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The Queer Intersection of Live and Digital Applied Performance, Youth, Sexuality and Mental Health

by

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degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre Studies

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Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Part of this PaR project has been published by the author:

Phillips, H. (2016) 'Heterophobia: subverting heterosexual hegemony through intermedial applied performance for young people.' *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. 21 (3), pp. 319-331. DOI: 10.1080/13569783.2016.1194190.

Abstract

The Queer Intersection of Live and Digital Applied Performance, Youth, Sexuality and Mental Health

In a Conservative, Brexit climate, homophobic and transphobic hate crimes have increased by fifty-five percent in the past five years (Francis, 2020), suicide rates for young LGBTQ+ people have also increased as stated by The Trevor Project (2019). Homophobia is endemic in Britain's schools (Stonewall, 2017) and a new research study, published in *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* (2018) recently revealed children as young as ten who identify not to be heterosexual are more likely to demonstrate mental health issues. This PhD thesis is informed by practice, the performance project *Heterophobia* (2015), attempted to interrogate live and digital queer applied performance aesthetics for / with young people. Concluding that the virtual can operate outside of binary thinking and digital technology can offer an ever-evolving, reimagined, virtual, queer performative space for practice with young people that is not confined by fixed hegemonic gender or sexual identities and can disrupt heteronormative narrative. In *Heterophobia* (2015), a live social media platform offered a queer space where the live performance intersected the digital performance and the self-identified queer performers connected with the young audiences / participants in live discourse. This practice-as-research PhD stands as a call to activism for queer performance makers to make queer applied performance work for and with children and young people as a form of intervention for young LGBTQ+ people's mental health issues and suicide.

Chapter One

Introduction

In a #loveislove generation LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer and Questioning plus) hate crime incidents are rapidly rising (Francis, 2020), homophobia is endemic in Britain's schools and mental health issues, self-harm cases and suicide rates for young LGBTQ+ people are increasing as Stonewall's recent school based research evidences (2017). Young LGBTQ+ people internalise homophobia through living and learning in an obligatory heterosexual world which reflects cultural anxieties around the 'promotion' of homosexuality to children and young people. Youth services and mental health services have seen extensive cuts in the past decade, a DFE (Department for Education) quantitative survey (2017) revealed further cuts in schools have also resulted in counsellors being removed from schools. There is no formal training available for teachers in the area of LGBTQ+ inclusivity (Stonewall, 2014). This thesis will focus on the application of applied performance practice-as-research (PaR) to this issue. Further practice-as-research, activism and agency is urgently required in this area of queer applied performance with children and young people as a form of intervention to young LGBTQ+ suicide. This PaR based PhD aimed to interrogate a culture of what Adrienne Rich (1980) refers to as 'compulsory heterosexuality' in secondary schools and to challenge young people's homophobic attitudes and behaviour through intermedial applied performance. This PhD was practice-as-research based as the practice tested and developed a queer aesthetic in live and digital applied performance for and with young people. The argument of the thesis revolves around the development of a queer aesthetic in applied performance with young people and unpacks alternative gender and sexuality politics for children and young people.

I started with the following broad research objectives:

- to add to the understanding of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity in secondary schools

- to develop applied performance practice with queer emerging artists to test with young people as a means of challenging heteronormativity
- to better understand young people's aesthetic values in live and digital applied performance
- to interrogate whether using digital technology in live performance and the opportunity for young people to participate in live performance through digital technology enhanced their engagement with the issues being explored
- to test whether digital technology offered applied performance with young people a new queer participatory and pedagogical aesthetic and praxis

This practice-as-research project recognises a historic pathologizing and criminalisation of homosexuality and non-normative gender identities which challenge cultural normativity. The argument in this thesis claims the legacy of Section 28 (1988), the Local Government Act, introduced by Margaret Thatcher, the most notorious anti-gay legislation to have been implemented in the UK in recent times, legislating against the local authority promoting homosexuality or publishing any homosexual materials as the catalyst to what is culturally referred to as homophobia in schools evidenced by Stonewall (LGBT) Charity and other third sector reports (2003, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019). These deep rooted, rampant homophobic attitudes and behaviours in schools across the UK are significantly impacting on the mental health and well-being of young LGBTQ+ people. In a current Conservative climate, where homophobic and transphobic hate crimes have increased by fifty-five percent in the past five years (Francis, 2020), as have suicide rates for young LGBTQ+ people as stated by The Trevor Project (2019); this practice-as-research project is a call for activism for applied performance makers making work for and with children and young people to recognise the importance of making queer work and offering young people queer characters, queer role models and portraying queer lives.

Context

In 2012, when my original application was made for this practice-as-research PhD at the University of Warwick, I was interested in creating a new feminist paradigm with young people through interdisciplinary applied performance. This followed a project entitled *She*, which was commissioned and funded by Birmingham's Community Safety Partnership as part of the Government's *Prevent* Agenda, a strategy to safeguard people and communities from threats of terrorism. I had worked with second year undergraduate applied performance students at Birmingham School of Acting, Birmingham City University, to develop a new piece of interdisciplinary applied performance practice which explored issues of sexual exploitation for young women associated with gangs in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull's Women's Aid. This work took place at The Drum arts centre in Aston which was a central location for gang activity in Birmingham. School and Pupil Referral Units of female students from inner city Birmingham came to see the work over a three-week period. Twenty-three young women and ten older women self-referred to Birmingham and Solihull's Women's Aid as a direct result of engaging with this work for ongoing, further support having experienced sexual exploitation through gang association. Witnessing the impact of the practice when working in partnership with a third sector organisation inspired me to develop this practice but also to understand the significance of research built into the practice.

Through the process of literary review, it became apparent that misogyny is inspired by society's view and focus on heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity, anything 'other' is 'less than' and results in bullying and oppression. As Mindy Blaise and Affrica Taylor uphold,

we cannot think about gender without simultaneously thinking about sexuality. More specifically, we cannot behave in gendered ways outside of the framework of heterosexuality. In other words, dominant gender discourses and the dominant discourse of heterosexuality are inseparable and we must consider them together

in order to fully appreciate the persistence of gender stereotypes.
(2012: 91)

To have any impact on young people's views of gender identity and sexual autonomy, the primary consideration needed to challenge a society which insists on 'compulsory heterosexuality' to prove 'masculinity'. I returned to an earlier piece of practice and concept, *Heterophobia*, a role reversed world where the majority of society were homosexual, and the minority were heterosexual. In 2010, I was commissioned by *Shout*, Birmingham's Festival of Queer Arts and Culture to make a new piece of work to empower young LGBTQ+ audiences. Now, in 2013, I wanted to remake this work for school audiences to disrupt preconceived ideas of homosexuality. This practice intentionally worked within binaries, albeit a binary switch of the oppressed and the oppressors. Society offers children and young people binarized thinking in terms of gender and sexual identity, 'a system of compulsory heterosexuality' (Butler, 1990: 24). To work outside of binary thinking for young people aged thirteen plus would potentially only engage those young people self-identifying outside of this restricted thinking. In this research project, I was interested if this practice could impact the thinking of the oppressors rather than the oppressed. Previous LGBTQ+ themed plays have been largely unsuccessful and sparse. As Lindsay Amer asserts 'queer themes must be effectively depicted in cultural content for young people in order to destabilise global stigmas of LGBTQ+ people' (2016: 9). This thesis explores how performance makers might 'queer' work for and with young people. Recognising a queer aesthetic for children and young people will be different to a queer aesthetic for an adult audience. To enable young people to work outside of binary thinking, this practice-as-research project concluded that children need to be presented with queer performance and representations in their early years as a means of intervention against binarized thinking and for this to be ongoing with age appropriate work developed for and with them at different stages of development, offering children and young people alternative forms of gender and sexual identities.

Queer theory, a field of post-structuralist critical thinking emerging in the 1990s out of feminist theories and queer studies is an ever evolving,

multi-layered and complex concept which is ambiguous and difficult to define. As Donald Hall argues, it is not one singular concept, 'there is no 'queer theory' in the singular, only many different voices and sometimes overlapping, sometimes divergent perspectives that can be loosely called 'queer theories' (2003: 5). My starting point for this project was to use Blaise and Taylor's very basic definition of queer theory and its relevance to childhood education. They assert,

Queer theory is a new theory about gender. It is relevant to early childhood educators who wish to find new ways of understanding and challenging persistent gender stereotypes. The theory links gender stereotypes to the norms of heterosexuality. It is definitely not a theory about gay and lesbian identity. Queer theory is "queer" because it questions the assumption that there is any "normal" expression of gender. (2012: 88)

In this PaR project, I use queer theory as a framework to interrogate the normative gender and sexuality identities offered to young people in schools which are constructed by dominant gender discourses and regulated through the practice of compulsory heterosexuality.

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. (Butler, 1990: 31)

Any individual who is identified as 'other' in terms of their gender or sexuality identity is marginalised and bullied as a result.

In 2013, I decided I would like to revisit the concept and title of *Heterophobia* and create a new piece of intermedial applied performance work specifically for school audiences in an attempt to challenge this culture of 'compulsory heterosexuality' in schools as a pilot piece of practice for my practice- as-research based PhD.

Practice-as-Research

The emergence of practice-as-research within the creative arts as Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt claim, 'highlights the crucial interrelationship that exists between theory and practice and the relevance of theoretical and philosophical paradigms for the contemporary arts practitioner' (2010: 1). This research paradigm broadly explores new creative or artistic processes and methodologies to produce new knowledge and access impact. As Sally Mackey asserts,

an exhilarating and dynamic form of research, in PaR your practice is the crucible for creating and challenging knowledge. It is this that has made it such a rewarding methodology: the meshing of creativity and experiment in live practice is deeply attractive for many of us who have been, and are, practitioners working in participant contexts. (2016: 478)

Brad Haseman views the artwork as the research itself which is symbolically expressed through the practice. He argues, 'symbolic data work performatively. They not only express the research, but in that expression become the research itself' (2006: 102). This PaR project uses Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean's framework 'which includes not only the artwork but also the surrounding theorisation and documentation' (2009: 5).

Heterophobia (2014) was created specifically for young people aged thirteen to eighteen years in Birmingham. It was funded by Birmingham City University's Centre for Enhanced Learning and Teaching and Birmingham Pride. It was collaboratively devised with Outspoken, a diverse company of predominantly self-identifying queer emerging artists which was developed as part of this project and was made up of graduates and undergraduates from the applied performance programme at Birmingham School of Acting / Birmingham City University. We worked in partnership with Birmingham LGBT, the City's leading charity advocating the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Birmingham. The production company comprised of a composer, set designer, a visual artist and me, leading the devising process, directing and producing the production. This project was clearly described to students,

graduates, and the production team as an applied performance research project. The company were aware that their own lived experiences which were shared as part of the process and their own identities would inform part of this practice-as-research and that they were collaborators within this PaR project. As Mackey states 'research 'ownership' becomes interestingly ambiguous. The researcher 'authors' the research ideas; the participants might not be co-authors, perhaps, but certainly they comprehensively inhabit the research findings. Knowledge production is therefore shared – and complex' (2016: 486). Mackey refers to the multiple voices of community, participants, researcher(s), a production team involved in applied performance PaR projects as a 'polyphonic conversation' (2016: 487).

As an embedded researcher, I also had further challenges around dual affiliation on various levels, this was my PhD research project; however, I was also making this practice and leading this project in the hope of achieving social change and impact in Birmingham. There was a dual role in my relationship with the students and graduates as both their lecturer at Birmingham School of Acting and their director / employer (the graduates were being paid for this project) / collaborator on this project. I was affiliated to two universities, Birmingham City University where I was employed and who had part funded this project and the University of Warwick where I was a PhD student. I had also agreed outcomes with Birmingham Pride who had also part funded this work and I was also working within the objectives of our partners, Birmingham LGBT. I had to ensure I consistently reviewed these competing demands and ethical considerations and the priorities for making the work to ensure the completion of my PhD did not outweigh the needs of the company, the participants, or the partners. I balanced the need for advocacy and measuring impact within this specific area of research alongside the pursuit of a qualification. It could be argued that my critical distance of both the subject matter, due to my own queer identity and the practice as I was making the work, was limited. At points this was challenging, and I found myself wrangling for longer periods of time with certain aspects of the practice than others before I could find what I believed to be a necessary distance for critical reflection. These insights often became the most rewarding, as Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson suggest,

[the] intuitive messiness and aesthetic ambiguity are integral to researching theatre and performance, where relationships between the researcher and the researched are often fluid, improvised and responsive. Getting lost, meeting obstacles or generating disagreement in the methods and methodologies maze are intrinsic to collaboration, but these moments of confusion, dissent or antagonism can be very research-rich. (2011: 2)

The issue around critical distance within embedded research was largely negated by the length of time this project has spanned over. This has given the opportunity to receive feedback from a variety of stakeholders, adequate reflection time and the opportunity to remake the practice in several iterations of the work. This thesis has also been written several years after the practice was made, enabling me to review the practice through distance and a theoretical lens. I have also developed further queer work since 2015 in response to this practice, enabling further learning, revealing developed knowledge and evidencing increased impact.

Heterophobia (2014) was made as a pilot piece of performance to test practice and consult with young people to inform the direction of the work and develop *Heterophobia* (2015). I would use this pilot piece of practice to gather experiential research from young people around the existence of homophobic bullying in schools, gather their feedback about the performance piece, the fusion of live performance and digital media and to test whether this work could challenge their preconceived thinking around sexuality. Philip Taylor (2003) discusses the 'transformative' potential of applied theatre / performance. He suggests,

When applied theatre operates well, it can challenge audience members, spectators, to ask themselves the questions: What might I do if I were placed in the same circumstance? How does the experience being demonstrated in front of me relate to my own circumstances? To what extent can I learn from the experience? How might my life be changed or transformed? (2003: 6)

Feedback from participants and research would then be taken back into the rehearsal room to develop the final piece of practice in 2015. So, the feedback and research changed the direction of the practice-as-research.

Another aspect of the PaR project was also to experiment with new forms of immersive applied performance practice, to create an interactive performance experience for the targeted audience which was distinct from either a TIE performance or an applied theatre workshop process. This PaR project spans a seven-year period, throughout this thesis expansive use of different terminology is used to be reflective of the time when either the practice happened, or it was written and the broad spectrum of practices, vocabularies and methodologies used during these periods. The variations of terminologies used was also necessary to engage different audiences, in 2015 *Heterophobia* is referred to as an 'urban musical' to engage young audiences. The same practice is referred to as 'intermedial applied performance' in a special issue RiDE article in 2016 where the theme is 'intermediality'. From 2018 onwards, I refer to terms such as 'interdisciplinary', 'immersive' and 'hybrid' to reflect contemporary discourse around participatory practice which uses more than one art form. As Nicola Shaughnessy states, 'this positioning of working across and between disciplines and forms, is particularly pertinent to artists engaged in applying performance; hybrid practices which, like performance itself, evade definition, refusing to be constrained by categorical frameworks' (2012: xv).

In 2014, for the pilot piece of practice I asked both quantitative and qualitative questions through a questionnaire given to the young audiences directly before and after the performance. Taylor favours a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, the quantitative approach enables generalizations which can be communicated to a variety of audiences whereas 'the qualitative report embarks on a comprehensive inquiry of the multiple and shifting perspectives surrounding an applied theatre event' (2003: 106). The pre-show research questionnaire (Figure 1.1) focused on gathering information around their previous theatre and arts experience, if any, as I was interested if the young people were engaged with theatre and the arts previous to this experience to help understand their views around

aesthetics post-performance, whether the young people would prefer to experience the developed practice in an alternative venue and to investigate how accessible theatre and the arts were for these young people living in Birmingham. At this stage of the process, I was also interested in their lived experiences of homophobia.

HETEROPHOBIA PRE-SHOW FEEDBACK
We want to hear your opinions and feedback so we can make the kind of theatre you want to watch!

1. Have you ever been to the theatre before?
☐ Yes ☐ No

2. If yes, which theatres have you been to?
 (You can tick more than 1 box)
☐ The Birmingham Repertory Theatre / The REP
☐ The Drum
☐ mac Birmingham
☐ The Birmingham Hippodrome / The Patrick Centre
☐ The Crescent Theatre
☐ New Alexandra / The Alex
☐ The Custard Factory
☐ Wolverhampton Arena
☐ Lichfield Garrick
☐ Other

3. Do you enjoy going to the theatre?
☐ Yes ☐ No
 If yes why?

 If no why?

4. Have you experienced any Theatre in Education at your school?
☐ Yes ☐ No
 If yes did you find it
☐ Exciting ☐ Good ☐ Boring

5. Do you prefer theatre or cinema?
☐ Theatre ☐ Cinema

6. Do you do any of the following?
 (You can tick more than 1 box)
☐ Dance
☐ Act
☐ Sing
☐ MC / Rap
☐ DJ / VJ
☐ Produce and make music
☐ Spoken Word
☐ Write
☐ Making videos / films

7. Do you think young people are bullied for being Gay?
☐ Yes ☐ No
 If yes, where does this happen?
 (You can tick more than 1 box)
☐ At school
☐ Online
☐ In the Street
☐ Other
 Why do you think this happens?

Figure 1.1 Pre-Show Questionnaire

Post-show research questions (Figure 1.2) focused on the aesthetics of the performance, which aesthetics they enjoyed or didn't enjoy, how the performance made them feel, how they think it should have ended, whether the digital technology enhanced their experience and did the practice impact their views around the subject area of homophobic bullying. This data was

used in collaboration with an observation of the young people's interaction and responses to both the live and digital elements of the performance at each of the five performances attended by a diversity of Birmingham based schools.

HETEROPHOBIA POST-SHOW FEEDBACK
We want to hear your opinions and feedback so we can make the kind of theatre you want to watch!

1. Which bit of Heterophobia did you enjoy or not enjoy?
(You can tick more than 1 box)

Dancing	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Singing	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Spoken Word	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Acting	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
The videos / films / animation	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
The Game Show	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Lights	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Set	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Costume	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy
Pre show - AR / Vjing etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Enjoy

2. Did you find the performance?

☐ Exciting
☐ Good
☐ Not good
☐ Boring

3. How do you think this performance should have ended?

4. Did this performance make you think any differently about people being bullied because of their sexuality?

☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how?

5. Did the digital technology - the films, animation, AR, make the performance better?

☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how?

6. If there was further online stuff available after this performance would you go and have a look?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Would you like to be a performance artist?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If the answer is yes, check out Outspoken's website, details are in the programme.

Figure 1.2 Post-Show Questionnaire

Heterophobia (2015), was the assessed practice for this PaR PhD, transformed from *Heterophobia* (2014) in response to my reflection on the practice following the observation of the live performance with a young audience, the young people's engagement with the work and the feedback received from them through the questionnaires. For this new work in 2015, the young audiences were given questionnaires at the end of the

performance (Figures 1.3 and 1.4) as the research focus was now observing any change in views following the experience of the performance. Research questions focused on empathy and changing behaviours. There continued to be questions around aesthetics and through the process of the practice I became specifically interested in understanding whether digital technology enhanced young people's engagement with these issues, whether they preferred digital or live aesthetics and how to develop the digital aspects of the practice.

HETEROPHOBIA 2015 Student Feedback

Age: Gender: School:

1. Was there a moment you started to care about Ryan? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, when and why?

2. Did you want to help Ryan? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, when and why? If no, why not?

3. Do you think any of the other characters could have helped Ryan? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, who and how?

4. What do you think Heterophobia was about?

5. Have you ever experienced or witnessed anyone being bullied in school or online because of their sexuality? Yes ☐ No ☐

6. Having seen Heterophobia would your actions change if you witnessed this kind of behaviour at school or online? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why?

Figure 1.2 *Heterophobia* (2015) Research Questionnaire

HETEROPHOBIA 2015 Student Feedback

7. Did you join in with the Facebook comments during the performance? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Do you think the use of social media and digital technology (films / projections) added to the performance? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why?

9. Which of the following did you find the most enjoyable?

<input type="checkbox"/> Acting	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media and Digital Technology (Facebook, films, projections)
<input type="checkbox"/> Dancing	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Show (Walking around the space at the beginning & joining in, skating, dancing, graffiti, beatboxing and Who Wants to be a Minority Quiz.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Singing	<input type="checkbox"/> All of it
<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> None of it
<input type="checkbox"/> Spoken Word / Poetry	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rap / Beatboxing	

10. Do you think this performance related to young people? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why?

11. What word would you use to describe this performance?

12. What was your favourite bit of the performance?

13. Any further feedback or comments?

Figure 1.3 *Heterophobia* (2015) Research Questionnaire

Research was also conducted with teachers in 2015 (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). A further *Stonewall Teachers Report* was published in July 2014 after *Heterophobia* (2014) which demonstrated that more than a half of teachers were not challenging homophobia in schools, however, I realised it was vital that teachers were part of this research and discourse in an attempt to interrupt institutional heteronormativity in schools. The questions focused on teachers' experiences of homophobic bullying in schools, if they felt confident in dealing with this behaviour, whether they thought this type of model of applied performance could support learning and teaching in this area, how

they would use it and whether they would use further digital pedagogical resources developed with the project.

