detaching from the “I” that holds passionate attachments to ways of knowing (representationalism/formalism) can be painful, as we become undone in the process- yet I have argued that whilst this process is an uncomfortable one, a learning has still occurred, as there was still a change in state, an affect - a queer learning perhaps.

I have also argued the intra-action of matter (ambiguous objects/students/tables/art room/smells/discourse/materials/processes etc) which was unique to the art classroom in the research assemblage produced new becomings which differed from other ways of addressing gender and sexuality in schools, as students had mentioned affective tones outside of more established frameworks such as representationalism and learning about different categories of identity. Here the project may offer students, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+, another avenue to explore identity/gender and sexuality.
Chapter 8

Queering the art classroom

conclusions

8.0 Introduction

In this thesis, I have explored the possibilities of queering the art classroom at GCSE level, in a bid to trouble normative art practices and school art orthodoxies whilst problematising tokenistic explorations of gender and sexuality. More specifically, I engaged students with the role of ‘not knowing’ with regards to the art making process (Fortnum, 2013), in the hope to offer different avenues to explore gender and sexuality outside of essentialist representations, towards a making process that may account for the complexities of gender and sexuality outside of human-centred conceptualisations. Consequently, whilst cultivating spaces for experimentation within the GCSE Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, I have theorised moments of unknowingness and becoming between human and non-human matter, as I believe these moments acknowledge a space where thinking and being could be explored differently within the art classroom. Yet, whilst mapping these moments of unknowingness between matter, in an art project I designed, I am not claiming that I have ‘queered’ the art classroom entirely or eliminated the hegemonic structures that still exist. This would be an impossible task, as there is the material reality of school structures and discourses in which the project sits within. Also, ‘queer’ I believe, can never be fully reached and nor should it be, as it pushes us ontologically to pursue difference, whether it be generative or not. Therein, in many ways the practices of the art classroom have not been queered. However, I argue this project has highlighted a different relation between how we might approach art, gender and sexuality and
each other, human and non-human, in schools and illuminated how we are a part of that generation, even in the micro moments of constitution to trouble from within. Therefore, the knowledge generated in this thesis, is about mapping where the ‘effects of difference’ appears (Haraway, 1992, p.300). In this concluding chapter, I summarise and evaluate the responses from the students and class teacher when intra-acting within the research assemblage. I will also reflect on the limitations of the research before suggesting possible future sites for research, practice and policy.

8.1 Student response evaluation

In this study, I have demonstrated the ways in which the art classroom could be queered by illustrating how students were constituted differently through the process of making or engaging with non-human matter/materials. For instance, I drew attention to the intra-action of matter, human and non-human, within the experimental process of making art, to consider how all matter (students/materials/discourses etc) are co-constituted in a mutual becoming. Therein, the study highlights the relationality of matter and how that relationality may bring us to new understandings. For example, in chapter 5, I focused on one student Viviana, who responded ethically to matter by reaching an understanding that she was only one part of the process of making. Viviana allowed herself to be guided with the material’s agency, in this case the Modroc, as she too was relationally intertwined in the processes of becoming. In other words, there was a mutual becoming of Viviana and the Modroc through the intra-action. Therein, during these processual moments of flux between matter, Viviana was able to reach a new understanding regarding gender and sexuality and thus was reconfigured in the process, as there was an opening of new ontological spaces. Hence, this study suggests that the sheer making process of art, could provide a different dialogue, a non-linguistic interchange, to
explore subjects such as gender and sexuality in the classroom with students - as thinking, exploring and investigating, is also making. In other words, an alternative avenue is revealed for exploring the subjects of gender and sexuality, one that is not as teacher/adult led (like many assembly days or LGBTQ+ anti bullying campaigns), but an avenue where students can come to think, communicate and make their own meanings in a different manner through materials and processes - making.

Another aspect the study draws attention to, is how we may cater for different art practice in schools and students who may rest outside of normative school systems, which points towards how practices within the art classroom can be disrupted. For instance, Viviana’s artworks could easily be interpreted in a normative way, just like her sculptures/books were by my two acquaintances, (both art teachers), in chapter 5, as the artworks could be deemed as existing outside of established epistemological frameworks commonly associated with art and design teaching/assessment. For instance, Viviana’s messy pages of her sketchbook and her stump like sculptures are not recognised in exemplar materials (seen in chapter 2). Hence, my two acquaintances, rendering Viviana’s art practice as unintelligible within their epistemological understanding of art teaching and misrecognising her learning, which I argued occurred, as she came to new understandings regarding identity. Thus, the non-linguistic dialogue and meaning making, which was communicated through the materials by Viviana, (and other students like her) could be lost within a normative framework of understanding that usually is practiced in schools. Here, the study suggests there is value and learning in different art practices, if we approach with a different lens.

The subject of misrecognition was also apparent for the other student I focused on, the so-called ‘SEND’ boy Leonardo. For example, the study focused on the normative frameworks
that were asked of him and how those frameworks performed an ethical violence upon him (Butler, 2005). For instance, the normative frameworks in the school asked him to have a specific standard of English or cognition to write/speak coherently and to have the ability to draw in a representational manner, to achieve certain assessment targets, ‘A03 record’ - all so he could make himself intelligible to us through those frameworks, which I suggest are a form of ethical violence. Yet, Leonardo through failing to achieve the normative frameworks, was labelled SEND or unintelligible in some way- as he existed outside of what was asked of him. However, the study demonstrated that through the making process, which was experimental and open-ended in nature, as there were no fixed outcomes or structures to meet, he was able to exist in a space with the materials. A space where the matter does not ask him to conform to something he is not, but only asks to evolve and becoming with him. Thus, if we begin to shift our gaze to look at Leonardo or Viviana with a queer post-human lens, a lens that accounts for failures, misrecognitions or differences, we can begin to recognise those unseen and those who slip through a normative institutional framework, like a school. This study demonstrates how we can stand to see again and demonstrates what the art making process can do, not what art is, I believe art and design as a subject can only evolve in schools if we begin to engender spaces outside of these frameworks. Therefore, through the attention given to these students, the study suggests how we can cultivate areas within the art classroom that allow for moments of unknowingness. These moments demonstrate the ways in which the practices of the art classroom can be queered, to not only bring about a change in learning but begin to recognise students like Viviana and Leonardo in schools.

When I focused on the students collectively in chapter 7, I further demonstrated how the intra-action of human and non-human matter (students/ambiguous objects/Ruth Hardinger and Eva Hesse’s artwork etc), can bring about an affective tone (mockery/disdain/disbelief) or change
in state. However, unlike the presentation of Viviana and Leonardo or even the classroom teacher, Ms. Gibbins, where there were arguably positive movements of transformation and becoming, the data presented in chapter 7 suggested moments of disconcertion. Drawing on Maclure (2013), disconcerting moments, are bodily affective intensities, which resist and shows us the limits of rationality and representation to surpass language and signification. These moments emerge unpredictably or uncomfortably, they are the odd details that can disrupts the researcher’s certainty when making sense of the data. Therefore, some of the student data presented was, in some way, disconcerting, as students felt lost, disillusioned and troubled with the project they had been a part of, and I also felt uncomfortable with their reactions. Thus, in the analysis, I argued that when encounters with discomforts or unknowingness arises, new learning and art practice can emerge and hold potential for new subjectivities/phenomena to come to the fore. Here, I claim that through analysing moments of discomfort or disconcertion, I have highlighted the productive possibilities for the pedagogy in the art classroom.

8.2 Teacher response evaluation

Similarly, to the students, this study suggests that a more open approach to art practice in the secondary art classroom whilst exploring more unconventional subjects, such as gender or sexuality, can disrupt didactic modes of teaching, as the research suggests Ms. Gibbins underwent a transformation over the course of the GCSE project. Therein, suggesting that practices of the art classroom were queered. For example, Ms. Gibbins, came to experience herself differently over the course of the project, as the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work, cultivated a site of experimentation/not knowing, as the subject of gender and sexuality were largely explored through making, materials, and open conversations with students, instead of
outcome driven art practices or anti-bullying/representational agendas. Exploring the subject of gender and sexuality in art in this more open fashion led Ms. Gibbins to feel challenged, which later on in the project pushed her to learn alongside her students. In other words, Ms. Gibbins, through sustaining her desire to offer recognition (Butler, 2005), to her students and herself, by refraining from being an ‘all knowing’ and coherent teaching subject, was able to ethically relate with her students and herself. That is to say, the experimentation with materials/processes through a queerly informed pedagogy, allowed Ms. Gibbins’ and her class a space to become differently - a space that did not demand the student be known to her or she to them. Therein, Ms. Gibbins did not ask herself to be a particular kind of teacher during this project, as she was able to risk herself to become something different. The study is a contribution to arts education and notions of how teachers may explore gender and sexuality in the class, as the research suggests that a co-construction of learning through experimentation and materials, may open dialogue to discuss these subjects with students and challenge outcome driven art practices. Here, the study provided an example of how students and teachers, can come into dialogue with one another non-linguistically, which may hold some significance, especially considering how difficult it can be to discuss sensitive subjects like gender and sexuality for some students and teachers. Therefore, this study demonstrates a different way of relating with one another as art or the making process, was able to provide a different way of meaning making and communicating. Here, the findings account for the ways in which practice was queered in the art classroom, as didactic/outcomes driven models were disrupted, and discursive and linguistic approaches to presenting gender/sexuality with young people were usurped by making pedagogies.