HETEROPHOBIA 2015
Teacher Feedback

1. In your opinion, does homophobia exist in your school?
 Amongst students Yes ☐ No ☐
 Amongst staff Yes ☐ No ☐

2. Do you hear students use homophobic language? Yes ☐ No ☐

3. Do you hear staff use homophobic language? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. If you witnessed homophobic behaviour at school, would you feel as though you could challenge it? Yes ☐ No ☐
 Why?

5. Do you think performances like this could be used to challenge homophobia in schools? Yes ☐ No ☐
 Why?

6. Was there any part of this performance that made you think differently about homophobia in schools or see the issue from a different perspective? Yes ☐ No ☐

Figure 1.4 Teacher Research Questionnaire

HETEROPHOBIA 2015
Teacher Feedback

7. Would you use further online resources linked to this performance? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Can you identify any key moments that supported your own learning around issues of homophobic bullying?

9. How would you use these key moments in your teaching?

10. What would be the barriers in your school to this learning and teaching?

11. Any further feedback or comments?

Figure 1.5 Teacher Research Questionnaire

Full video edits of both *Heterophobia* (2014) and *Heterophobia* (2015) have been submitted with this PaR PhD as well as shorter online video edits of the live performance and accounts of the young people's participation have been inserted throughout this thesis in the footnotes. Mackey suggests there 'is a second 'set' of polyphonic conversation in applied theatre practical research, however, which are, I suggest, peculiar to the field. This second set comprises a conversation between practice, theory, action and reflection' (2016: 488). This approach to applied performance research became crucial to this PaR project, exploring theory by making practice, observing and reflecting on that practice through a theoretical lens, acting on those

reflections and observations of the practice, specifically through observation of the participants engagement with the practice before reworking and going through the process again to deepen understanding and produce new knowledge. Peter O'Connor and Michael Anderson suggest 'it is not enough for research to tell us what the world is. Instead, it must provide opportunities for communities to imagine what it might be' (2015: 19). PaR is a transformative tool enabling participants to reimagine their futures, in this project, the performance, *Heterophobia* (2015) stood as an act of intervention, a form of agency. This PaR project was not aiming for deep analysis over a sustained period of time, it was focused on small change which would enable an active discourse to inform future work, a contribution to knowledge and queer applied performance practice with young people.

Scope

This PhD research focuses on two areas of research. Firstly, it interrogates a 'compulsory heterosexual' society using Judith Butler's (1990) gender theory framework and further sociological, social psychological and gender-based research studies and theories to deepen our understanding and knowledge of masculinities and femininities in education and how girls and boys construct and negotiate their identities within school settings. The focus of the research then shifts to applied performance with young people, exploring the emergence of learner centred pedagogy and the founding principles of theatre in education (TIE) questioning whether digital technology offers the contemporary applied performance maker with young people, a new strategy to reimagine TIE methodology. Connecting the two areas of research, the PhD applies both these theoretical approaches to new performance practices that investigate whether applied performance can challenge homophobia in schools and whether digital technology can offer a new participatory queer aesthetic for live applied performance.

This PhD project had to be a practice-as-research project as it was both practice and young person led. I had to test practice with young people to inform the background research and to develop new practical research. What began to emerge during the span of this project and between *Heterophobia* (2014) and *Heterophobia* (2015) was the exploration of a

queer aesthetic specifically for young people. Queer theory and practice are intractably linked. Queer aesthetics focus on the liveness of an event, live bodies performing in a space and sensory responses of audiences which are physical before they can become theoretical. As Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier claim,

When we talk of researchers doing queer PaR, we mean self-identified queer people doing the theoretical and practical wrangling – producing a conversation between both modes – that offers a way to make sense of their work and their own embodiedness. This conversation opens up thinking how they might make work differently / make different work in the future. (2016: 8)

The practice part of this project was necessary to test work with young people and to practically and theoretically identify and define a queer aesthetic for a young audience as there is a lack of both practice and scholarly writing in this area.

Thesis

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters including the Introduction and Conclusion. This chapter has introduced the PaR project and thesis, exploring the research objectives, the context, the scope of the research, and the practice-based methodology. Chapter Two, 'Disrupting a Culture of Compulsory Heterosexuality, Hegemonic Masculinity, Misogyny and Homophobia in Schools', establishes the issue of 'compulsory heterosexuality' and 'hegemonic masculinity' using Butler's (1990) gender theory and sociological and education-based research studies. The chapter highlights the historic pathologization and criminalisation of homosexuality and evidences this to be the cause of a culture which insists on fixed gender binarism and obligatory heteronormativity. The argument continues to cite the legacy of Section 28 (1988) as the cause of institutional homophobia in schools resulting in legitimised homophobic bullying and continued internalised homophobia in young people resulting in high levels of mental

health issues, anxiety and increased possibility of self-harm and suicide which this practice-as-research addresses.

The chapter begins to consider Theatre in Education's (TIE) limited response to homophobic bullying in schools suggesting previous work has been restricted by a 'coming out' narrative and a formulaic TIE dramaturgy located in the homophobic setting of a school where these hegemonic gender and sexual identities have already been created and fixed. Chapter Two, questions whether there are alternative queer dramaturgies to be made for and with young people which can disrupt the notions of compulsory heterosexuality and reimagine gender identities whilst offering a framework for queer performance making.

Chapter Three, 'Reimagining TIE: Digital Participatory Pedagogy, A New Aesthetic for Live Applied Performance with Young People', looks back at the founding principles of progressive education and TIE. The legacy of theatre in education is contextualised into the evolving discourse of applied performance practice. An argument is made for the need for applied performance made for /with / by young people to be responsive to, and led by, young people's cultural mediums and references, specifically digital technology to enhance young people's engagement. This thesis positions digital participatory practice as an aesthetic form for applied performance with young people, providing a new strategy for implementing historic TIE and DIE participatory pedagogical methodologies.

Chapter Four, '*Heterophobia* (2014): Testing Live and Digital Applied Practice with Young People', reflects on testing practice-as-research with young people in response to the argument made in the previous chapter, which states that applied performance with young people should be responsive to youth culture and youth led. Surprisingly, the research surveys conducted with the young people evidence that it is the 'live' performance, which is preferred by young people to the digital in 2014, but it is the combination of the two which enhances their experience and makes it feel authentic to their young lives, demonstrated by their comments around the impact of the digital aspects of the performance. Even at this stage of the project, the evidence suggested digital technology offers a new strategic aesthetic for applied performance with young people. However, the

Augmented Reality used was less effective than if I had used a more accessible form of digital technology that young people were already engaging with such as a social media platform which is what I went on to do in *Heterophobia* (2015).

Chapter Five, 'Developing a Queer Aesthetic with Young People', reflects on the practice-as-research, *Heterophobia* (2015) informed by the research findings through *Heterophobia* (2014) documented in Chapter Four. The chapter locates the interdisciplinary and immersive nature of *Heterophobia* using street arts and digital technology as part of its queer aesthetic with young people. It positions participatory digital space as an opportunity to develop a queer participatory aesthetic, working outside of fixed binaries and enabling young people to have an active voice and make choices within a performance and make endings after the performance through the website and writing tool, REPWrite. The chapter specifically situates social media as the queer intersection of live and digital applied performance, youth, sexuality and mental health in this practice-as-research project.

Chapter Six, '*Heterophobia* (2015): Queering Performative Pedagogy' reports on the findings of the PhD assessed practice-as-research, *Heterophobia* (2015). Understanding the safeguarding complexities in asking young people about a queer sensory experience, this practice-as-research gathered evidence for developing a queer aesthetic with young people by asking the young audiences questions around aesthetics, engagement and changing thinking and behaviours. Research was also conducted with teachers understanding the need for a change in heteronormative pedagogical approaches and the impact this has on young LGBTQ+ mental health. Chapter Seven concludes that although this practice-as-research project evidenced a successful outcome in changes in young people's attitudes and behaviours towards homophobic bullying, the project was limited by the binary switch. It is argued that queer applied performance needs to be programmed for early years and children to impact upon a shift away from binarized thinking. This practice-as-research project started to interrogate what live and digital queer aesthetics for young people may look, sound and feel like, recognising queer applied performance practice has the potential to empower queer young people. Transcending this concept is the

suggestion that by queering pedagogy for all young people there is the potential to disrupt fixed identities and attitudes, to enable all young people to reimagine themselves and their environment in a multitude of contexts.

Chapter Two

Disrupting a Culture of Compulsory Heterosexuality, Hegemonic Masculinity, Misogyny and Homophobia in Schools

Chapter Overview

The pathologization and criminalization of homosexuality throughout history has contributed to a culture of 'compulsory heterosexuality' which enabled the passing of The Local Government Act, Section 28 in 1988. This legislation policed the information children and young people received around sexual identity and reinforced the hegemonic status of heterosexuality in schools. The legacy of Section 28 (1988) evidenced through reports by Stonewall the UK Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Charity and other third sector reports (2003, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2020) demonstrate that homophobia is endemic in Britain's schools demonstrated through homophobic language, bullying and assault. Stonewall (2017) report demonstrated that almost half of LGBT pupils face bullying and two in five trans young people have tried to take their life. That situation has resulted in internalised homophobia that has a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ young people. Stonewall's most recent research suggests 'in school, isolation resulting from a non-LGBT inclusive learning environment, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and a lack of LGBT-specific support, had a negative impact on participants' mental health, their ability to engage in education, and their plans to continue in post-16 education' (2020: 6).

Pathologization and Criminalization of Homosexuality

Legislative history reveals that the country's first sodomy law was passed under the reign of Henry VIII in 1533. *The Buggery Act* legislated that both anal penetration and bestiality were punishable by death. It was not until 1861 that *The Offences Against the Persons Act* removed the death penalty for homosexuality; however, homosexuality was still punishable by imprisonment. In 1885, Section 11 of *The Criminal Law Amendment Act* known as the *Labouchere Amendment* was passed which extended the laws

against homosexuality to include any sexual activity between men. A notorious example being the criminalisation of the playwright, Oscar Wilde, for his homosexuality following a trial in 1895.

During the 1950s, the criminal justice system actively enforced laws forbidding sexual activity between men. Through the 1950s and 1960s, aversion therapy was often employed as a treatment for homosexuality, and in 1965, when the House of Lords proposed the decriminalisation of male homosexuality, an opinion poll found that the vast majority of the people who responded in the UK thought homosexuality was an illness which required medical treatment (NHS, 2011: 17). It wasn't until 1967 that *The Sexual Offences Act* decriminalised homosexual activity in private between men over twenty-one in England and Wales which means it was only partly decriminalised. The age of consent between a man and a woman was sixteen as opposed to twenty-one, signifying a lack of parity and reaffirming a homophobic notion that younger men were seduced by older gay men. There was no age of consent for two women, reinforcing the invisibility and perceived lack of threat of both woman and lesbianism. Over fifteen thousand men continued to be convicted in the decades following this legislation and the remaining anti-gay laws were policed more aggressively than before. The semiotics of this criminalisation of homosexuality to the public could be interpreted as the belief that homosexuality was 'wrong' and 'forbidden' and that the criminal justice system and the government sanctioned homophobia. The message given to society was a culture of obligatory heterosexuality.

Through the 1980s, the conservative mood intensified which enabled compulsory heterosexual demands to increase. Value was placed on the family and patriarchal structures. Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative Prime Minister, referred to 'Victorian values' and, at a Conservative party conference, attacked the right to be LGBT by suggesting that 'there was no such right' (Todd, 2016). She introduced Section 28 (1988) the following year. *The Local Government Act* legislated against the local authority promoting homosexuality or publishing any homosexual materials to 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship' (*Local Government Act*,

1988). Section 28 specifically applied to local authorities who do not control the school curriculum or have any legal force over what is taught in the classroom as this is the role of the Department for Education. Nevertheless, the act resulted in staff self-censorship in schools. Teachers were confused and anxious about what they could and could not say to young people regarding homosexuality, and they were unsure whether they could act in response to homophobic bullying. Stonewall's (2014) *Teacher's Report* evidences twenty-nine percent of secondary school teachers and thirty-seven percent of primary school teachers were unaware if they were 'allowed' to teach lesbian, gay and bisexual issues at school, potentially putting vulnerable children and young people at risk.

Adding to this difficult situation for young people was the advent of the HIV and AIDS epidemic during the 1980s that was used to vilify homosexual people. The media referred to it as the 'gay plague' (Braidwood, 2018) and suggested that it was a gay lifestyle which incited this infection. Going even further, it was often referred to as a 'punishment' and used to further marginalise homosexuals and homosexuality as a disease.

Homosexuality was included in the American classification of mental disorders recorded in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) until 1987 whilst same-sex attraction remained on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) list of mental illnesses until 1992. Interestingly, as homosexuality came out of the DSM, transsexualism emerged transforming into 'gender identity disorder', highlighting both the instability of psychiatric semiotics and the ways in which mental illness can be socially constructed. Transsexualism has only recently been removed from the WHO's list of mental illnesses in May 2019. It therefore could be argued that psychiatry was instrumental in creating and polarizing gender and sexual identities whilst playing an influential role in social control. The pathologization of homosexuality has contributed to the marginalisation of homosexuality and hegemonizing of heterosexuality. This intensified homophobia was sanctioned by those in power, the government, the law, the church, psychiatry, education and the media compounding the idealisation of a normative heterosexual lifestyle.

Compulsory Heterosexuality and Hegemonic Masculinity

This idealised and demanded normative heterosexual way of living refers to 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Definitions of 'compulsory' are 'obligatory', 'mandatory', 'essential' and 'required by law'. 'Heterosexuality' refers to a sexual relationship between a woman and a man, so the definition of the phrase 'compulsory heterosexuality' refers to obligatory relationships between men and women. Adrienne Rich's (1980) essay, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* appears to be the source of the phrase 'compulsory heterosexuality'. In her essay, Rich seeks to challenge the lack of visibility of lesbianism from scholarly feminist literature that, she suggests, is not only anti-lesbian but also anti-feminist. In her essay, Rich hopes to inspire change around the visibility and identity of lesbianism in scholarly feminist literature, looking for a greater depth of understanding of lesbianism and a desire to portray lesbianism as an extension of feminism. She suggests the lack of lesbian visibility and the destruction of lesbian history has led to lesbianism being viewed as unacceptable. Heterosexuality is not 'natural', according to Rich, and rather is a political institution imposed on society to render women subordinate. Heterosexuality disempowers women and gives men physical and emotional access to women. Rich suggests the notion of heterosexuality renders women as dependent on men for economic and social support along with sexual and psychological fulfilment. Inviting heterosexual and lesbian feminists to interrogate and challenge this political institution, Rich maintains that lesbianism is a defiance of the heterosexual, an act of resistance of patriarchy and suggests women should focus on writing about other women rather than men and on relationships between women rather than women and men. Rich was writing to provoke new questions, stimulate change, and ask feminists, lesbian and heterosexual alike not to write, read or teach solely through a heteronormative lens. The significant act was in a woman's rejection of the culture of 'compulsory heterosexuality' to *enable* a lesbian existence, not necessarily to engage in lesbian sexual activity. Rich did feel, however, that all women should experience some kind of lesbian expression in order to

make a choice of whether they wanted to engage in lesbian or heterosexual relationships.

Gender theorist Judith Butler characterizes the term 'compulsory heterosexuality' as

a hegemonic discursive / epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (1990: 208)

Butler applies Michel Foucault's (1972, 1978) argument for a distinctive analysis of gender and sexuality, using Foucauldian genealogy suggesting identity categories of gender and sexuality are not natural but the results of power and discourse. Foucault believed power reproduces and shapes knowledge, but power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge. Foucault's post-structuralist approach to identity and knowledge questioned practices that are linked to specific external conditions which we use to define ourselves by. Foucault suggested that sexual identity may not have existed but originated through sexual acts. Foucault's genealogy offered different ways of thinking rather than accepting what we are told are fixed 'truths' such as fixed gender and sexuality identities. Butler (1990) identifies 'compulsory heterosexuality' as the regulating practice responsible for gender and sexuality oppression that results in all our social interactions in society being viewed from a non-critical perspective of heterocentricity. The expectation in Western culture is that an individual is a heterosexual male or female and engages in heterosexual practices. Not to be heterosexual in this society is to be 'other', to be different. Heterosexuality is viewed as the normative sexuality, the normal and correct sexuality model. Heterosexuality is hegemonic, the dominant form, the controlling sexual preference.

Similarly, compulsory heterosexuality relies on fixed hegemonic binary gender identities of male and female. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) provocatively argues that gender is not biologically fixed but culturally presupposed. This concept that gender and sexuality are fluid is one of the

key concepts of queer theory. Butler criticises feminism in *Gender Trouble* for exploring the 'essential' notion of 'woman' that has reinforced binary views of gender assuming there are two clear groups of men or women. Butler questions who is included in this notion of the female and who is excluded? This binary view of gender restricts an individual having choice and autonomy over one's own gender identity. Butler argues our notions of gender are learnt behaviours which we perform and associate with being 'feminine' and 'masculine'. Gender is therefore not something that we are but something that we do, or, as Butler states, gender is 'performative', suggesting we act, talk, walk and dress in ways which consolidate that we are a woman or a man (1990: 34). Our gender is not inherent, it is a phenomenon which is produced and reproduced, and we construct our social reality by saying 'this is how it is' and then performing this created reality with our bodies. Butler rejects that we are assigned a gender, instead claiming that gender is the cultural meaning we attach to our biological sex of male or female. We perform our gender based on the values we have learnt. These learnt behaviours and acts are imposed on us through a constructed and regulated heterosexual society of men and women.

Assumptions are made for us on our gender identity and our heterosexuality based on our biological sex from the onset of our lives starting with 'pink for a girl' and 'blue for a boy', the toys we play with, the hobbies and classes in which we are enrolled, and the questions we are asked about potential boyfriends or girlfriends and who we are going to marry. These culturally formed gender norms continue to be policed throughout our lives. Informal practices such as marginalisation or bullying occur when individuals break these gender norms, such as boys who appear to be feminine and are referred to as 'sissies' or 'gay' and girls who dress in male-associated clothing, have short hair or play sport are labelled as 'tomboys' or a 'lesbian' as evidenced in the Stonewall Reports (2009, 2017). This negative and abusive behaviour, yet accepted regulatory practice, reinforces gender norms and keeps us in our gendered places. Butler (1990) questions how can our gender dictate our behaviours, our desires and our sexual practices? Butler suggests certain cultural configurations of gender

and sexuality in terms of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality have become to seem what is natural and hegemonic.

Masculinity is viewed as the dominant gender in a normative heterosexual relationship and to be considered masculine requires a hegemonic masculine approach. 'Hegemonic masculinity is applied worldwide as the predominant concept in research on men and masculinities' (Buschmeyer & Lengersdorf, 2016: 190). Raewyn Connell's (1985) work was pertinent in introducing the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity,' a key sociological theory of gender within compulsory heterosexuality. This work emerged from a research project in Australian high schools around gender inequality and culminated in her theory of masculinity which was later published as *Masculinities* (1995, 2005). Connell's 'order theory' recognises a multiple of masculinities across time and culture but states hegemonic masculinity is the dominant, idealised form of masculinity. Connell refers to this dominant masculinity as 'the form of masculinity that is culturally exalted at any one time' (2005: 77), a claim that supports the idea already suggested that it is our culture that constructs this dominant form of masculinity. Society describes the type of masculinity that we will celebrate as the ideal male and then boys and men attempt to perform this role with their bodies. A compulsory element of being a hegemonic male is to be heterosexual.

Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix and Rob Pattman conducted a large-scale research project from 1997 onwards. This research project further compounds the existence and impact of homophobia in schools, but this study goes further than this and supports the theory that the issue inciting homophobic bullying is the existence of compulsory heterosexuality. The research project involved eleven to fourteen- year old boys from twelve London secondary schools examining 'young masculinities' through in-depth interviews with individuals and groups exploring young males' perceptions of their own male identities, that of their peers and their opinions of the construct of masculinity within a wider society. They interviewed two hundred and forty-five boys and twenty-seven girls about their thoughts about boys. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman's views on gender originate from Butler's (1990) gender theory, discussed earlier, that gender is 'performative' and relational, and that masculinity is constructed and only exists in relation

to femininity. Their work followed ethnographic and discursive studies that address boys' cultural practices; they 'explored questions such as the place of violence in young people's lives, the functions of "hardness", of homophobia and football, the discourse of boys' underachievement in school, and the pervasive racialisation of masculine identity construction' (Frosh et al, 2003: 2). These interviews evidence the existence of both hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality in schools of the time and in young male attitudes. Their interviews were interviewee centred as they acted as facilitators, exploring the issues the young people raised and encouraging them to reflect on and develop their thoughts into narrative accounts. Some of the young people volunteered to give a second interview which allowed for deeper investigation of the specific research questions.