Returning to Butler (2005), as she states, ‘our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human’ (p.136), points to a tension in the project
that remains unresolved. As mentioned above, I discussed two acquaintances of mine, fellow art teachers who thought Viviana’s book did not deserve a high grade and consequently saw no value in her work, as her book was rendered unintelligible in their epistemological understandings. Similarly, the HOA in the Brill school, also mentioned in chapter 5, was uncertain when it came to acknowledging the students’ sculpture as art, in her off-hand comment ‘but is it art?’. Both incidences, I have argued point to a disconnect between their epistemological understandings and the material pieces in front of them. This disconnect, I claim, is a space generated, that is pre-subjective, unknown and affectual- meaning, it is the space before recognition, as it is momentarily felt before it is known or coded back into discourse– it is an encounter with the unknown, be it an unrecognisable sculpture/object/book. However, these unknown encounters open up a tension with regards to the teachers I present in this thesis. Ms. Gibbins I believe, was able to embrace this unknown space that she found herself in momentarily, as she showed a ‘willingness to become undone’, to be constituted as ‘human’, undone from the norms, structures, discourses, matter, that create her - whereas the other teachers I present, did not risk themselves in this encounter with the unknown. Instead, the teachers held on to what made them intelligible to themselves and others. As Butler (2005) states:

[W]e must recognise that ethics requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us (p.136).

Thus, I use Butler’s language to ask the question; do we have to be ‘willing’ to risk ourselves in the moments of the unknowingness to become undone? Hence, do we have to be willing to be queered?
8.3 Contributions to theory

As discussed in the theoretical design, in chapter 3, when considering performativity or the construction of phenomena, queer theory’s emphasis on language and discourse inscribing upon and shaping the body leaves the body and other matter, somewhat passive. Therefore, this conceptualisation made many contemporary feminist scholars discontented with poststructuralism’s privileging of language and discourse and lack of acknowledgment of materiality and other non-human matter (Barad, 2007). I argue I have aimed to resolve this tension, by embracing a relational ontology between all matter, human and non-human, meaning notion such as ‘sexuality’ or ‘queerness/unintelligibility’ can be understood as a material-discursive assemblage, instead of only a citational-anthropomorphic phenomenon within a poststructuralist framework. Hence, we could think about a ‘queering of matter’ as well as only queering human/language/discourse. For example, as we saw in Chapter 5, Viviana attributed her process of making to a gender and sexuality assemblage, as she understood the material serendipity as accounting for gender/sexuality in a state of flux and becoming. Therefore, ‘sexuality’ is liberated from it being human-centred and focused on sex/gendered/human object attraction in discourse and language, to conceptualising sexuality as an assemblage of materials, movements, heat, textures, bodies, affects, discourses, other non-human agents.

Another contribution to theory this thesis has made, is conjoining the ethical understandings of both Barad’s (2007) and Butler’s (2005). For example, Butler (2005), attributes agency to the relational slippage of norms in language and discourse between the human self and the human other. Whereas, for Barad (2007), agency is equally enacted by all components (human-non-human matter) having the capacity to affect, resulting in multitudes of possibilities. It is here,
within the multitudes of possibilities and affects where different realities can be enacted through different cuts and exclusions. Therefore, I argue, that the reconfiguration process may reside in Barad’s (2007) exclusions, as there are different possibilities within the exclusions - we just need to focus on the exclusions we enact to create other possibilities. As elaborated on in chapter 3 and 4, as a point of ethical responsibility, Barad (2003) wants us to focus on the exclusions we help enact, or the paths we choose, as these exclusions bring about differences - ‘differences that matter’ (p.803). Therefore, I understand Barad’s (2007) ethical exclusions to be compatible with Butler’s (2005) ethical incoherence, unknowingness and un-intelligibilities, as I argue both attribute other possibilities residing in moments of incoherence (Butler) or the exclusions (Barad). Thus, I believe that exclusions can be read as moments of unrecognizability as both Barad and Butler attribute some agency here. So, for this project, I read Barad’s exclusions as incoherences, as I believe these are differences that matter. And I have attended to the effects of difference (Haraway, 1992) which I argue could also be read as the effects of incoherence within the intervention. Here, I argue the thesis contributes to the bridging of the divide between the two theories.

8.4 Limitations

There were a number of methodological limitations to the study which should be addressed. In particular, there was an incoherence regarding my methodological design and my poststructuralist and new materialist theoretical framework. Whilst I argue that I focused on the dialogue between human and non-human matter, as I considered the broader entanglements and intra-actions, there was still much attention given to the human and human centred methods of data generation. Also, my research methods were still very researcher centred, whilst the students and teacher were left to experiment with the curriculum design, my pre-existing
methods still drew a line between me, the researcher, and my participants. For example, my analysis chapters still rely heavily on my interpretations and my construction of knowledge. And whilst the researcher is always a part of that knowledge creation, for future work, I would like to advocate for a further blurring between researcher and the participants by exploring multiplicities within the research process with a greater focus on post qualitative inquiry. For example, have multiple researchers (students/teacher), with multiple modes of documentation (arts-based methods/photovoice/interviews etc), allowing for multiple interpretations - all whilst having an unfolding methodology, by which I mean, a methodology of immanence (St. Pierre, 2021). Here, this might allow for the co-construction of knowledge and open a dialogue of what counts as meaning making with and for others, students/teachers or even non-human. Yet having said earlier in chapter 4, finding the time within the restraints of school life, that being, timetables and exam pressure, could prove difficult for such a post qualitative project to be conducted.

8.5 Recommendations for future research

Along with exploring a different methodological approach, my recommendations for further research, would be to explore the themes brought forth in this thesis with different schools, (single sex or independent) and different age groups (primary). During the work I did with the Queering the Art Classroom Exhibitions, I worked with different schools doing one/two-day interventions with teachers and different age groups (key stage 3 and 4), all of which, had a variety of approaches and responses to the subjects considered here. For example, a single sex school I worked with, had many students with a performing arts background, so notions of gender and sexuality being in constant flux were investigated through movement and dance. Here, explorations of gender and sexuality rested on affectual and bodily intensities, fast/slow
pace, sound, heat, smell etc, which gave students a different dialogue to discuss these subjects - perhaps pointing towards an inter-disciplinary approach to this work. However, at the same time, I have worked with students who simply did not engage with any of the subjects or art making practices. Therein, given the different school contexts in which art education takes place, this can have significant implications for exploring these subjects with students. For instance, schools who are traditionally led in their approach to art practice or schools with a majority religious intake, will undoubtedly approach the ideas brought forth in this thesis differently. Therein, future research could rest on understanding the variety approaches different students and teachers take when exploring these subjects in their art classrooms - yet these explorations should not only be bound to the art classroom. Since starting this research, many teachers from different subjects, (English, history, music, drama) have come to the exhibitions or my talks, wanting to explore gender and sexuality outside of anti-bullying agendas or human centred static notions. Exploring this work in other subjects could be even more pertinent than ever before, as subjects like English literature, which had new changes to their GCSE specifications, leading to greater emphasis on teaching 19th Century ‘traditional’ canons, has arguably engendered exclusivity and Eurocentric/heteronormative discourses (Cough, 2017). Therefore, future research into how these themes might be implemented in different subjects, or even exploring a inter/transdisciplinary approach, could offer insights to how schools could go beyond what is required for school policy regarding equality or anti-bullying, toward a more in depth understanding of the identity/gender and sexuality in schools - which I argue investigating these subjects in the art and design classroom has done. Another point I would like to address relates to what happened after the intervention. When I saw Ms. Gibbins after the research, she told me that the year 10 class had had a more adventurous approach to the Surfaces Scheme of Work (the project after the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work), than her other year 10’s in the past, as students were willing to take more risks with
making. Therefore, it might be interesting to do a longitudinal study, to understand how queering student and teacher art practice might inform their future practice in years to come.