Their interviews with young males supported the existence of hegemonic masculinity 'as a method of social regulation amongst young men' (Frosh et al., 2002: 11). If young males did not demonstrate attributes associated with hegemonic masculinity, there was a risk of bullying for not being 'masculine'. They did not introduce the subject of homophobia with the young males that they interviewed; however, the feedback from the young people revealed that 'homophobia was pervasive' in secondary schools as a third of the boys individually interviewed mentioned 'being called gay... The boys labelled as gay were seen as possessing the same characteristics that were denigrated in girls. Hence, homophobia was intertwined with misogyny' (Frosh et al., 2002: 176). This research project noted that boys could be reflective about the issues they were discussing, 'they were aware of the destructive power of homophobia on their relationships with each other (though they continued to mock and pillory boys thought to be gay)' (Frosh et al., 2003: 5). They were very willing to talk about their lives and were looking for ways to make it better. The boys could identify that homophobia was antagonistic and causing irreparable damage within their relationships with their peers. They wanted these relationships to improve but they continued to demonstrate their hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality through their learnt behaviour of using the informal regulating practices previously discussed, such as, ridiculing and bullying anyone who may be identified as homosexual or those boys demonstrating feminine behaviours, any boys not

demonstrating exalted hegemonic masculinity supporting similar claims made by the *Stonewall School Report* (2009). The young males were aware this was an issue which was having a negative impact on individuals and their relationships with each other. However, the cultural collective voice of compulsory heterosexuality was louder than their individual, internal voice and so it continued. They had not been offered any alternative framework other than fixed binary genders and heteronormativity and therefore knew no 'other' way of being.

Carolyn Jackson, researches aspects of gender and education and is specifically interested in the notion of 'laddish' behaviour as a result of fear of both failure and a fear of the 'feminine', suggesting that hegemonic masculinity 'is an idealized form of masculinity which very few boys or men can ever attain' (2006: 10). However, Jackson suggests it is a standard used to measure and understand masculinity and offers young males' behaviours and attitudes to attempt to replicate. Martin Mills (2001) built on Connell's (1995) theoretical framework about hegemonic masculinity when exploring gender and violence issues with young males in schools and supports Butler's (1990) theory of gender constructs by stating that hegemonic masculinity is a 'contextual construct in that a particular form of masculinity acquires hegemonic status only in certain situations' (2001: 21) suggesting this constructed masculinity only needs to demonstrate this dominant control in certain contexts or situations to be accepted and unrivalled. Jackson's later empirical research which built on the work of Frosh et al., identified 'a very large degree of overlap between hegemonic masculinity, popularity and 'laddishness' among boys' (2006: 10). Hegemonic masculinity appears to be threatened by these 'other' gender identities and sexualities and in a desire to remain 'popular' has to demonise them. As Butler suggests 'crafting a sexual position...always involves becoming haunted by what's excluded. And the more rigid the position the greater the ghost, and the more threatening it is' (1997: 237). Jackson explains this further suggesting many boys fear appearing 'insufficiently masculine' and the consequences of not being sufficiently masculine and therefore feminine or homosexual 'frequently include a mixture of verbal abuse, being ostracized and physical violence' (2006: 10). This behaviour describes the misogynistic attitudes and

homophobic bullying which exists in British schools and reflect a society which insists on compulsory heterosexuality.

Young people demonstrate the behaviours identified above in order to remain popular. Young people fear social failure as this will lead to marginalization or bullying and so in these complex gender power structures within schools and now online communities, they have to avoid social failure and strive to 'fit in' and 'fitting in generally involves conforming to models of hegemonic masculinity or normative femininity for boys and girls, respectively' (Jackson, 2006: 141). These hegemonic males and normative females are, of course, heterosexual. David Jackson, an ex-teacher who writes about working with boys in secondary schools, states, 'if we want to change these traditional macho cultures in schools, we have to do something about the taken for granted supremacy of hierarchical heterosexuality' (1998: 80). Reinforcing the connection between a culture of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity, school culture insists on young males being hegemonically masculine and therefore, heterosexual. Jackson is alluding to the fact that we can't deal with hegemonic masculinity until we deal with hegemonic heterosexuality. Young males behave in a 'laddish' manner to not be perceived as 'gay' or 'feminine'. This idea is supported by Debbie Epstein, who researches the intersecting constructions of gender, sexuality and race in education and popular culture and attributes boys' attitudes to academic work and their underachievement to 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Epstein claims that 'the rejection of the perceived 'feminine' of academic work is simultaneously a defence against the 'charge' of being gay' (1998: 97).

The Legacy of Section 28

Section 28 (1988) appeared to many lesbian, gay and bisexual people to be built on discrimination of their community. Section 28 was not actually Section 28; it was inserted retrospectively into clause 28 of *The Local Government Act* which was written in 1986. This insert implied that homosexuals were inherently dangerous to children and suggested an association between homosexuality and paedophilia. The idea Section 28 was a law intimated to the public that the government sanctioned

homophobia and although the Act did not lead to any convictions and was revoked in 2003, the forms of rhetoric articulated by Section 28 and in defence of the act remain active. Stonewall (2003), conducted an initial survey in the same year that Section 28 was repealed, that revealed that homophobia was endemic in Britain's schools. It also disclosed that most teachers were aware of the existence of homophobic bullying, both verbal abuse and physical assault, in their schools. Stonewall's survey also highlighted that there were no anti-bullying policies in place in schools to combat this homophobic bullying and to protect young people and LGBT staff. In the same year, the mental health charity Mind stated in the *Guardian* newspaper that 'two in three gay people are likely to have mental health problems and this was believed to be due to homophobia that had been fuelled by Section 28' (17 November 2003). In addition, the publicised connection made between paedophilia and homosexuality through the legacy of Section 28 is likely to have impacted LGBTQ+ people's sense of self-identity, internalised homophobia and a sense of shame and consequently mental health.

In 2007, Stonewall conducted a further study in schools investigating the existence of homophobia four years after the repeal of Section 28 (1988). *The School Report* (2007), Stonewall's ground-breaking study of more than 1,100 secondary school pupils growing up homosexual, revealed the full extent of the impact of Section 28 (1988). Two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people reported experiencing homophobic bullying at school and that school policies and procedures were still not responding. After the results of *The School Report* (2007), Stonewall produced a range of learning resources to support local authorities and schools to challenge homophobic bullying in the classroom. The success of these resources would be measured by the results of consequent surveys.

The next ground-breaking study Stonewall conducted was *The Teachers' Report* (2009), the largest survey of secondary and primary school teachers ever conducted up to this time. YouGov, an international internet-based research firm, surveyed a sample of two thousand and forty-three teachers and non-teaching staff from primary and secondary schools across Great Britain; half of the respondents worked in primary schools and half in

secondary schools. The survey asked staff about their experiences of homophobic bullying of pupils in their schools and the inclusion of sexual orientation issues in their classrooms. Ninety percent of secondary school teachers said pupils in their schools were bullied, harassed or called names for being or being perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual and one in four said this happened 'often' or 'very often'. Being 'perceived to be homosexual' referred to boys who were academic and girls who played sport. Children who had gay parents or family members that were homosexual were also subject to homophobic bullying. Secondary school teachers said homophobic bullying was the second most frequent form of bullying happening 'very often' or 'often' after bullying because of weight and was three times more prevalent than bullying due to religion or ethnicity.

Stonewall, then conducted a further *School Report* in 2012. This report suggested that young lesbian, gay and bisexual people who are bullied because of their sexuality are more at risk of suicide, self-harm and depression than young heterosexual people. Twenty-three percent of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people aged eighteen to twenty-four years have tried to take their own life at some point. In comparison, Samaritans reports seven percent of all young people in general ever attempt to take their own life. Therefore, a young LGB person is over three times more likely to commit suicide. Similarly, more than half of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people deliberately harm themselves in comparison to NSPCC estimation of less than ten percent of all young people self-harm. The risks of a young LGB person self-harming or attempting to take their own life are considerably higher than that of a young heterosexual person. A further *Stonewall Report* (2017) also revealed that almost half of trans pupils in the UK have attempted suicide.

Crispin Thurlow discusses the impact of homophobic speech in schools in terms of internalised homophobia and the impact on young people's mental health and well-being, asserting 'whether young people are out, coming out, or slowly and privately awakening to their homosexuality, the stigmatizing effects of homophobia on self-esteem are inescapable' (2001: 26). Quoting Alan Maylon, he continues, 'quite simply, homophobic content becomes internalized and often causes protracted dysphoria and

feelings of self-contempt' (Maylon, 1981 cited in Thurlow, 2001: 26). Thurlow concludes, 'the threat is therefore one of profound social and psychological alienation, rendering the "invisibility" two-fold as these young people cease also to exist even within, and for, themselves' (Thurlow, 2001: 26). The pathologizing of homosexuality and its implied associations of homosexuality and paedophilia and the risks to children and young people executed in schools by the discriminatory, anti-gay legislation of Section 28 (1988) has enabled a homophobic culture and rhetoric in Britain's schools. This culture contributes to the internalised homophobia of young LGBTQ+ people, socialising them to believe that heterosexuality is the normative sexual identity and 'other' sexual orientations, or gender identities are 'less than' resulting in internalised oppression which impacts the mental health and well-being of young LGBTQ+ people.

In 2014, METRO, a leading equality and diversity charity conducted a report in collaboration with Ergo Consulting and the University of Greenwich. *The Youth Chances Survey* reported on the experiences of young sixteen to twenty-five-year-old LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning / Queer plus) people in England. This five-year research project was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and surveyed 6,514 LGBTQ+ young people, 612 heterosexual non-trans young people and 956 trans young people, twenty-nine commissioners of services for young people and fifty-two relevant service providers across England. The survey demonstrated that these young LGBTQ+ people were facing high levels of discrimination, abuse and mental health issues. Nearly half of LGBTQ+ young people reported that their time at school was affected by discrimination or fear of discrimination. The consequences of this included missing lessons, achieving lower grades, feeling isolated and having to move schools. The majority of LGBTQ+ young people surveyed felt their school didn't support students in respect to sexuality or gender identity.

Stonewall published a further *Teachers' Report* in July 2014, again, using a YouGov polling report to gather data from 1,832 school staff. The research revealed that even after further efforts by Stonewall to offer teachers training and resources around supporting young LGBTQ+ people and challenging homophobic bullying following earlier reports, little progress

had been made since *The School Report* in 2012. The word 'gay' is often used in the UK by young people as 'street slang' for something being 'bad', and the vast majority of teachers said pupils in their school had often heard the phrases "that's so gay" and "you're so gay". More than half of secondary school teachers did not challenge homophobic language every time they heard it, and a third of them also admitted hearing homophobic language from other school staff. As Thurlow stated,

abusive naming practices are indexical of social attitudes and mark delineations, whether latent or explicit, of ingroup and outgroup... What is more, with its own conservative micro-politics... the school environment merely exacerbates this contrastive impulse. (2001: 26)

In the classroom, young people are trying to construct their own and 'other' identities through the language they use to describe themselves and others. Young people are both striving and rivalling for hegemonic, normative popularity. They use swear words and slang discourse to name 'other' as part of their own social identity development and in the case of 'gay' to reinforce hegemonic heterosexual group membership and exclude 'other' outside of heteronormativity. Thurlow concludes,

Sticks and stones may be more likely to break their bones, but the relentless, careless use of homophobic pejoratives will most certainly continue to compromise the psychological health of young homosexual and bisexual people by insidiously constructing their sexuality as something wrong, dangerous or shameful. (2001: 36)

Matthew Todd gay rights activist, writer, comedian and editor of gay magazine, *Attitude*, discusses the shame facing the gay community, the impact of LGBTQ+ childhood trauma on the mental health of LGBTQ+ people, resulting in addiction, lack of self-worth, the need for validation, self-harm and suicide. Drawing on his own experiences and others Todd claims,

At the core of the problem is a shame that has been inflicted upon us so powerfully that those of us whom it affects often do not even

realise it. It is a shame with which we were saddled with as children, to which we continue to be culturally subjected, and which is magnified by the pinball-machine gay scene and culture which sends some of us spinning from one extreme experience to the next...It is the damage done to us by growing up strapped in a cultural straitjacket, a tight fitting, one-size restraint imposed on us at birth that leaves no room to grow outside its narrow confines. It makes no allowances for the fact that, yes, indeed some people are different, and we deserve - and need – to be supported and loved for who we are too. (2016: 4)

Todd believes we have an LGBTQ+ mental health crisis and calls for a government inquiry to look at LGBTQ+ children and young people's experiences in schools and their associated mental health issues.

Stonewall's interventions in the form of learning resources for young people in schools and training for teachers devised in response to their survey results and implemented in between surveys have been largely ineffective in dealing with this widespread homophobia in Britain's schools indicated by the survey results in 2014. The most recent school survey, *The School Report* (2017) also evidenced that outside of school, LGBTQ+ hate crime has soared from nine percent to seventy-eight per cent in the last four years. In February 2020, Stonewall published *Shut Out, the experiences of LGBT young people not in education, training or work*, a correction to the fact that there has been no previous research conducted into this area of young Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) LGBTQ+ people. This research demonstrates the profound impact school bullying and the rejection of a young LGBTQ+ family can have on their mental health and consequently their future opportunities in terms of education and employment. The research demonstrates that due to systematic bullying in schools young LGBTQ+ people often change future plans in regard to Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). For others further discrimination and lack of support in FE and HE settings led to young LGBTQ+ people not completing their studies and becoming disengaged with education. Young LGBTQ+ expect and experience discrimination in the

workplace creating further barriers to young LGBTQ+ people from starting, and staying, in employment. The reason for this deep-rooted homophobia lies not only in the legacy of Section 28 (1988) but also, and perhaps more importantly, in a culture of 'compulsory heterosexuality' which was responsible for Section 28 coming into existence as a way of policing sexuality and enforcing a heterosexual lifestyle and thus ensuring children in schools were not subject to any information about any alternative sexual identity and given a clear signal that anything other than heterosexuality was 'wrong'. *The Trevor Project's National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health* (2019), the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organisation for LGBTQ+ young people's first survey across the United States demonstrates that just one accepting adult can reduce the risk of a suicide attempt for young LGBTQ+ young people by forty percent. Erasing LGBTQ+ existence in schools will continue to stigmatise vulnerable young people and legitimise homophobic bullying in schools, impacting upon their academic achievement and their mental and emotional health.

Performing Disruption in Schools

As previously discussed, a history of pathologizing and criminalising homosexuality, a culture which reflects the values of heterosexuality and the impact of Section 28 (1988) highlighting concerns around presumed heterosexual children and young people coming into contact with 'other' sexualities or gender identities has led to a culture of homophobic abuse and bullying in Britain's schools. This in turn has led to internalised homophobia and mental health issues for young LGBTQ+ people. Theatre in Education (TIE) pieces around homosexuality and homophobic bullying have been limited in comparison to abundant TIE work exploring other forms of bullying, addiction and sexual health issues. A performance or workshop exploring issues of gender and sexuality within a school setting in which a homophobic culture exists as evidenced in the Stonewall Reports (2009, 2014) is unlikely to change these learnt values and behaviours unless it attempts to disrupt them, to reimagine a queer space or reframe gender and sexual identities. Butler suggests if we disrupt gender norms and reject a culture of compulsory heterosexuality then both would cease to exist. Butler views

making *Gender Trouble* 'as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power' (1990: 46).

In 2008, I had been an audience member for FIT at The Birmingham REP, written, directed and starring Rikki Beadle-Blair of *Metrosexuality* fame, the 2001 TV series which explored the complexities of sexual identities and relationships. FIT claimed to be ground-breaking as it addressed issues of homophobic bullying in Britain's schools and had been especially created for Key Stage 3 (KS3) students, aged eleven to fourteen. During its run in 2007 and 2008, twenty thousand young people in seventy-five schools across the UK saw this piece of work. FIT was financially supported by the UK LGBT rights organisation, Stonewall, and was also made into a short film that toured UK Schools. The piece started to challenge young people's negative language associated with homosexuality, as exemplified by calling inanimate objects such as trainers 'gay' which had become a word used by young people for anything they didn't like or that they thought was 'bad' or 'unpleasant', as discussed earlier. Watching it, however, the use of stereotypes was disappointing; Rikki played a very 'camp' PE teacher wearing tight pink lycra shorts and although this queer image disrupts the concept of hegemonic masculinity, it confirms the stereotyped representation of a gay man appearing feminine, wearing tight pink clothing, thus reaffirming the association of homosexuality and femininity and the links between homophobia and misogyny in a young person's fixed binarized world. The structure of the play was formulaic of a TIE performance, a written play focused on the spoken word, set at school with minimal set, two young female characters and two young male characters alongside Rikki's 'teacher' character. I wondered whether young people would empathise with the homosexual characters represented in this performance? Would this performance enable a change in these young people's learnt behaviours from schools and in a society, which reinforces a compulsory heterosexual lifestyle? My assumption was that it would not.

FIT not unlike other TIE work around issues of homosexuality and sexual identity focused on 'coming out'. As Eve Sedgwick (1990) argued, this moment of 'coming out' is a false concept as to be an 'out' LGBTQ+ person,

it is necessary to continually 'come out' in a number of different contexts and settings. Revealing one's sexual identity is not a dichotomy to be 'in' or to be 'out'. Stephen Greer (2011) theorises in a RiDE article entitled *Staging legitimacy: theorising identity claims in anti-homophobia Theatre-in-Education* around identification and disclosure in Theatre-in-Education work within the UK, examining non-heterosexual identities and works that challenge homophobic bullying. Greer uses a queer theory lens influenced by Judith Butler (1990) and Alexander Duttman (2000) to identify issues in representing 'invisible' subjects in TIE, especially in light of 'the potentially pervasive heterosexist culture of school and educational settings' (Greer, 2011: 56). Greer seeks to reconsider the status of 'coming out' as the primary formative narrative of gay subjects in TIE work which explores non-heterosexual identity and challenges homophobic bullying. He discusses the complexities in 'coming out' and the ethical issues of disclosure in an educational context. Greer argues for 'a broader liberal agenda which seeks to create cultural environments in which sexual orientation is not an issue of contention' so a young person's sexual identity is not their defining identity at school. Greer feels homophobic narratives and images have dominated the field of non-heterosexual representations in schools, describing relationships of power and agency, and he questions the value in visibility in opposition to the potential power in invisibility. He draws on Peggy Phelan's (1993) work *Unmarked* around visibility and invisibility where she claims, 'the binary between the power of visibility and the impotency of invisibility is falsifying. There is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal' (1993: 6). Phelan is suggesting the active invisibility of homosexuality in the arts holds a more powerful and fluid position. Invisibility is outside the notion of fixed binaries as performance offers different ways of reimagining and framing cultural production. Greer builds on this work and calls for anti-homophobic dramas to consider the strategies used for the purpose of identification and how non-heterosexual identities are constructed. Drawing together readings of TIE works including The Spare Tyre Theatre Company's, *Burning* (2006), Robert Higgs' *Gay* (2007) and Stonewall's *Education for All* campaign (2005), Greer explores performance representations of non-heterosexual identity and identification,

before suggesting TIE makers consider the possibilities of 'a fluid relationship between recognition and cultural visibility and the potential of such fluidity as a form of resistance to normative expectations' (2011: 56). Greer uses Stonewall's (2007) campaign slogan 'Some people are gay: get over it' to support this argument as it presumes the legitimate and identifiable presence of gay people but does not attempt to identify those subjects. He concludes that it may be 'through moments of deliberate uncertainty where further potential of anti-homophobia dramas may lie' (2011: 72).

Queer Performance Making

Queering has become a strategy used in performance for anything 'other', 'different', non-normative', not only focusing on sexual and gender identity, although it derives from a performative view of gender and sexuality as cultural constructs. Campbell and Farrier refer to queer performance as an embodied experience, 'the...performance did something to us through our bodies and we were led to theory to articulate it' (2016: 3). Queering has become a way to discuss an intersection of various critical positions, such as feminist theory, cultural and social theories, postcolonial theory, studies focusing on sexuality, disability, race, globalisation and semiotics. To queer gives the individual a mode of exploring identity and the fluidity of identity which is not fixed to sexuality and gender but other non-normative ways of existing. Max H. Kirsch (2000) is critical of queer theory because he argues this generalised cultural theory removes us from visible LGBT identities and communities. Kirsch states his students perceive queer as 'a discussion of identity – on their own terms. These terms are not about theory, but validation. For them, the goals are general awareness of difference, an understanding of inclusion and human rights in the broadest sense. They include anything other than the status quo' (2000: 6). Although, I can appreciate Kirsch's concerns around the diluting of collective LGBT identities and the impact this may have on social change, I too have questions around the letting go of my 'lesbian' or 'feminist' identity and visibility; however, it is interesting younger people such as Kirsch's students are attracted to queer, as I have noted with my own undergraduate students in varying learning contexts who don't identify as LGBT but are still interested in queer theory,

making queer work and the intersections of queer theory and practice with other critical lenses such as feminist theory. When focusing on young person led projects these young views point us in the direction of queer. Kirsch (2000) is concerned that the consequences of queer theory is a deconstruction of communities for the benefit of the individual and he feels 'the community is where "safe space" is created' (2000: 122) and enables social change. I would question where is there an alternative safe space and community for young LGBTQ+ people? Queer enables a sense of community which is more inclusive and enables LGBTQ+ allies to support their peers. Queering pedagogy and offering queer applied performance space offers queer young people a 'safe space'. Queering also opens up opportunities to explore identities in much wider contexts and via the intersections of our individual and collective identities.

This PaR responded to Lindsay Amer's PhD thesis (2014) which discusses the lack of queer theatre and queer representations for young audiences and serves as a call to action for theatre makers to recognise the importance of including queer characters and narratives in theatre for young people. My argument transcends Amer's thinking as what I am suggesting is that making queer work for young people is not only about content, in terms of creating queer characters and narrative, but also about developing a queer aesthetic specifically for young people. When identifying a queer aesthetic, Campbell and Farrier (2016) talk about themselves as artists and makers, experiencing moments of performance as audience members, work made by other artists that they would now theorise to be queer work. They connected with this work physically and emotionally, they were 'attracted to' the work, they understood something had happened to them and those around them which they understood to be 'connected to sexuality, community and identity' (2016: 2). The examples of queer performance they offer such as 'pearls coming out of a vagina at Duckie in a ballroom in north London; mid 1990s' (2016: 1) I too remember this performance and I remember having the same sense of connection and excitement but not fully understanding it. At the time, I did not understand my connection was about my own queer identity, I understood it to be a preference for a particular performance style, energy and content. In 2020, a queer aesthetic is now

much more widely visible in live art and queer performance festivals across the country. Campbell and Farrier claim that queer practice is followed by the theory, 'the performance event comes first: the articulation is what follows' (2016: 4). The experiential queer feeling which Campbell and Farrier discuss as 'experiencing something on a corporeal, gut level' (2016: 2) and being 'queerly moved' (2016: 2) is the scholarly framework I am using for a 'queer aesthetic' when making this work, but the focus of this queer aesthetic is young people. Campbell and Farrier's (2016) *Queer Dramaturgies* wasn't yet published when *Heterophobia* was made but their queer framework articulates the queer impulse I had to make this and previous work, it is non-definable, driven by a historic and current connection and attraction to a style and content of work as both an audience member and a maker. A queer aesthetic is about a sensory connection to a performance energy, content and form(s) on an emotional, sensory, gut and identity level. This aesthetic will consistently shift as anything queer by nature, is always evolving and in a state of flux, queer sees sexuality and identity as fluid, it is uncertain, once it becomes certain and definable it stops being queer as queer will have moved on to something different. Whilst Campbell and Farrier (2016) focus on 'embodiment' as a queer performance aesthetic, Sue-Ellen Case introduced the potential of new technologies to 'produce a creative, even playful space where identifications may be explored' (2009: 167). Case uses examples of queer virtual performances that demonstrate technological interventions replacing internal Method acting processes in 'live' theatre. Case argues,

Today, this tradition of theatre seems somehow dated. In the new technoculture, the body's own fleshly status serves to reveal how it is altered by, or operates in consonance with new technologies. An array of new performance techniques illustrates the widespread sense of the body as its own theatre of change, through technology, rather than as a register of unseen, internal motivations. (2009: 151)

When discussing queer aesthetics in performance with / for / by young people, the work obviously needs to be age appropriate and be relevant to

youth culture, therefore in the light of Case's argument the inclusion of digital technology for queer exploration and the interrogation between the relationship of the live and digital in queer applied performance for / with / by young people seems a compelling starting point. Case informs her argument with the use of futuristic digital forms such as avatars and cyberbodies in performance. The concept of a performative queer digital future supports José Esteban Muñoz's (2009) concept of 'queer futurity'. Muñoz suggests 'queerness is always in the horizon' (2009: 11) using Lee Edelman's (2004) ideas around the future being the province of the child, Muñoz places queer as a space of hope in the future. This argument supports the concept of making queer applied performance work with / for / by young people which points towards future identities and existence.

Kathryn Bond Stockton (2009) suggests all children are queer in *The Queer Child* where she examines both children's strangeness and even 'gayness' in the twentieth century. Stockton positions a child as queer in the context of the 'normative' adult in a socio-cultural construct. This is an interesting concept and the idea that children live outside of heteronormative expectations would support the argument that children should be introduced to queer performance, art, literature and representations during early years. This would enable all children to embrace their individual 'queerness' and disrupt cultures of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. Hannah Dyer (2019) intersects queer theory and child studies in a new theoretical framework which supports this PaR project and future queer performance work with and for children. Dyer focuses on children who have experienced trauma and believes the arts enable children to communicate their experiences and how they have been harmed by systems of power. By applying a queer aesthetic to their cultural expressions, this enables children to re-imagine and create new structures and new models of social and political life. She posits,

When differently attuned to the social and emotional spheres of child development, concerned adults might help children work through the affective legacies of colonial traumas, the constraints

of homophobic social orders, and the class dimensions of schooling and education. My analysis is motivated by a belief that the aesthetic expressions of childhood can provide insight into how histories of sexuality, colonialism, gender, and nation become entangled in theories of child development and, in turn, can wound children's subjective realities. Queer theory, I aim to show, can help to replenish child studies by giving language to the child's creative resistances against normalcy. (2019: 4-5)

Although Dyer's concept of queerness transcends gender and sexual identity, she concludes her book with a reflection on children's sex education as she believes 'it is an example of how the adult's politics and fantasies of futurity impact the material lives of children' (2019: 131). She refers to Chase Joynt's short film, *Genderize* and suggests we listen to the voices of young people around issues of gender, sexuality and sex and learn from them how to best instruct pedagogy in this area. This supports the argument made throughout this thesis for applied performance projects that are young person led in terms of form and content. Queering applied performance and other areas of cultural expression and pedagogical frameworks enables children and young people to reimagine their identities, contexts, environments and future.

The Origins of *Heterophobia*

I first came up with the idea of a role reversed world, a binaristic sexuality switch of the privileged and the oppressed, a gay world where an individual would need to 'come out' as heterosexual as a concept for a play in 2008. I was reading Michael Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet* in which Cindy Patton includes an article 'Tremble, Hetero Swine!' (1993). This phrase taken from an essay which had originally been in the *Gay Community News*. The essay fantasised about reversing roles of oppression and warned 'Tremble, hetero swine, when we appear before you without our masks' (1987) and satirically threatened to revoke laws that ban homosexual activity and replace them with laws that give rise to homosexuality, raise armies,

sodomise sons and genetically engineer perfect boys as claimed by new-right conspiracy theories. Patton found this essay in 1989 in a special edition of the right-wing periodical *New Dimensions*, which reproduced it without the intended irony, warning of the political plans of the gay movement. It was entitled, 'The Homosexual Mentality' and was dedicated to revealing the so-called 'truth' about AIDS stating:

Homosexual relations are indisputably the major cause of AIDS epidemic in the Western world. But what is the mentality and the political agenda of homosexuals? WARNING: The material on this page, written by homosexual political activists, may be offensive to some people. (1989: 28)

Patton asserts 'apparently, hetero swine do not tremble. Instead, they arm themselves with their own sense of a new-right identity, formed in opposition to what they understand to be a dominant culture in the grip of homosexual activists' (1993: 144).

At the time of reading Patton's chapter, I was developing a new piece of queer work commissioned by Shout, Birmingham Queer Arts and Cultural Festival entitled *Fear of Queer* in 2009 at The Custard Factory in Birmingham. It was informed by real experiences of the LGBTQ+ company I was working with, and extensive existing research conducted with the local LGBTQ+ community in Birmingham. My performance piece, *Fear of Queer*, was a hybrid fusion of multi-disciplinary performance which explored homosexuality and homophobia through a diversity of lenses; we used whatever art form felt most appropriate for the content we were creating. We fused forms, created characters and montages without plot and often without narrative, performed queer ideas through bodies, and moved between scenes and locations. As Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier suggest, this form of making interdisciplinary performance is 'doing theatre in a queer way' (2016: 15). Building on Muller-Scholl's (2004) work around making theatre in 'a political way', they discuss dramaturgy which is queer as being identified through the making of the work and its form rather than through content. Queer work is not about re-telling queer or LGBTQ+ stories, it is about the style of the work being queer, it is not normative in form, therefore, it does

not present as a recognisable structure of a 'play', it subverts structure, it is experimental, it takes risk, it feels 'different' or 'other'. It is not linear in timelines or fixed in terms of characters, narrative or place. *Fear of Queer* was a queer performance experience rather than a play, held together by the host, Ms. Gorgeous Lesbian, (Figure 2.1) for the purpose asserted by Jill Dolan: the lesbian is 'the most radical position from which to subvert representation' (1988: 119). Valerie Traub supports this position in her claim that lesbianism should be placed 'centre stage – not to enforce a politics of identity, but to destabilise some long-standing theatrical conventions and to activate the queer potential of today's global audience' (2002: 38).

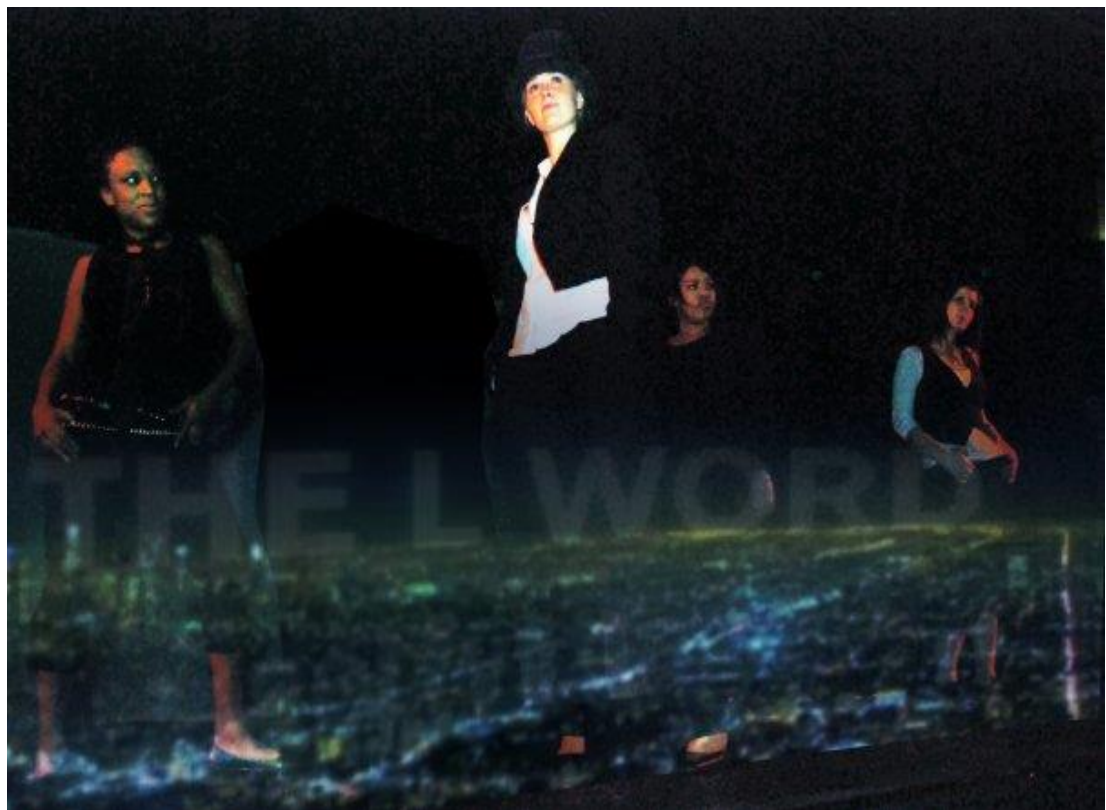


Figure 2.1 Ms. Gorgeous Lesbian and other lesbians take 'centre stage' in *Fear of Queer* (2009) with lesbian focused media projected onto them.

Reading Patton's article inspired the development of a short scene to be included in *Fear of Queer* entitled *Heterophobia*. This scene was from a young person's perspective and started to explore the concept of role reversal and heterophobic actions. It simply consisted of a group of young gay and lesbian people at a bus stop who start to bully a young male who arrives at the bus stop and they believe to be 'straight'. The scene was introduced by a projection with the quote from the *Gay Community News*

(1987) previously discussed: 'Tremble, hetero swine, when we appear before you without our masks'. This particular scene received the most interest and feedback from the audiences watching *Fear of Queer*, both LGB audiences and industry professionals. In reflection, this was not the most interesting scene in *Fear of Queer*, but it was the safest, the least queer since it was the closest to having a conventional, recognisable structure, characters and a plot. It existed in the binary power system society is accustomed to albeit a switch of that system. The audience were mainly arts industry professionals or young LGBTQ+ people. The arts professionals wanted to see a structure they recognised, and the young LGBTQ+ people wanted to hear their own invisible stories told by the LGBTQ+ representations in this accessible scene that legitimised young non-heterosexual lives. This type of work appeared to be what the young LGBTQ+ audience in Birmingham wanted to see. As a consequence, *Fear of Queer* was expanded in 2010 to a forty-five-minute version of the *Heterophobia* scene from 2009 with a company of young emerging LGBTQ+ artists. *Heterophobia* presented the struggle of one young heterosexual male trying to 'come out' in a gay world. I was interested in displacing the symbolic space of homophobia with the word 'heterophobia' and heterophobic actions. The aim for this work had not been to challenge homophobia in schools but to make queer work and representations to empower young LGBTQ+ emerging artists and audiences.

In 2008, when I looked up the word heterophobia online, the word didn't exist in any online dictionary; and in any form online other than a book written by Daphne Patai *Heterophobia: Sexual Harassment and the Future of Feminism*. Here Patai (2000) criticises sexual harassment laws arguing that this legislation has had a negative impact on feminism and suggests these policies place women in a position of weakness where they need the government's protection in both their social and professional lives. I decided to look at the actual meaning of the word heterophobia: hetero originates from the Greek word *heteros* which means other and is used as a prefix that means other or different. Phobia also originates from a Greek word *phobos* which means aversion. The actual meaning of heterophobia is therefore an aversion of the other rather than a fear of heterosexuals as the urban dictionary or Wikipedia suggested in 2014 when I looked again. After my

2010 production, other creative works entitled *Heterophobia* appeared, for example a Birmingham-based amateur group called Acting Out who attended *Heterophobia* in 2010 devised their own piece following the production with the same title and concept. The work clearly had resonated with them enough to re-make their own piece of the same name and concept. There is also a short film on YouTube called *Love is all you Need* which the *Huffington Post* featured with the headline: 'Film Explores If "Heterophobia" Were Real' (2013). The film explores the same issues of intolerance, bullying and suicide as my 2010 version and has won nineteen film festival awards. In addition, a Heterophobia Facebook group and a tweet from Nick Griffin, former Leader of the BNP, tweeted in 2012: 'say no to heterophobia!' When I looked again in 2016, there was also a video of 'the heterophobic taxi driver' (2015). In 2015, a taxi company decided to ask their taxi drivers to make heterophobic comments in front of passengers to make a point about discrimination, and there was one driver who was particularly good at it and became known as 'the heterophobic taxi driver'. In 2017, the word 'heterophobia' entered in the urban dictionary and in Wikipedia.

My new piece of work, *Heterophobia* (2010) played at mac Birmingham and then toured to London to The Drill Hall, then a devoted LGBTQ+ off West-End arts centre. Artistic Director, Julie Parker asked for the piece to remain called *Fear of Queer* as she felt that *Fear of Queer* would sell better to LGBTQ+ London audiences than *Heterophobia* so when we toured this piece to London it was called *Fear of Queer*, in Birmingham the same piece of work was called *Heterophobia*. In the production of *Heterophobia* (2010), a performance piece made to celebrate diversity in terms of sexual orientation and identity, I fused live performance with visual arts. Simple animations were projected on a screen as a backdrop for the performers rather than using a set (Figure 2.2) offering audiences visual semiotics. In this image, we see a young female set against a pink fairy tale princess palace whilst an audio recording of Disney's (1937) Snow White's "Someday my Prince will Come" was playing loudly offering the beginnings of a queer aesthetic for a young audience. The innovative new piece of work began developing a queer dramaturgy which along with a queer aesthetic would be developed much more fully in later iterations as part of this PhD

PaR project. The 2010 original piece of work began by questioning society's regulatory practice of compulsory heterosexuality, although at the time I didn't recognise it to be the term 'compulsory sexuality' or be so significant to my later work, I was just compelled to make it.¹ The Drill Hall has since closed down after having all of its arts council funding removed in April 2008; the centre was not able to financially sustain itself and closed in 2011. The UK no longer has a venue committed to queer work, artists and audiences.



Figure 2. 2. *Heterophobia* (2010) at The Drill Hall, London. Graphics and animations were projected onto a large screen upstage in place of a set.

These early makings of *Heterophobia* began to disrupt the concept of compulsory heterosexuality. In 2013, I returned to this idea to test whether the concept of a gay world where someone is bullied for being heterosexual as opposed to being homosexual, could be a more accessible narrative for a predominantly young heterosexual audience to engage with. To interrogate whether a binary switch of the oppressor and the oppressed would enable them to recognise bullying, understand the hate crime they were witnessing and experiencing in schools on a daily basis and even empathise with the

¹ Review of *Fear of Queer* can be accessed at: <https://www.artshub.co.uk/news-article/reviews/performing-arts/duncan-robertson/fear-of-queer-182766>

protagonist character who represented 'other'. This practice-as-research study aimed to investigate the impact that the binary switch would have on young people in terms of subverting fixed views of gender and sexuality and enabling them to empathise with a victim of homophobic bullying through understanding how the experience of heterophobic bullying and marginalisation could impact them if they were to experience it. The study recognised the binary limitations on the project from the onset, but as young people live in a fixed binary context it was a necessary starting point. The practice intended to find the queer spaces in a quest to develop a deeper disruption and develop a new queer dramaturgical approach to TIE / applied performance to explore issues of gender and sexual identities with young people through practice-as-research.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has argued that the historic criminalisation and pathologization of homosexuality has led to a culture of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. These values are reflected in British schools and have been further affected by the legacy of Section 28 (1988). 'Hegemonic masculinity' is symptomatic of 'compulsory heterosexuality', young males having to prove their masculinity and therefore heterosexuality through 'laddish' behaviours and attitudes. Through a sociological, social psychological and gender-based lens, this chapter examined research and various current third sector reports by Stonewall, METRO and The Trevor Project (2003, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2020) which evidence that these attitudes have resulted in severe homophobic bullying and abuse in schools impacting on young LGBTQ+ people's mental health and well-being.

The chapter then begins to consider previous TIE approaches in school settings to homophobic bullying, concluding these resources have been largely ineffective because they happen in schools where this oppression and power dynamic already exist, and they largely focus on the 'coming out' of the LGBTQ+ character. No young person should have to come out, heterosexual young people do not have to 'come out' and an LGBTQ+ person is required to 'come out' more than once in different contexts in their lives. It shouldn't be necessary to identify what it is to be

LGBTQ+ for a young person, the identity should be able to exist without needing to be defined and marginalised. Only by disrupting a culture of compulsory heterosexuality and subverting hegemonic gender norms can we eradicate them. The chapter looks at queer theory and a framework for queer performance making before introducing my earliest piece of practice around these issues which was re-made as the practice-as-research part of this project in an attempt to displace these notions and reimagine sexual and gender identity in a 'gay world' for young people. This practice-as-research will be explored through a queer lens in Chapter Four, '*Heterophobia* (2014): Testing Live and Digital Applied Performance Practice with Young People'. Meanwhile, Chapter Three, 'Reimagining TIE: Digital Participatory Pedagogy, A New Aesthetic for Live Applied Performance with Young People' will explore participation and aesthetics in applied performance for and with young people.

Chapter Three

Reimagining TIE: Digital Participatory Pedagogy, A New Aesthetic for Live Applied Performance with Young People

Chapter Overview

Making applied performance work for and with young people today derives from the tradition of theatre in education (TIE). When TIE emerged in the 1960s it was progressive, innovative and learner centred. The birth of theatre education was influenced by its social and political context, the work reflected its climate and was responsive to change. It was radical at the onset, but the movement has been drained of funding, social conscience and artistic innovation as Helen Nicholson claims, 'once separated from the oppositional politics that drove its aesthetic strategies, TIE was drained of its life and political energy and inevitably some programmes became predictable and formulaic' (2011: 73).

This chapter explores the participatory, pedagogical and digital developments made in applied performance, immersive live performance art and digital storytelling. Building on the work of other scholars in the field, this chapter positions alternative digital participatory pedagogies for young people which draw upon and develop aspects of TIE methodologies and practice as an aesthetic for intermedial live applied performance with young people. In a Conservative climate reminiscent of the 1980s where hate crime is surging, young people's services have been cut, the NHS is under threat and the arts are disappearing from the national curriculum. In an unknown Brexit era, during an environmental climate crisis led by Greta Thunberg and a digital revolution, what narratives do a #metoo, #blacklivesmatter, Netflix, reality television, You Tube generation need and in what forms should those narratives be told? What experiential learning, skills and resilience is now needed by young people? How do we give young people a voice in a time when all our voices and our democracy are being challenged? How do theatre makers fully understand all young lives in their digital, global contexts, appreciating young people's hopes, dreams, realities and fears? How can theatre makers engage young people in creative discourse,

challenge their thinking and attitudes, access global perspectives, develop new paradigms, provoke them to reimagine their identities, their relationships, their futures and participate in social change?