8.6 Recommendations for future practice and policy

The growing governance of schools by consecutive governments in the past 40 years, has meant that the incentives for teaching and learning have been largely economic, as competitiveness within global markets has caused schools to focus on ‘core subjects’, assessment and accountability, all taking a more prominent role over the growing needs of learners. The DfE strategy 2015-2020, published in 2016, which was in place during this research, had little reference to establishing new pedagogical understandings, methods, inquiry or research (and I am yet to see a published update for 2021 on the DfE). Instead, the focus of the document is largely on ‘embedding’ ‘rigorous assessment, standards and accountability’ with one of the chief principles being, ‘outcomes, not methods’ (p.5). Therefore, any debate regarding the purpose or value of education, is reduced to producing neoliberal subjects capable of demonstrating that pre-determined outcomes have been met. However, this discourse, surely, is not the purpose of education- at least not when viewed queerly. Whilst the economic rationale is one aspect of our lives, should we not want to prepare learners beyond that rationale? With this being said, I hope this project can contribute to the debate regarding the purpose of education and the need to keep questioning and troubling its declared purpose. For instance, in a new art education, we need to disrupt the practices we uphold and perform, in a bid to imagine new future sites for learning and by doing so, this may reach the needs of more learners or even more teachers. In my examples of Viviana and Leonardo in chapter 5, we are reminded of this possible future, as we are able to apprehend how disrupting practices, can
generate a site where another learning can take place, where they can be understood or constituted differently. Thus, I argue that in a new art education we need to keep engaging with cultivating sites of difference and disrupting practices, whilst understanding our relation to one another, human and non-human, to trouble from within the neoliberal bureaucracy in educational policy and practice.

In some senses, the art and design National Curriculum and GCSE/A Level frameworks, provide art teachers with some flexibility, as reforms to the DfE guidance in 2008 and 2013, and changes to the GCSE assessment rubric in 2016, encourage a greater focus on art processes, with language being more open/interpretive, than teaching a specific content or subject knowledge. Yet, despite these changes to the frameworks and guidance, how they are implemented or understood by art teachers can still lead to school art orthodoxies and prescriptiveness. However, this is not to blame art teachers entirely. Whilst I agree with Atkinson (2011) in chapter 2, who states that art teachers fail to mourn the past, inciting a sort of violence on difference, bureaucracy is still heavily bound to teachers/schools, impacting art practice. As mentioned in chapter 2 and 6, GCSE assessment grids can cause linear patterns of learning, due to the tallying of numbers in boxes and exam board exemplars offer examples for teachers based on graded outcomes. This way of assessing student work mixed with the time restraints/pressures and accountability cultures that teachers face, can mean that art teachers hold on to what is known and understood- to effectively keep their careers. For example, the findings suggested, that Ms. Gibbins was unquestionably touched by her involvement in the project, as it allowed her to reflect on her practice and acknowledge a certain complacency and rigidness, she found herself in over many years of teaching. Therein, it is imperative for art teachers to be given the necessary CPD/teacher training, to reinvest in their careers and their arts practice to keep their passions and practice contemporary and thriving. More so than ever,
especially in light of the continuing school CPD/teacher training budget cuts, organisations such as the NSEAD are vital for keeping key art teachers’ networks together to continue refreshing art practice in our schools through sharing best practice/resources and attending talks and having artists in residence. By way of extension, it is well known amongst initial teacher training (ITT) programmes (where I now work) that the current Conservative government have been wanting to terminate university-based ITT programmes due to cost (and most likely the opposing rationales for education). Therein, it is imperative that we keep the PGCE courses and ITT programmes in our universities, so that future teachers can trouble and hold accountable the structures and practices that operate in schools.