Foundation Principles

As Nicholson argues, ‘the education of young people is always orientated towards the future, but it also builds on the knowledge of the past’ (2011: 12). Theatre / drama education was heavily influenced by the values of progressive education, a pedagogical movement placing value on experiential learning rather than didactic teaching. This, of course, included the innovative and essential work of John Dewey whose philosophy involved engaging children’s natural curiosity to enable them to learn, contradicting the fixed information-based teaching methodology used in education at that time. Dewey believed in learner centred education where students learn from their own experiences. For Dewey,

education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and...the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction. (1916: 16)

Dewey argued that a collaborative, playful approach to education was essential, and he believed that participating in the arts was a playful experience, a ‘complete merging of playfulness with seriousness’ (1934: 279). Dewey was an early pioneer linking the arts and play, and he provided the foundations for experiential learning through arts participation. This was an active approach to learning, the combination of both physical activity and cognitive activity. Children needed to take an active role to learn and the easiest way to achieve this was through play. This shift in thinking around experiential learning and using ‘play’ as a participatory tool to learn enabled the beginnings of arts education, active learning through imaginative play and role play. It was twenty years on that Peter Slade (1954) was recognised to be the first to make a theorized connection between play and children’s

drama in his influential *Child Drama* that introduced the practice of play as the essence of drama. As the first British drama therapist, Slade's priority was in using play and consequently drama to create 'a happy and balanced individual' (1954: 105). Building on the work of these scholars and the foundation principles of TIE that play is the essence of child drama, an argument could be made for the consideration of the evolving nature of child play, hobbies and participatory activities in line with children and young people's environment when making child / young people's drama / theatre. It could be argued that engaging with current youth culture could be a crucial activity in supporting theatre makers and facilitators to make relevant, current work. Finding opportunities for practitioners and theatre makers to interrogate which games and participatory activity are relevant to young people would be advantageous to using the same methodologies they were taught with at University or during Conservatoire training. This process can be led by young people and I would argue is an essential part of the research process in making work for and with young people. There is much rhetoric around theatre providing an alternative form of education and entertainment for young people and more traditional forms of art potentially moving young people away from their smartphone screens, playing video games and using social media as well as contemporary forms of music and dance such as Hip hop, Dubstep, Drum and bass and Grime. In 1990, Paul Willis questioned the use of the term 'arts' feeling it was associated with traditional art forms which many young people could not access. Willis preferred the term 'culture' as he felt young people were already engaged in everyday creativity which he referred to as 'ground aesthetics' (1990: 55). These cultural activities were accessed through 'popular cultural products and media of the mainly commercial market' (1990: 55). The argument in this thesis builds on Willis' suggestions made thirty years ago and questions what is the value in taking young people away from their own cultural references, hobbies and activities? If we are using the framework built by Dewey (1934) and Slade (1954), making learner centred work which focuses on both action and intellectual stimulation through play then the game / participatory activity must engage the learner /player. It is the makers of this work that need to shift and reframe thinking around arts education and play to develop better

understandings of current youth culture rather than young people obtaining a more sophisticated understanding of the arts. Performance work with / for young people would benefit from being routed within youth culture using genres of play and artforms which currently engage young people. We only know what these are by asking young people and testing and evaluating new methodologies and strategies with them.

Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire (1970) placed the learner at the centre of the pedagogical process and influenced the pedagogical approach of TIE. Freire radically argued for praxis, informed action to evoke social change which is at the core of TIE and applied performance. Freire argued that a new 'underclass' had been created, the poor had been oppressed by the dominant, privileged classes and systems and this was achieved by a lack of access to education, keeping them 'submerged' in ignorance and disadvantage. Freire saw liberation as possible through the oppressed becoming aware of their own oppression and the desire to transform their own situation through learner centred education, Freire argued any human being will develop self-awareness and autonomy through the right kind of education. He argued knowledge emerges through collaborative inquiry and reflection not what he referred to as 'banking education' where 'education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor' (1970: 53). Freire's influential critical pedagogy had a fundamental impact within the field of education, his ground-breaking thinking about active and reflective learning was crucial to the development of TIE. Freire described the teacher as

always cognitive, whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with the students. He does not regard cognizable objects as his private property, but as the object of reflection by himself and the students. In this way, the problem posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students – no longer docile listeners- are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teachers. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration and re-considers her earlier considerations as

the students express their own. The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students. (1970: 62)

Freire's analysis of an educator is reflective of the TIE / DIE facilitator and the active, reflective inquirer, the young participant. This theoretical framework influenced Dorothy Heathcote's (1995) methodology who claimed it was essential for children to learn through interrogation and inquiry. The pedagogical dramatic techniques used in theatre/ drama education such as 'in role' techniques or 'Mantle of the Expert' (MoE) were in large introduced by drama educator, Heathcote, who believed this methodology should not only be isolated to drama but could be utilised for learning and teaching across the national curriculum. Heathcote's teacher 'in role' methodology created conditions and opportunities which enabled young people to be in the position where a 'mantle' of expertise, leadership and knowledge grew around them and required active participation. Participation became the defining characteristic of TIE and enabled the genre to become a new form of theatre as part of the alternative arts movement which began emerging in the 1960s. Theatre education uses theatre / drama as a practical and interactive pedagogical tool, placing the child / young person at the centre of the learning experience and has been used as a vehicle for learning about other areas of the National Curriculum such as science, history, literature, personal social health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship. Dramatic methodologies are used to encourage the child / young person to become an active participant in the structured experiential learning process. As Chris Cooper argues 'physical participation, the manipulation of time and space in a TIE programme has many of the characteristics of learning in real life' (2013: 46). Children and young people have the opportunity to creatively rehearse and experience real life situations they are required to collectively make choices and then observe the consequences of those collaborative decisions without actually having to deal with them, allowing them to reflect about their choices, what happened and how they might respond the same or differently in a real-life situation. A key concept then to TIE is that human behaviour is learnt and can be challenged and changed influenced by Freirean pedagogy and significantly influenced by the work of Brazilian

practitioner, Augusto Boal (1974) and publication of his ideology, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal's methodologies such as forum theatre, where Boal created a forum to present an unresolved situation of oppression which is then replayed and the audience are invited to stop the action, replace the character they feel is oppressed and offer alternative solutions, modelling a process of social change has been fundamental to the applied theatre / TIE movement. Similar, to Boal's methodologies, TIE gives children and young people the opportunity to empathise with characters and their lived experiences which they may share or not. The ability to view a situation from another person's perspective and empathise with another person's emotions plays a significant role in our social lives. This concept was key to this practice-as-research project and the binary switch of the oppressed and the oppressor. I was specifically interested in whether watching a young heterosexual male be bullied because of their heterosexuality, were the young people more likely to identify, engage and empathise and as a result then understand how it may feel to be a victim of hate crime and how that may impact a young LGBTQ+ person. Rather than if it were a young LGBTQ+ protagonist they were watching and may not identify with in the same way because of a compulsory heterosexual culture and a heteronormative attitude evidenced in Chapter Two.

Participation is also the key element which links theatre education with drama education. TIE is not an isolated performance but exists as part of a larger body of work, a programme of structured interactive activities around a specific subject area often in the form of a pre-show or post-show process of drama-based workshops. Jackson who pioneered the teaching of practical based TIE modules at Manchester University in the early 1970s uses the programme of activities which surround the TIE performance as a means of distinguishing 'TIE most obviously from other kinds of young people's theatre' (2013: 6) which he feels allows for a much 'deeper and richer learning process than the 'one-off' play (or indeed most teaching methods) could possibly hope to offer' (2013: 6). Gavin Bolton (1980) also identified that the creative experiential learning of the whole group was a defining connection between Drama in Education (DIE) and TIE, a collective learning

experience. This practice-as-research study will primarily focus on TIE as its foundation due to the performance element of the work.

Reimagining TIE: Applied Performance

TIE sits comfortably under the umbrella of applied theatre but at the same time can lay claim to playing a significant, if often unrecognised, part in shaping its various educational, social and political aspirations, its theoretical frameworks and its wide range of eclectic practices.

(Jackson & Vine, 2013: 2)

TIE has suffered from not being valued and a lack of recognition for its contribution to the alternative arts scene and the development of applied performance practice. However, in a climate, which forces us to reimagine theatre education and develop the participatory methodologies used within the genre, applied performance for and with young people seems a more appropriate and fluid space for new forms of experimental and innovative participatory work for and with young people to develop and re-emerge. As it began, TIE was revolutionary but as Nicholson summarises Raymond Williams' (1992) observation, 'as soon as audiences become aware of the conventions of dramatic performances, they have already become stale' (Nicholson, 2011: 14). The cuts to arts and education funding and resources, the removal of creative subjects from the national curriculum, the impact on young people's support services, the lack of arts provision for young people and the current political, financial, environmental and educational landscape forces us to reimagine and develop applied performance work for and with young people which gives the most vulnerable a voice, challenges them and is 'artistically innovative, educationally effective and socially engaged' (Nicholson, 2011: 5).

Applied theatre / performance / drama is alternative arts practice which has community, educational, social or political objectives and aims to make a difference to lives and communities. The emergence of applied performance practice has been heavily influenced by the alternative theatre, theatre education movement and the progressive education movement. The umbrella term of applied theatre / performance emerged in the 1990s,

predominantly used by academics and practitioners embracing theatre and performance practice outside of the mainstream theatre. Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston state,

the work often, but not always, happens in informal spaces, in non-theatre venues in a variety of geographical and social settings: schools, day centres, the street, prisons, village halls, an estate or any other location that might be specific or relevant to the interests of a community. (2009: 9)

There is general agreement amongst applied practitioners and academics that by applying theatre to a social issue it can be used to empower, inform, educate and in some cases, intervene and transform or as Nicholson prefers 'transport' (2005: 12). Ackroyd (2000) argues there are two defining characteristics of applied theatre which are an intention to generate change and participation. Philip Taylor states that

applied theatre operates from a recognition that throughout time theatre has been applied or rendered as a powerful educative tool...[and] it operates from a central transformative principle: to raise awareness on a particular issue (safe-sex practices), to teach a particular concept (literacy and numeracy), to interrogate human actions (hate crimes, race relations) to prevent life threatening behaviours (domestic violence, youth suicide), to heal fractured identities (sexual abuse, body image) to change states of oppression (personal victimization, political disfranchisement). (2003: 1)

Applied theatre / drama follows a similar debate around 'process' and 'product' as the theatre /drama education debate in terms of whether applied practice should be referred to as theatre or drama. The term 'performance' has now also entered this discussion. Applied 'performance' seems a more suitable label for socially engaged performance work for and with young people such as *Heterophobia*. In an article exploring applied performance's relationship to site and place, Sally Mackey and Nicolas Whybrow use the

term, ‘‘applied performance’ to suggest a possible expansion-beyond simply ‘drama’ and ‘theatre’’ (2007: 1). They refer to the term ‘performance’ as an ‘umbrella term’ (2007: 1) allowing for a diversity of practice and art forms. As James Thompson suggests the term ‘performance is used to illustrate the widest possible set of artistic forms and also avoid the assumption that a staged event is one that only uses the spoken word or some linear narrative structure’ (2009: 8). Nicola Shaughnessy entitled her book *Applying Performance* and focuses on contemporary performance practices demonstrating ‘a shift from a theatre dominated paradigm to a performance centred one in the twenty-first century’ (2012: 13). Applied performance encompasses such a wide range of practice, it is a flexible and versatile alternative arts movement which already has academic weight and is gaining energy and international support behind it. Jennifer S Hartley (2012) feels every project should be different, the way of working cannot be fixed or predicted, the applied practice should evolve with the participants involved and the work developing. Veronica Baxter and Katherine Low joined the debate in 2017, giving a useful and simplistic definition, ‘Applied Theatre practice, in its most pared down form, involves theatre-making with and / or for a particular group of people’ (2017: 5). In line with this thinking Gareth White suggests that ‘applied theatre is a discourse around theatre and performance, that allows us to see things in common between practices and the contexts in which they happen, rather than a coherent set of practices in itself’ (2015: 11). Similarly, Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson identify applied performance as an ‘ecology of practices’ (2016: 4). These most recent definitions offer a flexibility and freedom for applied practitioners to make and facilitate work which is not limited by specific forms, methodologies and definitions. It is only through thinking in these terms that will enable applied artists in collaboration with communities and participants to make work which is truly innovative, as anything becomes possible rather than conforming to a definition, a set of participatory methodologies and specific locations or setting up fixed binaries for applied performance and other types of work. Hughes and Nicholson identify the evolving nature of applied performance practice and the significant response on its identity. They comment,

applied theatre is continually shifting and developing, with the consequences that it has not one identity but many practical identities, differently and appropriately nuanced according to context. As part of its richness, applied theatre is associated with a body of experimental theatre-making rather than a set of toolkits. (2016: 4)

Aesthetics: Beauty is in the Eye of the Participant

There have been ongoing debates around the aesthetic value of theatre education / applied performance. Does the aesthetic have a role in socially engaged work often placed in social and community settings? When discussing aesthetic value of performance with young people I am referring to the aesthetic experience for young people so I am not limiting the definition to a sense of beauty but exploring artistic quality in terms of the visual composition of the art forms used and young people's sensori-emotional experience of those forms including their own interaction with them. James Thompson feels the 'affects' of performance are as important if not more important than the effects (2009: 4). In his book, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of the Effect*, he explores applied performance projects in disaster and war zones arguing that joy, beauty and celebration should be the inspiration for this work. He calls for a new aesthetic approach rather than the focus being about the impact of the work. Taylor sees the aesthetic of applied theatre as being the 'aesthetic form for raising awareness about how we are situated in this world and what we as individuals and as communities might do to make the world a better place' (2003: xx). There have been arguments made against the aesthetic value of TIE due to the participatory nature of the work. John Allen suggested 'the art of theatre [was] itself being undersold' (1979: 6-7) due to the 'hybrid' nature of TIE in its learning and artistic objectives. Aurand Harris, a playwright, writing plays for children was reluctant to write plays with audience participation as he felt this removed the 'aesthetic distance', whereas Jackson challenges this view, arguing all theatre is metaphorical (2007: 146). However, Jackson appreciates the argument of aesthetic distance is more

complex with participatory theatre and draws on Boal's argument for 'aesthetic space' (1998: 72) creating a bridge between the worlds of the artist and audience and that the audience participation which is integral to TIE then becomes part of the aesthetic. He argues that 'participatory theatre such as TIE has a full claim to being considered not only the product of artistic intent but a full aesthetic experience' (Jackson, 2007: 160). Jackson argues 'in good TIE...the theatre is pedagogic, and the pedagogy is theatrical' (2007: 149). This of course leaves us to decide the definition of 'good TIE'.

Joe Winston talks about 'seeking beauty in education' (2010: 1) and provokes educators to consider beauty as an educational tool, he uses examples of creativity from the curriculum to demonstrate the power of beauty and its potential to aid experiential learning. He asks us to consider 'when in our own lives have, we been profoundly affected by beauty, and was this ever connected to learning?' (2010: 133). He asks the reader whether such experiences as listening to a beautiful piece of music could be valuable to a young person? As educators, Winston suggests we consider if a child has ever presented us with a beautiful piece of artwork and he feels 'addressing such questions in the context of professional discussion might help us, as teachers, articulate how beauty already has a tacit place in our thinking' (2010: 133). In agreement with Winston's 'beauty' argument and my own view of the importance of form as part of the aesthetic experience for young people, I believe the aesthetic is an important element of our practice for and with young people. The sector needs to value young people as both current and future artists, participants, producers and audiences. Young people are aesthetic consumers with high aesthetic expectations at the click of a button on their smart phones, laptops and tablets. Applied performance makers need to view beauty and aesthetics through the lens of children and young people when making work for and with them rather than using our own perceptions of artistic and aesthetic quality. Matthew Reason (2012) highlights the inherent problem in theatre for young audiences (TYA) is that it is theatre largely created by adults for children. For Reason, 'the impossibility of theatre for children requires us to acknowledge the unequal power relationship between adult and child, with children in our society largely constructed as powerless and vulnerable' (2012: 25). Young people, have

little control over what cultural content of theatre they are exposed to, leading to a power imbalance where 'theatre for children is a product made for children but is made and consumed in a manner that is far from equal or democratic' (2012: 17). The idea that there is a more sophisticated aesthetic that young people can learn to engage with reduces us back to age old conservative and elitist arguments of a high art form for the privileged who can access it and understand it. Jeanne Kleinn and Shifra Schonmann discuss the 'enormous gap' which exists between adult and child / young person's understanding of 'aesthetic distance' (2009: 60). They conclude, 'if we want to close the artistic distance between theatre for young audiences and adults, then we believe that TYA must develop its own innovative, meaningful, and metaphoric forms, inclusive of all genres and styles, yet exclusive to the unique developmental needs and desires of young people for its own artistic sake' (2009: 72). The work we create must aesthetically connect with the young people it is made for and engage them. The only way this is possible is to have young people included in evaluation and research processes, so we can reflect and learn from the feedback they offer our practice. Currently, the lens young people look through is that of a mobile phone or a screen, in their roles as artist / producer / curator on social media platforms, the young person selects a meme or takes a photograph or films a video, adds a hash tag and the selected emojis to offer a narrative and chooses an appropriate filter to give their artistry the acquired aesthetic tone for their audiences and followers, often in the hundreds sometimes thousands on a daily or hourly basis. Young people understand aesthetics, they have high production expectations and they expect digital technology to be part of every experience having grown up in a globalised digital world.

Jackson claims that there is a need to consider the 'aesthetic dimension' within theatre education work and calls for theatre educators to consider ways to evaluate the aesthetic quality of this work. He states,

It is important to stress how much time and space we need to give to audience response, to the voices of the young people who receive the work, especially in any attempt to assess the value of the whole experience, of which the aesthetic is a key part.

Exactly how we evaluate the aesthetic dimension is of course another matter and beyond the scope of this book but learn to evaluate it we must. (2007: 208)

Jackson's claim that we give space to the young people's responses who receive the work is key. For aesthetic value to be considered in applied performance with and for young people, the aesthetics of the work need to be defined and evaluated by the young people the new performance work is made with and for. Shaughnessy takes this a step further claiming we need to ensure the ways we gather and discuss this feedback and outcomes are accessible to those participants, stating

applying performance enables us to perceive differently and this demands different kinds of critical vocabularies, theoretical perspectives and methodologies to discuss, analyse and evaluate so impact might be understood as being evident in the words of the autistic partaker. (2012: 255)

Gareth White (2015) offers the most current thinking in terms of aesthetics in applied performance, identifying the challenge for aesthetics in applied arts is 'reconciling the simultaneous 'autonomy' and 'heteronomy' of art' (2015: 12). White returns to Nicholson's (2005: 6) 'pure' and 'applied' argument, that 'applied' suggests theatre which isn't 'pure', Nicholson uses the metaphor of mathematics where pure mathematics appears to be the genuine mathematics whilst applied mathematics is merely using maths as a tool. White suggests there is a misconception that 'pure theatre (real theatre, for some) is focused on its aesthetics rather than its effects' (2015: 1). He continues, 'applied theatre can create occasions of theatre as pure as any other; indeed, for many practitioners it is the potential of these settings and intentions for creating powerful art that is the attraction. Attending to aesthetics might serve to bring this potential back to mind.' (2015: 2) White points to the argument Mojisola Abedayo's (2015) makes in *Aesthetics* that applied practice encompasses such a broad range of diverse practices it may confuse the political objectives for the artistic ambition. Abedayo feels the actual term

applied theatre is not only not accessible for those that are outside the realm of academia and therefore holds a sense of privilege and the suggestion that participants are being 'applied to', it also 'lacks a sense of aesthetics' (2015: 127). White argues applied performance practice needs to re-focus on artistry which is driven by social and political objectives, suggesting, 'teaching, and conceiving, applied theatre as a way to apply oneself as a theatre maker, and thus placing artistry, skill, and creative ambition at the core, alongside critical thinking and political awareness' (2015: 2).

Jackson (2007), White (2013) and Shaughnessy (2012) all position 'participation' as an aesthetic of TIE / applied performance, an integral form of the applied performance experience with sensori-emotional value. Jackson states that in TIE,

the whole experience should be conceived of as an integrated aesthetic totality in which the 'audience' can switch to being active participants, engage in out-of-role discussion and move on (for example) interrogate characters from the play without feeling they are at any point being returned to the classroom. (2007: 149)

Jacques Ranciere (2009) questions the concept of transforming an audience member into an active participant as part of the art in *The Emancipated Spectator*. Ranciere explores the relationship and space between the actor and the audience member. He argues for the autonomous learning and semiotics each audience member takes from experiencing art. Ranciere is concerned by the blurring of lines between the actors and the audiences and calls for the emancipation of the audience, respecting the spectator's intelligence and autonomy to take what they need from the artistic experience rather than assuming a superior knowledge of the actor and the condescending concept that the actors pass on their advanced knowledge to a less informed audience. White, informed by Ranciere's emancipation thesis and the analysis of other performer and audience relationship theories, creates a new lens for the audience participation debate by focusing on the invitation to participate rather than the actual participation. White considers audience participation as an 'aesthetics of the invitation' (2013: 9). He doesn't

see participation as an enforced activity but a space for artistic discourse and potentially disagreement. White views the acceptance of the invitation, the participation to be art and the processes offered to the audience member to participate as 'aesthetic', positioning the audience member within the aesthetic of participatory performance. Shaughnessy suggests contemporary performance is being influenced by affective applied performance and a new engagement and aesthetics emerging in which 'work is process orientated, produced in social contexts, and which foregrounds the role of the audience as partakers whose experiences and responses are valued as aesthetic criteria for success' (2012: 255). Shaughnessy uses Lyn Gardner's statement 'The future may look like this – Theatre with rather than Theatre for' (2011, cited in Shaughnessy, 2012: 252) as evidence of this socially engaged drive and cultural shift.

In White's *Aesthetics*, Shaughnessy discusses how aesthetic value changes in response to social and cultural contexts and she reminds us that the Arts Council's vision and ten-year strategy is entitled *Great Art for Everyone* (2010) suggesting our current cultural, aesthetic and social priorities are applied arts and inclusion. Shaughnessy identifies

The contemporary vogue for immersive and participatory art as well as verbatim forms might be regarded as a new aesthetic emerging from mediatized societies seeking experiential modes of art and a valuing of qualities of authenticity, affect and emotion to complement the technical artistry, plasticity and artifice of contemporary culture's virtual realities. (2015: 122)

The argument in this chapter agrees that inclusion and the applied arts are a current cultural aesthetic reflecting our current political, social, financial and environmental climate. More specifically, 'participatory pedagogy' is an aesthetic of applied performance with young people; however, the methodology needs to be appropriate and current for the next generation.

Participatory Pedagogy in Applied Performance

This chapter has identified participation and aesthetics as the key defining factors of TIE and often an integral element to applied performance practice. Practitioners need to find new specific participatory strategies and styles for each piece of work made and to include young people in the creative process of making and the reflective process of evaluating. White claims,

People who invite participation are making art when they do so. That participation is a shared creative process, shared between theatre practitioners and the volunteers they invite into their practice, changes its character as a process of authorship, but does not fundamentally undermine it: what is authored, as well as any performances that results, is the interactional space into which the audience member can step as a participant, if they choose to. (2012: 195)

Importantly, White identifies the right of the participant to choose whether to accept or reject the invitation and therefore whether to participate. Theatre in Education and much applied performance practice seems to expect and demand participation. Participation is seen as a key definition of the genre and therefore an audience must participate for it to be theatre education or applied practice. However, these views become fixed and binarized and can lead to a lack of flexibility, innovation and accessibility. The practice ceases to be responsive to its audiences / participants as well as the social, political, economic, environmental and technological climate. There is an expectation that the child / young person will want to join in, that it is good for them and they will learn from the experience falling into dominant cultural presumptions. This does not allow or enable any choice or autonomy within the creative pedagogical experience. There is a danger in positioning participatory performance as an agency to mobilise all young people, the more vulnerable, marginalised and hard to reach, the more significant the impact and transformation. Ignoring an increase in mental health and anxiety issues for young people, the demand to participate and to perform especially, around very sensitive issues such as sexual identity may of course be a trigger for mental health and anxiety issues especially in schools where bullying and

homophobia occur and are therefore not safe spaces for young people. I would argue performance makers who are making work with / for young people could begin their process by interrogating new innovative and aesthetic participatory methodologies for the specific audience they are trying to engage. These strategies may well be informed by methodologies of the past but are current and focused on the future which is what I explore as part of this practice-as-research based PhD.

To be revolutionary and innovative, applied performance practice for and with young people should aim to be fluid, transient and ever evolving. Nicholson reminds us that 'participation has become integral to the cultural economy and to the service industries, where everything from shopping to museum visits are sold as an 'experience'...it is no longer possible to suggest that participation is in and of itself radical' (2016: 249). In *Critical Perspectives on Applied Theatre*, Nicholson begins a dialogue around participatory practice that might bring 'together the ephemeral, the technological, the environmental and the material, and in ways that extend beyond binary thought, enabling new affective patterns of relationality' (2016: 266). Nicholson continues to interrogate and call for politically charged discussions whilst unpicking complexities around participatory practice in *Performance and Participation: Practices, Audiences, Politics* in collaboration with Anna Harpin (2017). Socially engaged practice is addressed in this critical reflection of practice but the study also moves outside of the applied field to consider and look at the current popularity of participation and immersive forms in a changing theatrical ecology in response to a changing political and social climate in which it is suggested is redefining the political relationship between performance and participation in live art. The 'book forms a reflective response to why the contemporary moment appears somehow to need participation' (Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 15). They begin a complex, political dialogue which begins to explore the actual mobilisation of audiences through participation and 'towards a recognition of participation as an ecology of mutual doings and beings' (2017: 15). This insightful concept that more experimental and contemporary forms of live art are merging with the principles of applied practice, both in their social engagement of content and immersive, participatory nature of form and this being reflective of the current social,

political, environmental and economic climate is reminiscent of how the origins of TIE was born. Applied performance practice with young people, similarly should aim to be responsive to its current climate, youth culture and the developments being made in other areas of experimental, immersive, live performance art.

Digital Participatory Pedagogy: A New Aesthetic for Applied Performance

John Carroll (2002) articulated how drama education was well placed to collaborate with technology in schools nearly twenty years ago suggesting,

Digital performance is being created in the minds and the computers of young online drama interactors enhanced by digital imaging. It is going to produce some interesting notions of what constitutes dramatic performances in the future. (2002: 141)

Shaughnessy suggests we have to find new methodologies and develop our practice for a new generation, she claims that ‘young people, immersed in digital technology are differently wired to their predecessors so perceive, think and learn in particular ways’ (2012: 162). She uses an example from the work of Marc Prensky (2001) that young people prefer to see a graphic before a text as opposed to a text before a graphic as the generation before them would prefer because this is what they are accustomed to. She quotes, ‘they function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to ‘serious’ work.’ (2001b, cited in Shaughnessy, 2012: 162)) Returning to the ‘learner centred pedagogy’ foundations of TIE / applied performance, this new knowledge around young people learning differently to the previous generation points us in a new direction for making work for / with / by young people if we are wanting to engage them.

Shaughnessy demonstrates the potential of socially engaged drama facilitated through digital technologies by using a case study of C&T. Former TIE company, Collar and Tie, now, the acronym C&T is consistently evolving reflecting the ever-changing contexts the company works in, Computers and

Theatre, Community and Training, Creativity and Technology, Culture and Theory. C&T are a technology- driven organisation, using digital technology to implement theatre education techniques which enables children and young people to collaborate on a global scale. C&T predominantly sell their applied theatre practice in 'app' form to schools, community groups and youth theatres but they have developed a range of digital projects appropriate for the next digital generation. Shaughnessy identifies that C&T's process-based practice is responsive to youth culture and consequently engages young people in their new digital models of participatory performance. In White's *Aesthetics*, Anna Hickey- Moody (2015) also uses C&T's digital applied practice with young people as a case study, Moody identifies the strength of C&T's practice is the bringing together of applied theatre techniques and media culture. She argues that youth arts culture transcends theatre to music videos, television and current clothing trends which although might not be pedagogical, once given cultural narrative and meaning become pedagogical. She sees the work of C&T as responding to youth culture and that 'working with mediascapes and ideoscapes can enrich and extend the capacity of theatre to engage young minds...[and] how social issues can be highlighted and reframed through make believe' (Moody, 2015, p. 230). In C&T's process based digital making methodology, the young people become the producers of the work, they are the experts of the digital technology, reflective of the early methodologies of TIE and DIE, as the work is process rather than product based it is a digitally developed 'DIE' for a next generation of young people who are digitally minded and globally connected.

Megan Alrutz develops this argument further framing 'digital storytelling as an applied theatre praxis' (2015: 1) which can address the value of young people in society, youth culture and how young people engage in arts. Alrutz, frames digital storytelling as a site to create new knowledge and enable young people to become more socially engaged, political and aware of themselves and their own identity in relation to society, culture and community. Alrutz argues that rapid globalization and use of new technologies forces artists to

face new challenges around engaging communities in live theatre events and facilitating performance practices that prove relevant to youth's lived experiences. These shifts around technology, and the challenges they present, invite applied theatre practitioners to develop and engage with new approaches to performance that better reflect and respond to the lives of our participants. (2015: 4)

Digital technology has always been a part of young people's everyday life and they expect it to be a part of all their experiences. To not include digital technology in performance for / by / with young people is to miss an opportunity to engage young people in live performance work and without it, it will become increasingly more difficult to engage them as live audiences, especially work which documents young people's lived experiences. Digital technology needs to not only be present in form but also referenced within the work for it to feel legitimately youthful. Digital technology offers the potential for artists and companies to build digital communities and audiences increasing the impact of our work and it offers an approach to applied performance practice which enables us to work in collaboration with young people to better understand their challenges, their identities and disrupt and reimagine their future.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Jackson (2007), White (2013) and Shaughnessy (2012) argue participation is an 'aesthetic' of applied performance. Nicholson (2017) suggests that participation is no longer an innovative, experimental strategy as it is part of our cultural existence. Whilst, Shaughnessy (2012) claims digital technology has the potential to be utilised and developed for new participatory tools for performance and Alrutz's (2015) positions digital storytelling as an applied performance praxis. Matthew Causey suggests that we will eventually embrace 'a new aesthetics of the virtual' (2006: 60). Similarly, Baz Kershaw encourages us to accept 'the digital age not as a threat to live theatre but as a possible source of its rebirth and enhancement in a new kind of sensorium' (2008: 73). Building on these theoretical frameworks, I would like to cite digital technology not only as a participatory pedagogy and praxis but as an aesthetic for live applied performance with young people and evidence this claim through this

practice-as-research project. Digital technology in performance may include projected videos, graphics and animation, 3D projection mapping, digital streaming of live performances, blogging, motion sensors and cameras which have been previously used in dance performance, DJs playing live in a performance space, VJing which is a creation and manipulation of visual images in real time to an audience in synchronisation with music, YouTube, augmented reality (AR) augmenting virtual elements to the real world using a digital device, virtual reality (VR) which shuts out the real world for a fully immersive, virtual experience, Quick Response codes (QR) a barcode system using an app on a smartphone, apps, audio, game based online learning platforms such as Kahoot, video games or gaming techniques and social media. The use of digital technology may require audience members to use digital devices such as smartphones, hand or headsets or may be visible as part of the live performance. These innovative technologies also offer young people the opportunity to make and create not only participate. The list of technologies is ever changing and evolving as is the development of digital technology in a globalised world. It requires makers to be technologically creative and often offers opportunities for collaboration with graphic designers or other digital experts but not always; when using current everyday technology, it is young people who are the 'experts' reflective of the 'Mantle of the Expert' strategy. Digital technology has the capability to be a tool for learning strategies developed through TIE such as MoE, forum theatre, role play and hot seating as well as having the potential to develop these strategies further or create new methodologies. Digital technology can provide the TIE / applied performance programme package with further pre-show and post show activity virtually as well as offering young people the choice of whether to participate and to the level they wish to participate. Digital technology allows for anonymity when exploring challenging and sensitive issues but also has the potential to give young people a voice, to actively empower them and potentially offer them the 'invitation' to control a live performance through their smartphone.

Applying Digital Technology to Live Practice

My applied practice-as-research project differs from the work of C&T which uses processed based digital technology or Alrutzy's process and product based digital film making as it applies digital technology to the live performance experience to enhance engagement in the live work. I recently collaborated with C&T in 2017 using their digital media Push/Pull facility which digitally captures journeys enabled through the unique Prospero digital facilitation technology they have developed². This technology enhanced a live applied performance project, *Catfish*, which explored issues of online sexual exploitation. The live performance already utilised the virtual; however, the collaboration with C&T enabled the live and digital to intersect further and the young audiences received further narrative through their smartphones and the C&T app³ in the form of the protagonist character's journey and whereabouts when she went 'missing' and left the live performance.

Using digital technology in live performance for young people requires theatre makers to be flexible and versatile. Theatre makers need to constantly develop strategies in response to young audiences' use of digital technology and the frequent shifts in digital technology and social media to ensure work is current and relevant. As soon as a music style such as grime music or a social media form such as Snapchat becomes mainstream and understood and used by adults it ceases to exist in the same popular underground form as it did in youth culture which means makers of applied performance work with young people need to work with young people to find out what is current for them, but they also need to be versatile and understand that the same technology may not be able to be used in the next piece of work or the next development stage of the same work. In this project Facebook was used in the 2015 performance which was current and relevant at the time. However, in 2019 it would be unlikely a theatre maker would use Facebook for a performance with young people as research tells us young

² See <https://prospero.digital/pages/wM55Y3REY36G45Q3v>

³ A short video edit of *Catfish* demonstrating the collaboration of C&T's and Outspoken's work and the intersection of live and digital applied performance:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4XZLUg_ohg

people are less likely to use the social media platform because their parents and families are on it. I have since mastered Instagram for a digitally immersive project in 2019, I was instructed by young people. Neil Selwyn (2013) warns of 'digital hegemony' in schools and suggests that teachers and students need to intervene and collaborate to develop forms of digital technology which best suit their needs. He argues for increasing the 'informality surrounding technology processes and practices in school' (2013: 141) and he suggests that thought should be given to spaces where this informal use of digital technology is implemented, he concurs 'digital technology could well be an area where increased trust in the opinions and actions of students is merited' (2013: 143).

In this practice-as-research project, I was interested to test whether using digital technology in performance would enhance young people's engagement as I thought it might and therefore increase the impact of the work to challenge and disrupt young people's preconceived, binary concepts around compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. Helen Beetham and Rhona Sharpe argue that 'digital technologies have the potential to disrupt norms, challenge assumptions, innovate disciplines and professions, and usher in completely new forms of learning activity' (2007: 4). Bill Blake urges us to shift our thinking around the 'cultural project' of theatre suggesting it can be 'rethought' and 'refigured' (2014: 50). Blake concludes that 'the capaciousness of the digital is currently giving new scope to the artistic and cultural project of theatre' (2014: 70). Building on Blake's argument, I urge for applied performance for / by / with young people to be reimagined and for digital technology to be considered as a new strategy for participatory pedagogy and recognised as an integral aesthetic for live applied performance with young people.

Conclusion

This chapter has contextualised theatre education placing its legacy within the discourse of intermedial applied performance practice. It has argued for the fluid and evolving nature of applied performance to enable the experimental practice to be innovative in its response to its participants, audiences, contexts, content and climate. Building on the work of

Shaughnessy, Alrutz and Sutton / C&T the chapter argues for the development of digital participatory pedagogies to reflect young people's digital culture and enhance their engagement, positioning digital immersive participatory practice as an aesthetic form. This argument recognises the suggestions made in this practice-as-research project are already dated as this work took place in 2014 and early 2015 and digital innovation is happening so quickly. It also understands that this work needs to be led by young people's digital activity and they need to be active in this dialogue, evaluating work to shape intermedial applied performance practices for and with young people. With both these limitations in mind, the argument in this chapter places digital technology as both a participatory pedagogy and an aesthetic for applied performance with young people.

This was the theoretical starting position for the development of *Heterophobia*. Chapter Four will go on to explore a pilot piece of practice, *Heterophobia* (2014) made to test these ideas around live and digital aesthetics and immersive participatory practice discussed in this chapter; whilst also investigating the potential to challenge young people's views around a culture of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity to ensure young voices were active in this research process and young people informed the development and direction of this work.

Chapter Four

***Heterophobia* (2014): Testing Live and Digital Applied Performance Practice with Young People**

Chapter Overview

This thesis states that applied performance with young people should be responsive to a contemporary youth culture and be young person led. For this to occur, new work must be tested with young people to inform future shaping of the practice. This chapter analyses the making and presenting of a pilot performance of *Heterophobia* with a company of young queer emerging artists and young audiences from a diversity of schools across Birmingham. Chapter Three argued, intermedial applied performance with young people should be routed in youth culture and suggested new work is created around young people's cultural references and hobbies. To achieve this, new work has to be tested at different stages of development with young people to evaluate their responses and engagement.

This process part of the practice-as-research project with young people confirmed the existence of a compulsory heterosexual culture in schools as evidenced in Chapter Two. It also demonstrated that the making process of *Heterophobia* temporarily disrupted their preconceived thinking about these issues. This chapter positions *Heterophobia* as a queer piece of applied work with young people but accepts there were limitations due to binary restrictions and begins to unpack some of the complexities of queering performance for/ with young people. Reactions by audiences to the work itself demonstrate that the young people preferred the 'live' elements of the performance, but also that it was the fusion with the digital which enhanced their engagement and made the new work feel relevant and current to them. *Heterophobia*, even in this initial 'working' iteration, confirms that digital technology represents a new aesthetic form in applied performance with young people, but this 2014 version of the piece also demonstrates that the new technology of Augmented Reality (AR) was not very popular with the young people and questions whether the use of a more

accessible tool that young people were familiar with such as social media would have been more effective.

Heterophobia (2014): A Queer Space

As part of this process, the opening fifteen minutes of the new work along with some of the pre-show interactive digital technology had previously been previewed at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre⁴ as part of a student festival with students aged sixteen to twenty -five years, followed by a question and answer session with the company. This preview interrogated how engaging the audience found the work at this stage of development. Observing whether the live audience participated with the AR, and this established an opportunity to receive feedback about the style and content of the work from a live audience. The feedback from the audience focused on the binary switch as being the key to empathetic responses. Following this, the piece went back into rehearsals and small changes were made to narrative and characters in response to the feedback. We continued to work with the binary switch of homosexuality and heterosexuality and the AR. *Heterophobia (2014)* was not an assessed part of the practice-as-research but a key part of the upgrade process and informed the making of *Heterophobia (2015)*. As well as testing form, it was also necessary to conduct quantitative research to investigate young people's current lived experiences of homophobic bullying at schools in Birmingham and whether intermedial applied performance could impact upon their attitudes and actions towards sexual identity.

*Heterophobia (2014)*⁵ was performed at The Patrick Centre, the studio theatre in the Birmingham Hippodrome. The urban musical fused live

⁴ The following link takes you to a short video edit of the fifteen minutes previewed at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre:

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=heterophobia+2014#id=1&vid=4ed62af97d14f038d9da6efc01352bb8&action=click>

⁵ A full video edit, of *Heterophobia (2014)* has been submitted with this practice, and a very short but an effective video edit of the piece can be seen at this link which evokes both the style and content of the pilot performance:

performance and digital technology, a hybrid of singing, break dance, spoken word set against a backdrop of video projection, graphics and animation and live VJing. In the pre-show, the young school audiences were invited to interrogate the performance space and were invited to participate in break dance, rap, using AR and interact with the performers in 'facilitator' role. The world of *Heterophobia* was a reimagined space, a gay world where homosexuality was the hegemonic normative sexual identity. The narrative woven together through interdisciplinary performance and a non-linear structure followed the struggle of the protagonist character, Ryan, trying to understand his heterosexual attraction for Alice and his own sexual identity faced with heterophobic bullying at school and online and an avoidance by his two mothers to discuss Ryan's identity, all resulting in an impact on Ryan's mental well-being.

I had situated *Heterophobia* in a theatre because I felt there was an issue with taking applied performance work into schools in a compulsory heterosexual environment where these hegemonic gender identities and heteronormativity is performed on a daily basis. As previously identified, homophobic bullying is endemic in Britain's schools, these power dynamics already exist in this formal education environment, so I needed to find an alternative space to reimagine a 'gay' world. I had also wanted to include high production values so we could effectively evaluate young people's opinions around performance aesthetics which is very difficult to do in a limited school space. I decided to start the work in a theatre to increase accessibility for young people into a theatre, keep production values high and adequately assess young people's opinions not only on aesthetics of the performance but also about being a theatre audience. One of the key defining factors of applied performance is that it occurs outside of traditional theatre venues. I had expected we would be taking *Heterophobia* (2015) into an urban warehouse venue in Digbeth or a cinema where we could focus on the digital aesthetics. However, the diverse groups of Birmingham based

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=heterophobia+2014&guccou=1#id=2&vid=e68c92a08cde49d7cb24642295dc7536&action=view>

young people who came to see *Heterophobia* (2014) wanted to be audience members in a theatre and the vast majority of them were also engaged in at least one art form as artists; ninety-nine percent stated that they enjoyed going to the theatre and surprisingly a higher percentage preferred the theatre to the cinema. The most common reason for this was because it was a 'live performance'. These young people clearly valued being members of a live audience. It is of course possible that they could not imagine how they might still be able to be a live audience in a performance in an alternative venue to a theatre which they may actually prefer without experiencing it. However, this project was to be led by the evaluation of young people and so it needed to remain within a theatre but I was interested how we could use the space to become more versatile and 'queer' in the 2015 production, to enable us to create a reimagined space and for a virtual space to be part of the live event.

This pilot project clearly identified that young people wanted to experience 'live' performance, but as we will go on to discuss later in this chapter, it was the digital aesthetic which enhanced their engagement and made it feel more relevant and current for them. It is important for building-based theatres to be available and prioritise socially engaged applied performance work for and with young people so that it can be visible and valued. This view is supported by Jackson (2007) who suggests applied performance needs to be assessed, discussed and available for all audiences as well as schools' audiences to ensure its artistic quality. Applied performance makers can experiment with using theatre spaces in innovative and versatile ways for young audiences to support their access, engagement, participation and connection to the work.