Yet, with this being said, there are micro moments of difference which can be cultivated within the prevailing macro discourses we find ourselves imbued and constitute by. I argue that this project is an example of that movement and acknowledgement of difference to imagine future sites of learning within the constraints of school life. Therein, the findings demonstrate that there are spaces for art teachers to interpret the assessment frameworks differently by providing opportunities for students to gain confidence with more open artistic practice. For example, in a new version of art education, the GCSE/A Level assessment framework can be approached in less linear fashions (and still make the grades) through disrupting certain art school orthodoxies, regarding ‘foundational skills’ and ‘outcomes/A04’, or even how we present artwork with students, e.g., queering household objects through shadow drawings to enter into explorations of post-minimal artworks instead of only recreating an artist pastiche. Here, pedagogy is driven by the desire to explore the subject/topic (whatever it may be) with the materials/practices. This may be a simple point to state, yet as stated in chapter 2, there tends to be an unwritten rule that students must learn the basic skills of art first before moving on to create artwork later. What is forgotten in this rather didactic and linear approach to pedagogy
in the art classroom, is that making or materially investigating is *thinking* too and thus provides different non-linguistic knowledges that can enter certain topics/subjects in the art classroom.

Yet, despite the prevailing bureaucracy as mentioned above, there have been positive movements during the time of conducting this research. In April 2019, there were new changes to sex and relationship education policy in the UK, which now make it mandatory for all secondary schools from summer 2021, to teach about sexual orientation and gender identity along with other progressive discourse within the document regarding young people and their sexual lives/health. These developments in policy, point to the DfE starting to understand the need to equip students for life in modern Britain. Whilst I am still dubious as to how this curriculum will be implemented, as I fear that more charity resources will be published with essentialist connotations, to only support more outlier subjects like PSHE, the changes in policy may provide teachers with a greater incentive and legitimisation to explore these subjects with students. Here, teachers may feel more comfortable to begin tailoring their explorations of gender/sexuality to their subjects and students, which may in turn provide teachers with greater autonomy to explore difference and render charity resources redundant. As I mentioned in chapter 6, Ms. Gibbins found that investigating these subjects in art and design enabled her to have explorations with students that were outside of the awkward conversations she had usually with students in PSHE lessons or tutor group, as art provided a way to relate to her students and make meaning differently - perhaps suggesting that teachers could feel more confident teaching subjects like gender and sexuality in their specialist subject. Therefore, having teachers explore these topics in their own subjects could be even more relevant than before, as in 2020 the government ended the funding for LGBTQ+ anti bullying initiatives (Hunte, 2020), leaving a gap in the attention placed on these subjects in schools.
For the reasons mentioned in chapter 2, I argue the presentation of LGBTQIA+ identities in subjects like PSHE/assembly days, is problematic due to the victim discourses and superficial explorations of gender and sexuality that tend to be adopted (see PSHEassociation.org.uk). Yet this does not mean anti-bullying or the presentation of LGBTQIA+ terminology cannot be approached in PSHE or assembly days. However, given my findings, I would suggest that discussing anti-bullying with students could take a more practical and exploratory turn. Just as Ms. Gibbins and the students questioned the representation of the ‘queer art’ on the display at the Tate Britain and in class (see chapter 4), PSHE teachers could question fixed notions of LGBTQIA+ people. For example, PSHE teachers could ask their students to question if all LGBTQIA+ students might feel rejected/threatened and trouble the importance given to identity labels within some aspects of LGBTQIA+ culture. Another route could be to accommodate the awkwardness that some of these conversations can bring to both teachers and students through art making. For instance, an organisation called School of Sexuality Education (UK), provides in-school workshops on consent, sexual health, pornography and positive relationship through investigating with colourful playdough. Here, we can see that certain organisations are beginning to see the affordances art making can bring when exploring these topics with students beyond only discursive explorations.

Over the course of the project, the exploration of gender and sexuality remained a subject that the students were invested in and excited by. When I saw Ms. Gibbins after the research, she had said she felt a great sense of apathy from her year 10’s, when they moved on to the Surfaces Scheme of Work, as they still wanted to carry on with the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work. Also, the other art teachers in the department at Brill school had said to Ms. Gibbins that their year 10 GCSE groups kept asking if they were going to start the Gender and Sexuality Scheme of Work too. Although, I was unable to include all of the data generated in this project,
I did have a few students ‘come out’ to me whilst conducting the research, thus I believe these examples further suggest a need to approach these subjects with students, as these subjects in some cases are at the forefront of students’ lives. Yet, the weight of this work should not fall only on teachers or LGBTQ+ staff members/students. Whole school approaches (and initial teacher education) to counter hegemonic discourses such as heteronormativity and to explore more nuanced understandings of identity, need to be supported by leadership, staff development/CPD, parents/the community, teaching and learning/curriculum, policy development and of course, student voice. For example, staff development could be based on the responses of students to questions about what they feel is needed regarding exploring the topics of gender and sexuality and teachers could be given the time to develop meaningful resources and projects to fully investigate this within the curriculum. Therein, offering a fuller consideration of gender and sexuality in the curriculum beyond LGBTQ+ history month.