A Queer Making Strategy

The creation process of the piece relied on the impact that actual gender and sexual identities of the young emerging artists in the company had on the 'queering' of this new work. A queer strategy used in making this work was to select student / graduate performance artists for their youth, skill-base, gender, sexual orientation and self-defined queerness. The performers included actors, dancers, singers, beat boxers and spoken word

artists and were aged nineteen to twenty -five years. These young emerging artists were close in age, school experiences and online identities to the young people who would be engaging with the work. Race and ethnicity, class and disability were also considered so that the company was reflective of Birmingham and its diversity and so that sexuality and gender were intersecting with other areas of identity. The company was made up of self-identified homosexual, bisexual, queer, questioning, non-binary, gender fluid, pansexual and heterosexual performers as it was very important to have all perspectives for this piece of work; however, throughout the process a lot of space and time was given to the non-heterosexual performers' perspectives through lived experiences of homophobic bullying, discrimination and oppression.

All those who identified as homosexual during their school lives were subject to consistent bullying and ridiculing. Many had chosen not to 'come out' in fear of this bullying; young males who identified as heterosexual were also homophobically bullied because they 'appeared' gay for not demonstrating hegemonic masculinity because they sang, danced, wrote poetry or lived with a disability. All of the company had experienced or witnessed other young people being bullied at school due to perceived homosexuality or 'lack' of hegemonic masculinity. They described daily name calling, online bullying and physical assault. Many of the company talked about the consequent issues they had experienced with their mental health, issues of anxiety and non-attendance at school as a direct result of these behaviours. One young woman had grown up as a lesbian in Barbados where homosexuality is illegal and regulatory practices of compulsory heterosexuality are much worse than in the UK and regularly include sexual assault and murder. It was highly informative to hear all of the performers' youthful experiences of bullying, specifically cyberbullying of which I, personally, had no experience having grown up pre-social media. I started to view social media through their eyes as they would show me posts and links which demonstrated homophobia in extreme forms. These posts would never have appeared on my social media feeds and they helped me understand a younger person's online identity and experiences. This company of predominantly young, emerging artists reinforced that this concept of

'compulsory heterosexuality' or as they recognised it homophobic bullying existed in schools, further education colleges, universities and online. Their recent lived experiences informed the content of *Heterophobia*, in terms of the language used, the characters and their relationships, both the physical and online bullying Ryan endured and the physical assault.

The work was made queer by self-identified queer people including myself being part of this company (Figure 4.1) and making it 'queer'. Our own queer identities being reflected and influencing the work. As Campbell and Farrier assert, 'in thinking about *queer dramaturgies*, we would propose that, while they are, of course, about aesthetic composition and the narrative content of the work, they are also intricately bound up with the identity of the maker/s (self-identifying as queer)' (2016: 14).



Figure 4.1. *Heterophobia* (2014) a diverse, self-identified queer company of emerging artists creating queer intermedial applied performance with young people.

We spent a great deal of time discussing and reflecting on the material we were making (Figure 4.2) or the complex issues that it brought up around sexual identity, relationships and specifically around the role-reversed, homosexual world. These provocations often became a barrier in the devising process as the company would be submerged in complexities and this would prevent experimentation, practical problem solving and reflective practice. For example, the Pride celebrations in the performance

became a barrier; there was a lot of concern how this 'should' be a 'heterosexual' Pride if this were a reversed world or concerns how children were conceived in this 'homosexual' world. It was essential that we worked outside of the binary and by Pride remaining homosexual we were presenting a queer narrative and representations not reinforcing heterosexual ones. To break the rules was to disrupt and to disrupt was a queer action. These barriers were being constructed through a heterosexual normative lens and often by white, heterosexual male members of the company reinforcing the ideas of hegemony and compulsory heterosexuality which had prompted the piece to be made. Interestingly, these heterosexual males did not fit or had rejected hegemonic male status throughout their school lives and had been subjected to bullying or labelled 'gay' because of it. This process would often lead me to question and reflect after the rehearsal as any good practitioner should but also driven by my own self-doubt and vulnerability when confidently challenged. In this devising process, we were entering an uncomfortable and unfamiliar space and as a company, we were taking ourselves through a process of disruption and reimagining—the same process we would be asking our young audiences to go through. These young emerging performers had also recently been through a compulsory heterosexual school experience, they too saw the world through a heteronormative lens. My schooling experience was in the 1980s when Section 28 (1988) was in full force and thus impacted my own sense of identity and internalised homophobia. Although as a group and as individuals we were open to this disruption, it was still challenging and through observation and reflection, I would suggest most difficult for the hegemonic white, heterosexual males in the company. Their identity was shifting in this queer rehearsal space and as part of this queer company and this queer process, they were being asked to render their privileges and position in the group which they had become accustomed to throughout their lives.



Figure 4.2. *Heterophobia* (2014) devising process. A reflective discussion with the company.

The Lens of the Young Audience

A key aspect of *Heterophobia* in 2014 was to conduct research with the young people around issues of homophobic bullying, their arts engagement, and the use of digital technology to enhance engagement and to investigate whether performing this disruption of a compulsory heterosexual world was able to challenge preconceived thinking and change their attitudes. I conducted research with school audiences, of one hundred and forty-seven young people through pre-show and post-show questionnaires. The questionnaires designed for *Heterophobia* were used as a method of quantitative research and qualitative research. I asked questions that required a 'yes' or 'no' answer such as, 'are young people bullied for being gay?' This data could then be interpreted as statistics. However, the research also relied on qualitative data. I asked questions such as, 'why do you think young people are bullied for being gay?' (See Appendix A). I asked the young people questions immediately before and after the performance to

try and prevent any of the young people's opinions being influenced by peers, teachers or a facilitator asking them these questions in person.

I asked the young people before watching *Heterophobia* (2014) if young people were bullied for being gay, and ninety-five percent said yes, young people were bullied for being gay and the most common place for this to happen was at school supporting the previously discussed findings of *The School Reports* in 2007, 2012 and 2017, *The Teacher's Reports* in 2009 and 2014, and METRO's *Youth Chances Survey* (2014). Bullying at school was closely followed by online and the most common answers for the causes of this homophobic bullying were because people thought it was 'wrong' because of 'fear' and because 'they [homosexuals] are different'.

The majority of the young audiences stated immediately after seeing *Heterophobia* (2014) that it made them feel differently about people being bullied for their sexuality. Most common answers were around now being able to 'relate' and 'understand' and that the performance had made them 'think'. Although my research findings suggested a shift in thinking had occurred in the majority of the young people and that the performance had impacted on this change, I was unable to measure when and how this change had happened. I gave the young people separate pre- show and post- show research questionnaire cards which they submitted as soon as they filled them in. I was keen for them not to go back and change anything in the pre-show questionnaires; however, this didn't support observing change in individual's thinking unless they had clearly identifiable writing; exemplified by one young person who stated that s/he thought homophobic bullying happened in schools, online, in the street and other 'because being gay is wrong' and on the post-show research questionnaire ticked that the performance had made her / him think differently about people being bullied because of their sexuality because 'I am now more accepting to it but I still think it's wrong.' Interestingly, this young person ticked that s/he/they enjoyed every aspect of *Heterophobia* other than the interactive game show entitled *Who Wants to be a Minority?* a short section in the performance where the audiences were invited to vote on answers to questions based on the Stonewall (2012) Survey about LGBTQ+ issues. I realised that although there had been a change in thinking, I didn't know when this change of

thinking had occurred, whether the change in thinking was sustained, whether post show digital activities had a further impact on this change and whether changes in preconceived thinking would have any impact on the individual's behaviour. These were research questions I would need to formulate for *Heterophobia* 2015.

Once collating the research, I also became aware that I had not accounted for those young people who identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or Questioning when asking whether their opinions around issues of sexuality had changed. There are ethical and safeguarding considerations in asking the young audiences about their sexual identities and through the process of making *Heterophobia* it became very apparent that no young person should have to 'come out'. This is not something young people who identify as heterosexual have to experience. This was an issue we had discussed at great length during the devising process. The LGBTQ+ members of the company had discussed their apprehension about 'coming out' as homosexual to parents, family and friends. They reflected on how difficult it was to discuss something so personal for them whilst being in fear of the reactions they would encounter. Young heterosexual people are not required to confirm their heterosexual identity with family and friends. This further supports a culture of compulsory heterosexuality, individuals are expected to be heterosexual unless they announce they are homosexual, or it is suspected otherwise. For the purpose of this research project, further information about each individual young person's identity in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, religious and racial identity could be informative in investigating a culture of compulsory heterosexuality amongst young people in schools. I had decided to use questionnaires rather than a facilitator asking questions so that participants were not concerned with offending anyone since questionnaires were not personal and they were anonymous. However, this form of research can also be limited by young people trying to give the 'correct' answer rather than a genuine response to these designed questions. The research was conducted with a diversity of schools and young people across Birmingham, the results of the research demonstrated evidence by vast majorities and I wouldn't have expected all of the young people to have responded in what they thought to be the 'correct'

way. Questionnaires were filled in individually, immediately before and after the performance so that there was no time for views to be swayed by others. I was also able to observe young people's behaviour during performances and the visible engagement seemed fairly reflective of the research questionnaire results and comments.

In 2014, I became aware that I hadn't conducted any research with teachers as I had wanted to focus on young people. However, when talking to different teachers before and after the performances from a diversity of Birmingham-based schools, I realised this information was also essential in understanding and attempting to challenge the current existence of compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic bullying in schools. Research was conducted with teachers in *Heterophobia* (2015).

Queering the Binary Switch

Heterophobia presented the struggle of one young heterosexual male, Ryan, trying to 'come out' in a homosexual world, a binaristic sexuality switch of the privileged and oppressed. This reimagined world displaced the symbolic space of homophobia with the word 'heterophobia' and heterophobic actions. The significance of the reversed worlds of heterosexuality and homosexuality meant that young people who identified themselves as heterosexual could observe a young male being discriminated against for being 'straight' and therefore might be able to identify how it might feel to be a minority because of one's sexuality. The term 'straight' is used here as it is an accepted recognisable slang term that both heterosexuals and homosexuals use to identify heterosexuality and was used in the performances for this reason; however, the term offers a binary to the term 'bent', an offensive and unacceptable term often used to describe homosexuality. As previously discussed, the young people that *Heterophobia* was being made for, live in a society that promotes compulsory heterosexuality. They are encouraged to see the world through a heteronormative lens, and thus they recognise and understand heterosexuality. This is why the protagonist character, Ryan, needed to be heterosexual. It would be much more accessible for young people to see this reimagined gay world through Ryan's eyes, a young heterosexual boy than

to ask them to see it through a young gay male character's eyes. Society and schooling as previously discussed has not enabled young people to do this; even those that do not identify as heterosexual have only been offered a heterosexual lens by society, they haven't been offered alternative identities represented. I wanted to test if this binary switch, was able to disrupt young people's perceptions of a heterosexual world and would enable the young people to potentially empathise with Ryan for being heterophobically bullied without feeling their own identity was being threatened.

There are clear limitations to consider in using a binary switch to disrupt a binary. Can a binary switch ever disrupt a binary? Queer theorists understandably question binarized thinking around sexual and gender identities. However, *Heterophobia* needed to begin in a place of understanding for the young people, to take them on a journey and to attempt to disrupt these fixed views in the process. As Diana Fuss asserts,

Heterosexuality can never fully ignore the close psychical proximity of its terrifying (homo)sexual other, any more than homosexuality can entirely escape the equally insistent social pressures of (hetero) sexual conformity. Each is haunted by the other. (1991: 3)

In *Heterophobia*, the binary switch was a role reversal between homosexuality and heterosexuality. The majority of the reimagined society became the homosexual community and therefore, the dominant and powerful force as opposed to the minority, the heterosexual community which was therefore oppressed. It felt necessary to replace heteronormative power with homosexual power and LGBTQ+ oppression with heterosexual oppression for young people to fully comprehend complex issues of power, privilege, hegemony, oppression and marginalisation. To empathise with the discrimination they were witnessing, it seemed necessary for the young people to be able to identify themselves as the protagonist character and therefore the victim of hate crime. As previously claimed, the focus of the new work had to be who it is made for: this piece of work was made for young people who self-identified as heterosexual to challenge their thinking,

attitudes and behaviour around homosexuality and homophobic bullying in schools. I would argue to enable this change of thinking for young people at this age who had not previously been introduced to queer performance or narrative, the binary switch was essential. However, it was still possible to introduce a queer section, exemplified by the Pride section and use queer making methodology in the process.

A key concept of queer theory is that it attempts to exceed binary thinking, to challenge and disrupt binaries. Queer theory rejects a heteronormative view of identities and relationships. Queer theory dismisses the concept that relationships and partnerships only exist between the opposite sexes and that gender is defined into two genders, male and female, queer theory subverts the concept that biological sex is reflected by behaviours, dress and sexual preference. So, if the premise of *Heterophobia* was to use a binary switch this notion potentially prevents it from being a queer piece of work or using a queer lens and instead might contextualise the practice as part of a lesbian and gay canon of performance-based work around sexual orientation and gender identity. However, I would argue *Heterophobia* transcended lesbian and gay performance politics. *Heterophobia* moved into a realm of queer intermedial applied performance. The connection between lesbian / gay studies and queer theory is that both are concerned with the hegemonic position of heterosexuality. Lesbian and gay theories focus on oppression whereas queer theory concerns itself with the fixed notion of gender and sexuality, as Butler (1997: 47) refers to the 'heterosexual matrix'. Her theory explains a system of externally imposed rules where sex and gender are the known categories, the viewer, then, assumes a particular sexuality. *Heterophobia* was attempting to disrupt notions of gender and sexuality for its young audiences. The practice rejected the concept of a 'heterosexual matrix' but in order to do this it was necessary to engage the young audiences with the new work and to do this the binary switch was necessary as young people have only been introduced to binarized existence and thinking.

As previously discussed, the 'queer' self-identity and diverse identities of the company are inextricably linked with the 'queerness' of the work and also positioned *Heterophobia* into a 'queer' realm rather than a 'gay' one.

Alongside this was the process of making the work and the interdisciplinary nature of the work which situates *Heterophobia* into a queer context rather than a gay one. I chose to create an intermedial performance that would not only mix digital and live performance but also fuse different performance styles that were current and popular with young people to tell this story and investigate the aesthetic preference of the young audiences attending *Heterophobia* 2014. These art forms included acting, singing, music, street dance, break dance, rap, beat box and spoken word. I labelled this work as an urban musical to engage young people and teachers (as previously discussed the term 'applied performance' is not accessible to those outside academia or practice). These different art forms were combined with the use of digital technology and then they were merged into one another. They led the narrative in as Lehman (2006) labelled a 'postdramatic' form; Lehman's postmodern development of performance theory is a dramaturgical approach which does not focus on the dramatic text but on a performative aesthetic. Lehman focuses on semiotics, space, aesthetics, the integration of media into performance and the discourse between the performer and the audience rather than the text. Similarly, this postdramatic and hybrid nature of interdisciplinary practice was a 'queer' way of making performance. Campbell and Farrier claim the existence of an 'interdisciplinary character of queer performance' (2016: 16). The hybrid nature of *Heterophobia* was queer through its aesthetic composition, a fusion of a diversity of live art forms with digital technology, its integration of urban street arts and its juxtaposition of urban energy and it being a musical. Young queer performers chanting "We are here, we are queer, so everybody cheer." The direct address of the spoken word artists to the audience between scenes, breaking any linear narrative and providing social comment on what had just been witnessed by the spectators, all contribute to making the work queer as opposed to gay. Campbell and Farrier argue

Queer modes of performance often challenge this ideological assumption in ways that they structure the work...in compositional strategies such as metatheatricity / Brechtian distancing / multiple role-playing or direct address to the audience. (2016: 16)

As David Halperin, who refuses to define queer, states, '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' (1995: 62).

As previously discussed, queer tends to focus on actions to define identity. Definitions of queer theory are challenging, they reflect the concept of the critical theory, they are fluid, constantly shifting and in a state of flux. Queer rejects a fixed viewpoint; therefore, to state a piece of work is not queer because it is working within binaries would be a fixed viewpoint and contradict the concept of queer. In *Heterophobia*, the performers were purposefully 'performing' queer as their actions were purposefully demonstrating non-heterosexuality, the majority of both performers and characters were non-heterosexual and as suggested by Butler (1990: 203) we were rejecting a culture of 'compulsory heterosexuality' and presenting or performing a re-imagined gay world which are queer actions even though we were only reversing the agencies of power and oppression which may not be considered queer. Alice, Ryan's love interest stood as a queer representation as her sexuality continually shifted throughout the piece; she had feelings for both Bella and Ryan and physically acted upon both. Her character also demonstrated a 'deliberate uncertainty' and resistance to normativity (Greer, 2011: 72) which as previously discussed could be the future space for anti-homophobic performance for young people. There was friction between the performer's actual sexuality, her performative sexuality which also shifted and changed and how the audience perceived her different sexual identities or fluid sexuality in a reversed world. Normative sexuality was denaturalised, and Alice's action disrupted perceptions of both heterosexuality and homosexuality. These actions were queer and specifically queered the binary switch. Through this finding in *Heterophobia* (2014) it became clear Alice's character would become a queer focus for *Heterophobia* (2015) rather than a queer prop for Ryan's character as it felt in 2014.

A second key aspect of queer is disruption. Definitions of 'disrupt' are to confuse, interfere, to interrupt fixed thinking and turn it on its head which is what *Heterophobia* did for young people, and thus it represents a queer activity. During *Heterophobia* (2014) I sat behind a disengaged young male

who shouted out amongst a silent, engaged auditorium 'gay!' His friends either side turned around to look at him confused and one whispered 'he's not gay' because of course, the protagonist character was heterosexual. This demonstrated a 'disruption' of this young person's concept of heteronormativity. He expected the minority character to be 'gay'. He quickly corrected his mistake and shouted out 'straight', yet again, his friends turned quickly to look at him. In this binary reversal, if he was shouting out 'straight' as an insult he must be the binary opposite to 'straight', he must therefore be occupying a non-heterosexual space. He was confused, he sat silently for the rest of the performance, he had to reflect on the position of his own identity in relation to other queer identities which were being played out in front of him. His heteronormative world and homophobic jibes had temporarily been disrupted.

In *Heterophobia* (2014) there was a pre-filmed news report which Ryan watched on the television with his two mothers. The television was projected onto the screen and the news report was read by Joanne Malin, a well-known Midlands News presenter and journalist. This was an attempt to authenticate the piece by casting Joanne Malin, a recognisable face and name from the television and to put the situation into terms that an audience who predominantly identified as heterosexual may be able to identify with. The news report was about a heterosexual couple campaigning for heterosexual rights and equality for heterosexuals, including different sex marriage. The provocation offered to the young audiences was how would you feel if you were not entitled to the same rights as others because you were heterosexual? The weekend before *Heterophobia* (2014) was performed, same-sex marriage was legalised in the UK, 'homosexuality' and 'homophobia' were very topical issues the week of the performance which resulted in a lot of media interest in our work.⁶ In theory, the legislation of same-sex marriage was progress as same sex couples now would be able to have the same legal rights, social benefits and privileges as heterosexual couples such as unlimited access to a partner when she, he or they are

⁶ Local ITV new coverage <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2014-04-03/youngsters-tackle-sexuality-preconceptions/> which previews and discusses *Heterophobia* in light of this new legislation.

hospitalised or to make decisions about his/her/their health care when he/she/they cannot. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 did not provide complete equality however, for instance, pension inheritance rights are fewer for same-sex couples. Imposing the patriarchal history, culture and values of marriage on homosexuality makes 'other' seem less different and less threatening, more normative within heterosexual boundaries. Civil partnership exists as a democratic other. It represents a queer alternative to the patriarchal institution of marriage which should be open and equal to all (Tatchell, 2016) Civil partnership disrupts compulsory heterosexuality for the queer community. In February 2017, a heterosexual couple were denied access to a civil partnership as they were an opposite sex couple. The couple campaigned against this decision claiming this was discriminatory. This genuine campaign, three years after *Heterophobia* (2014) felt reminiscent of the *Heterophobia* news report which was visually updated and filmed again with Joanne Malin for *Heterophobia* (2015). It is interesting how much media coverage the heterosexual couple's campaign for a civil partnership received, possibly because it is a case of discrimination for privileged heterosexuals as opposed to oppressed homosexuals. The media presents this story underpinned with the question, how can this heterosexual couple not be entitled to a civil partnership if homosexuals are and homosexuals are now entitled to marriage too? The feminist equality argument made by the academic couple Rebecca Steinfield and Charles Keidan (2018) is valid, they are looking for a partnership without 'patriarchal baggage'. It could be argued, for legislation to allow this to happen would move heterosexual partnership into a queer realm which is threatening to a patriarchal society. It would remove the patriarchal framework of marriage and offer an alternative built on equality. Although, the news report in *Heterophobia* asking for equality for heterosexuals and heterosexual marriage was again a binary switch and therefore working within binaries. The argument the practice was making; however, was a queer one. In terms of marriage rights for heterosexuals and homosexuals alike, it could be argued society would benefit from new queer alternative inclusive and tailor-made frameworks. Rather than be reliant on existing patriarchal values, these queer frameworks could allow for our many different types of

partnerships and families which now exist in our society and which challenge a culture of compulsory heterosexuality.