8.7 Final thoughts

Through applying queer theoretical frameworks alongside new materialist conceptualisations, I have explored how the secondary art classroom could be queered. I argue this study has disrupted gendered and sexuality norms and art classroom/secondary school art practice norms. More specifically, the study has drawn attention to the role of experimentation during the art making process and highlighted the interconnectedness of thinking, doing and being within the intra-action of matter. In other words, the study illuminates the art making process is what makes us - as we are not separate from the materials we use. Put simply, we are made through making and making is made through us. Consequently, the place for gender and sexuality in the curriculum should not only based on anti-bullying agendas, but instead there should be an acknowledgement that investigating these subjects through subjects like art, is what it means to learn and create ourselves in the process. Here, I contend, that the process of making, the
unfolding of unexpected material events and processes is parallel to queer theoretical ideas of identity construction being an unstable process and always in a state of becoming. Thus, by focusing on material processes and experimentation with the students/teacher, I have offered different avenues to explore gender and sexuality outside of essentialist representations, towards a making process that I believe accounts for the multiplicities of gender and sexuality.
9. References


10. Appendices
Appendix 1: Letter of consent

Institute of Education

Research title:
An analysis of GCSE student responses to exploring identity in artwork

September 2017 and March 2018

Information sheet for: Parents

Who is conducting the research?
My name is Tabitha Millett, and I am inviting your child to take part in my research project, ‘An analysis of GCSE student responses to exploring identity in artwork.’ I am a PhD student at University College London investigating ways to improve the art curriculum and student equality in school. The Institute of Education at UCL is the number one leading department for education in the world, therefore it is assured I will be given expert advice and guidance throughout the research process. My previous research experience has consisted of similar research, where I conducted art research in schools with Cambridge university. The previous experience has undoubtedly equipped me with the necessary tools for conducting future research projects professionally.

The research I will be conducting at school name aims to explore if presenting artists that represent identity promote greater thinking skills amongst students and inclusion. I very much hope that your child would like to take part in the research. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know. Please explain the research to your child and discuss whether they want to take part. I will also ask the children before the task/interview and make it clear that they can drop out if they wish with no negative consequences.
Why are we doing this research?
The aim of the research is to promote greater inclusion and critical thinking skills amongst students which is important for the betterment of society.

Why am I being invited to take part?
*School name* have an excellent art department with talented students. The art department also studies ‘identity’ for a GCSE unit in year 10 and this unit fits with the research.

What will happen if I choose to take part?
The data will be collected by me through classroom observations and conducting one-to-one and group interviews with students. The main questions asked in the interviews will be surrounding how students felt about the artwork presented/explored and discussions surrounding their own artwork produced. All interviews and the 3 classroom observations will be audio recorded not video recorded. I will also take pictures of the students’ artworks and the students making the work.

Will anyone know I have been involved?
My supervisors, the examiners and I will be the only people who have access to the data and the students’ names will be anonymised, along with the school.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?
Some students may feel that discussing identity is a sensitive topic, therefore if students feel uncomfortable, they are entitled to stop at any point.

What will happen to the results of the research?
The results will be used to inform my PhD, aspects of which may be presented as conference papers and articles. As previously mentioned, all participants will be anonymised and the data will be securely stored in an encrypted hard drive, that only I and my supervisors will have access to. The pictures of the students making the artwork and their artwork will be shown in conference papers, academic journals and the PhD thesis.

Does my child have to take part? It is entirely up to you whether your child takes part. I hope that if you do choose to be involved then your child will find it a valuable experience. There
will be no negative repercussions if your child does not want to take part and it will not affect their grades or schoolwork.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you would like to be involved, please sign the following consent form and return to Ms. by 25th September 2017

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Parent signature: ..........................................................