Although *Heterophobia* (2014) was limited by binary restrictions, the binary switch was an essential element of engaging young people in a current compulsory heterosexual culture, and I situate the work in a queer context as ‘what makes a dramaturgy queer is complex and contingent, reliant on the interrelationship between makers, venues, processes and audiences’ (Campbell and Farrier, 2016: 2). We need to investigate not only what makes a piece of work queer but what makes a piece queer for a young audience? In *Heterophobia* (2015), I spent further time focusing on and developing the specific live queer Pride section following what was learnt through *Heterophobia* (2014) and questioning the queer aesthetic potential of digital aspects of the performance. Both will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Using Intermediality in Applied Performance with Young People

This work in part responded to Shaughnessy’s (2012: 159) call for the use of digital technology in applied performance and Alrutz’s (2013: 44) framing of digital storytelling as an applied theatre praxis which could change the way in which we both represent and engage young people in society as discussed in Chapter Three and to test whether digital technology could provide a new aesthetic for applied performance with young people. In 2014, I used a variety of digital technologies and media, including Quick Response (QR) codes linking to short promo films made for the piece, Augmented Reality (AR) and video projections. To make *Heterophobia* feel relevant and current to young people and to construct a familiar space within a theatre for them, I also relied heavily on urban street art forms. These art forms in *Heterophobia* (2014) were performance-based, including breakdance, spoken word, MC, rap and beat boxing. In the pre-show of *Heterophobia* (2014), the young people were encouraged to interact with these street performance forms such as break dance and beat boxing and they could also interact with new forms of digital technology such as AR, which augments the real world through added virtual information and graphics. Research suggests this was the first time AR had been used in a theatre

performance. AR triggers were projected on to the set in the pre-show, (Figure 4.3) on mac computers around the space and on the individual programmes. These triggers were linked to film trailers, films revealing the process of making the piece and statistics from the Youth Chances and Stonewall Reports. The young people could download an App on their smart phones or IPads to receive extra layers of information, subtext and insights into how we devised the work.



Figure 4.3 AR triggers on set, an actor placing a phone over the trigger to reveal a video of the rehearsal process.

The young people in the pre-show were much more engaged with the live performance than the digital technology as can be observed in this Vox-pop video ⁷ where you can see a majority of young people crowding around the live dancers in comparison to one young person interested in the AR technology. The young people in the Vox Pop at the end of the video also confirm their interest in *Heterophobia* being three of the dancers from Antic's

⁷

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=heterophobia+2014#id=5&vid=b6320d01cb112102f3f7bde78fea6bcb&action=view>

Dance Crew, a Birmingham based Dance Crew who were finalists on Sky's *Got to Dance* were in the performance. They demonstrated that the dancers being 'known' and on 'television' was significant for them and clearly excited them and increased their engagement with this live performance. Potentially these young people's interest in the three young males was heterosexual. However, these young males were playing queer characters in queer relationships with each other in *Heterophobia*.

One key aspect of both versions of *Heterophobia* was to interrogate the role of aesthetics in applied performance for young people. All of the art forms in this piece were enjoyed by the vast majority of young people who all indicated that they were engaged with this performance. In *Heterophobia* (2014) acting, singing, dancing, music and spoken word scored the highest results by the young audiences across the performances (see Appendix A). Live elements of the performance scored higher than digital, exemplified by ninety-eight percent enjoyment of dance compared to eighty-nine percent enjoyment of video and projection. The reason the majority of young people gave for their preference of live over digital was its 'liveness'. This could give us the answer to Helen Nicholson's question, 'I have kept asking myself if, and why, theatre matters to young people, even in this mediatised world' (2011: 212). I am interested in the intersection and fusing of live and digital performance made with young people and the opportunities virtual spaces give performance makers to enable the live performance to be reflective of young lives, learning styles and cultural production. In *Heterophobia* (2014), when I asked the young people whether the digital technology made the production better, eighty-six percent confirmed that it did. Many suggested they liked the environmental projections so that they immediately knew where a scene was taking place. These projections made the performance more 'exciting', added 'effect' and 'action', made it more 'real' and 'connected with young people' (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Therefore, this research suggests that whilst the young people found the live elements of the performance more engaging than the digital technology, it was a combination of the two which enhanced their engagement to enable a challenge in their

preconceived thinking around issues of sexuality.⁸ These young people were still looking for a shared live experience which wasn't only virtual, but the virtual aspects made it feel relevant and current for them. It felt like an experience made for them, removing barriers to access the work and shifting the focus from the subject of homophobia although this was integral to every element of the performance. This research supports Shaughnessy's view that, 'pedagogically technology can operate only at a basic and superficial level if it is divorced from the social and interpersonal contexts which frame and shape our everyday realities' (2012: 160).



Figure 4.4. *Heterophobia* (2014) characters standing waiting for a bus with projected backdrop of Birmingham urban city scape with familiar Birmingham Big Wheel landmark and a bus stop to give the scene a specific location.

⁸ See also Phillips (2016)



Figure 4.5. *Heterophobia* (2014) dancers in front of projected text / social media bubbles and hash tags reflecting what the characters were texting and filming on their phones which young people watching *Heterophobia* (2014) stated added to the excitement of the piece and made it feel current and relevant to their lives.

In *Heterophobia* (2014), as discussed earlier, I used AR; however, there were issues using this digital technology in a theatre. The audience members did not download the necessary apps before the performance and there was no open Wi-Fi network in the theatre, so we had to set up iPhones and iPads. There was also not sufficient technical support and time in the theatre and it was difficult to get the AR to work with theatrical lighting. I had been very focused on using a form of technology in the theatre for this practice-as-research project which had never been used before for this purpose, although it has been since and AR and VR (Virtual Reality) are starting to gather momentum as digital tools for performance. Round Midnight (2020) describe themselves as a 'Birmingham based theatre in education company' who have developed a programme entitled *Virtual Decisions* which delivers real life experiences for young people through VR. The student and graduate performers and the students who had engaged with the first preview of the work at The Birmingham REP all thought the AR was exciting, but they were all over eighteen. The young people aged

thirteen to eighteen did not seem either excited or engaged by this new technology. This demonstrated how specific you need to be in engaging with youth culture and the digital technology different age groups are utilising. I had thought a preview to eighteen to twenty-five- year olds would give me the necessary information I needed to develop the piece for thirteen to eighteen-year olds, but it didn't. However, the young people had identified they did want the digital to be part of the experience and had enhanced their engagement so had become an important aesthetic of this applied performance piece for them but not necessarily a participatory aesthetic as I had intended. Given those hurdles and responses, I questioned why we were really using the AR rather than just showing the films of the process and the statistics. I realised that I was trying to overuse technology in *Heterophobia* (2014) making it more complicated than was necessary. I had focused on trying to use digital technology in an innovative way which was new for the young people in the audience, rather than focus on the dramaturgical needs of the production and the needs of the audience / participants. I should have used technology that the young people could access on their phones and could easily understand and use to interact with the live performance, which is what I went on to do in *Heterophobia* (2015).

When talking to a group of second-year undergraduate students, I realised that Facebook had existed throughout their lifetimes; they had not known a society before social media, the internet or mobile smartphones. New media and digital technology are therefore essential parts of these young lives, and they expect social media to be a functional part of all of their experiences. I realised that I needed to use interactive digital technology that young people were already engaged with and that social media and Facebook may be a simple and accessible way of doing this in *Heterophobia* (2015). I wondered whether social media could offer the digital, participatory aesthetic in applied performance with young people that I was looking for. As Patrick Lonergan states 'social media websites: they are spaces in which people perform identities' (2016: 2). This also led me to wonder whether social media, in this case Facebook, could not only offer a participatory digital aesthetic but also a queer aesthetic, a space where both the characters in *Heterophobia* and the young people watching and participating

could 'perform' their identities outside of the binary restrictions of live performance and 'real' life. Social media could potentially offer the reimagined space to perform gender and sexual identities instigated by live performance. This would be interrogated through *Heterophobia* (2015) and analysed in Chapter Five.

Intermediality offered me the opportunity to experiment with current art forms and play with the style and structure of the work whilst fusing art and technology. The young people responded very well to the live urban street art forms such as break dance, MC and beat boxing and I wondered whether these forms could be extended in *Heterophobia* (2015) as a participatory aesthetic of the work and whether we could include other forms such as skateboarding, BMXing and graffiti art. Andelina Ong (2018) has since completed a PhD thesis entitled *Compassionate Mobilities: Towards a Theory for Negotiated Living using Urban Arts (parkour, art du déplacement, breakin'/breakdancing and graffiti)* positioning urban street arts as an applied performance praxis with young people and an opportunity for placemaking with hard to reach and marginalised young people in Singapore. Listening to Ong talk about her work in 2014 following *Heterophobia* (2014) inspired me to consider the continued and developed use of these street art forms in aiding physical participation by young people and breaking down hegemonic gendered stereotypes and reimagining place and space for young people. Similarly, this interesting fusion of different disciplines and use of space would build on the 'queer' making of the piece.

Similarly, to applied work, queer performance tends to 'pop-up' outside of mainstream venues, frequently, in lesbian and gay bars, cabaret clubs or fringe venues. What makes a queer performative space for young people? Queer applied performance with young people is a new discourse which presents new questions and lines of enquiry. What is a queer aesthetic for applied performance work with young people? What queer space does virtual worlds occupy for queer young people? Does the digital dimension of live work with young people offer a safe queer space where young artists and audiences might meet in queer performance? These were questions investigated through *Heterophobia* (2015).

Conclusion

The queer fusion of live performance and digital technology in a pilot piece of practice, *Heterophobia* (2014), an intermedial applied performance for young people, enhanced their engagement and resulted in a shift of thinking around issues of homosexuality and homophobia in schools and online. Young people greatly appreciated the ‘live’ elements of the performance, but it was the combination of live and digital that made the performance an effective tool for engagement. I would conclude that aesthetics are important to young people and in this project urban street arts and digital technology were considered current and relevant forms by the young audiences. Digital technology is ever evolving, as is young people’s use of it. How do we innovatively integrate combinations of art forms and digital technology and devices that young people are currently using into new work? How do building-based theatres which are looking to diversify and develop audiences especially amongst young people, become more flexible and versatile to collaborate with companies and accommodate and fully understand this work? This chapter has positioned *Heterophobia* as a queer piece of applied performance work with young people but accepted there were limitations. Chapter Five will explore the developments made in *Heterophobia* (2015) informed by this pilot practice and young people’s evaluation of it and explore whether digital technology, social media and urban street art forms offer new immersive aesthetics for applied performance with young people. The following chapter will also investigate how and whether social media can also offer a ‘queer’ as well as digital participatory aesthetic for applied performance with young people.

Chapter Five

Developing a Queer Aesthetic with Young People

Chapter Overview

Digital technology and urban street art forms currently offer applied performance with young people new immersive and participatory queer aesthetics. Drawing on the assessed PhD practice of *Heterophobia* (2015), this chapter suggests the virtual can operate outside of binary thinking and digital technology can offer an ever-evolving, reimagined, virtual, queer performative space for practice with young people that is not confined by fixed hegemonic gender or sexual identities and can disrupt heteronormative narrative.

Informed by the research with young people in the previous year, *Heterophobia* (2015),⁹ moved beyond the previous practice by developing and testing a queer aesthetic to inform future live queer performance making with and for young people. This included a queer company making the work with queer intention, queer representations and narrative, fusing and juxtaposing live and digital forms in a non-linear 'queer' fashion and the making of 'Pride', a specific live queer section. This practice also experimented with digital technology to inform future digital queer applied performance making with young people. The work interrogated the space where the queer, live and digital aesthetics met whilst exploring issues of young sexuality and mental health and this chapter sites social media as this intersection.

A Queer Aesthetic

In 2015, I was interested in developing and testing a specific 'queer' part of the live performance which worked outside of binaries which was realised in part, through developing the Pride celebrations. It stepped outside of the binary switch as we were celebrating 'Gay' Pride not 'Straight' Pride. I

⁹ This thesis has been submitted with a full video edit of *Heterophobia* (2015); however, a short video edit of the piece can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwdKJNIQXoc>

attempted to represent young queer cultural references such as Lady Gaga and Meghan Trainor in *Heterophobia* (2015). As queer is non-definable it is challenging to evidence what makes these artists queer or the content of their work queer for young people, but I will attempt to unpack this further. I used a juxtaposition of art forms such as scooters, glow sticks, flashing LED lights and break dance graffiti. The performance took place in a theatre as the young people in 2014 had stated they wanted to be audiences in a theatre. However, the space was flexible and versatile. When the young people entered there were no seats, instead they had the opportunity to explore the space which used skateboard ramps for levels and screens were placed around the space with live VJing and DJing. In addition, aerial silks hung from the rig in preparation for the Pride aerial sequence and LED floor lights and haze were positioned around the space to give the effect of laser lighting. Borrowing from both a club aesthetic and an urban skate park aesthetic, the space became a fusion of a nightclub and an urban indoor skate park, a space-within-a-space, a hybrid re-imagined vibrant pop-up space. Campbell and Farrier talk of queer performance space as a 'more fluid, subcultural space of the club or live art venue' (2016: 14) with 'fewer stringent 'rules' perhaps, than in the average western theatre auditorium' (2016: 14). This alternative space, oppositional to the conventional theatre space was able to defy normative expectations. The temporal performative space and the fusion and juxtaposition of form and content embodied queer. We were creating an alternative world representing aesthetics from other cultural spaces which occupy the margins of mainstream culture. The young people could participate in or observe street art forms, graffiti, Hip hop and break dance, beat box and emceeing, skating on boards or scooters in the pre-show section, and these participatory elements and energy within the space 'highlight[ed] the 'liveness' of the event' (2016: 14). We felt like we were doing theatre 'in a queer way' (2016: 15) with young people, in a 'different' way which fused form, had queer intention, offered queer space, representations, content, intensifying the 'liveness' of the event by the use of digital and reimagining identities and alternative ways of being in the world. While the queer emerging artists talked about this work being the 'best' they had ever been part of, seen, conceived of, and how they wished they could

have experienced something like this when they were younger, the couple of heterosexual white males involved consistently commented on the need for more focus on the narrative and expressed their concerns about the work not being in a linear structure so it didn't make sense (to them). As with the ever intangible, indefinable notion of queer, the label 'queer' is derived by an energy, a fusion of environment, the interdisciplinary form and a sense of feeling by an audience member. It could be argued that this style is reflective of much of current live / performance art. I would argue whether work is queer or not then lies firstly, in whether there is a queer intention in the making born of the lived experience of the queer performance maker(s) and queer artist(s) and secondly, in the experience of the queer audience member / participant. As Campbell and Farrier assert when writing about queer aesthetics,

The performance of these key moments allowed for what felt like a queerly transitory suspension of the regular rules of sociality. For both of us this produced a profound recognition: this small suspension meant that we could contemplate other ways of being in the world, play out non-normative identities and imagine, rehearse and form new ways of expressing an experience of the world. Powerfully, this allowed us to refuse a position that maintained that the world outside this rare moment was somehow set, fixed and given. (2016: 3)

Heterophobia sought to communicate its young queer identity through the young queer company. This included costumes which were designed to be androgynous / non binary school uniforms comprised of skinny jeans and white t-shirts and a tie, accessorised with hoodies, cardigans, denim, leather and bright coloured dyed hair, scarves and hats, selected by each artist to queer their character and ensure they were authentically youthful. The ways in which the young queer artists consumed music and culture, occupied virtual space and an intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability were all part of the queer aesthetic of this new piece of work and led by these young predominantly queer artists in the making process. The young artists embodied queer and had a desire to communicate queerness

and their queer identities through the performance to the young audiences. Queer work for consenting adults is likely to have had further sensual, sexual, embodied representation and reference than would be age appropriate for a young audience. As with any work with young people, safeguarding is a priority and queer work needs to be age appropriate. I would argue the focus for queer work with / for young people could be the queer provocation of a shifting identity and the ability to reimagine their identities and alternative ways of existing in society.

Following the pre-show section, young people were invited to move their own stool into the various seated areas signposted by bright yellow and black tape associated with rave culture in the 1990s with a glow stick taped under each individual stool. As the Pride celebrations began, there was an announcement made in a black out, welcoming the audience to Pride a voice resonant of the X Factor voice artist, the audience were invited to “wave their glow sticks in the air, like they just don’t care,” which the young people immediately responded to. Interestingly, in the pre-show, in the foyer at mac Birmingham a few of the performers were in role, around the public spaces whilst the young people were waiting to go into the theatre. This included Alice and her girlfriend, Bella, who would kiss each other and put their arms around one another. I observed that this was always met with a noticeable reaction from the young people who weren’t aware at this point that these were characters from the performance they were about to watch. They would point, shout out and they would make noises which suggested they were shocked and, in some cases, demonstrated that they were disgusted by what they were seeing reinforcing their culture of compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic behaviour which was never met with any intervention from other students, teachers or people attending the arts centre. This behaviour always occurred in groups. Twenty minutes later, during the Pride scenes where Bella and Alice would kiss again this time via a picture posted on the live Facebook feed, the young people were standing, dancing, cheering, filming, waving glow sticks and interacting with the live Facebook page, this became acceptable and celebrated behaviour in this reimagined queer space. As previously noted, Alice stands as the queer character in *Heterophobia* due to her uncertainty about her sexual identity and by acting on both attractions

towards both Bella and Ryan. She is neither heterosexual or homosexual and therefore could fall into the 'Q' queer or questioning category of LGBTQ+. Queer because her sexual identity does not appear to be fixed and her actions that represent her sexual identity are fluid and changing, she has not decided that she is bi-sexual and is existing outside of the heteronormative paradigm. She stands for 'difference' and 'other'. In *Heterophobia* (2015) her character and stage time was developed and increased to avoid her becoming a prop for Ryan's character and to ensure that she stood as a queer representation and the audience were presented with the complexities and confusions she faced around her own identity and her own questioning of her attraction to both Bella and Ryan.

The Pride section commenced with a dance graffiti section, two dancers in full black body suits entered the space in a blackout on scooters with two stereotypically pink female forms made from LED lights on one side of their body and two blue male forms on the alternative side of the body. These forms did not have genitalia, but the stereotypical pink and blue colours along with a body wearing a skirt / dress and a body not wearing a skirt / dress were semiotics for the audience of gendered representation of two females and two males as the dancers stood side by side offering an image of same sex partnerships. The LED imagery also represented the dancers being both female and male, non-binary, not a specific, fixed gender identity, in an attempt to challenge normative gender identity. Dance graffiti is a very new form and concept, in 2015 rarely used. The speed of the movement of the dancers' bodies dancing and riding on scooters, animated the LED lighting attached to them in a form which is reminiscent of graffiti art. As this light art was playing with gender form and semiotics in an urban, youthful context it enabled a queer aesthetic to form. This dance graffiti sequence was followed by a group of 'masculine' dancers who included the two well-known dancers from Antics Dance Crew who appeared as finalists in Sky's *Got to Dance*, dancing together in t-shirts and jeans to the popular track by Meghan Trainor, "All About That Bass" in an attempt to challenge gender stereotypes, hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality. The lyrics they danced to, began:

Yeah, it's pretty clear, I ain't no size two
 But I can shake it, shake it like I'm supposed to do
 'Cause I got that boom boom that all the boys chase
 All the right junk in all the right places. (Trainor, 2014)

The young people sang along and cheered at the male dancers. This was popular music that they enjoyed. I would assume they had previously associated the piece of music and its content as being 'feminine' because of the references to size, the female body, magazines, what boys 'like', Barbie dolls and a female voice singing the lyrics. However, the young audiences enjoyed watching these popular male dancers dance to this piece of music and identify with the lyrics. These males were no longer demonstrating hegemonic masculinity or heterosexuality, but they were still popular, if 'feminizing' or 'queering' these males had associations with homosexuality this appeared to be acceptable and enjoyable, not something to be jeered at and abused. In this reimagined, pop-up gay world, for this moment in time in each performance the image of hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality were being disrupted and a queer moment of performance offered and accepted by these young audiences.

This sequence was followed by the appearance of Lady Gaga at Pride in a leather cat suit, accompanied by male and female dancers who all wore white transparent fabric draped over them as a dress enhancing the queer imagery. The dancers' costumes further challenged hegemonic masculinity as the strong masculine dancers were wearing costume which appeared as dresses but as they were transparent you could see their male, muscular torsos through the material. They were also accompanied by one of the performers who played one of the mothers performing on aerial silks above the audience (Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1 Lady Gaga performing, dancers performing wearing uniformed transparent fabric and the aerial artist performing who also played one of Ryan's Mothers. This piece of aerial work was specifically made and choreographed for this song and *Heterophobia* (2015), focusing on themes of gender and sexuality identity and representation.

As a queer, feminist performance maker, I wanted to ensure that the mother characters played by slightly older female performers weren't only included in this new piece of work as Ryan's parents looking to challenge gender and sexuality stereotypes and queer the role of mother as depicted in this image (Figure 5.2). They needed to have a further impact on the piece as artists, one of the performers is a spoken word artist and the other is an aerial silks artist, they were cast for these skill bases which were utilized within the interdisciplinary work. I actively sought an aerial artist as the aerial work felt fitting for a queer Gaga performance, reminiscent of a queer cabaret club or the artist, Pink's live concerts which have a queer subtext. Aerial silks as an art form is sensory by the nature of silks and the live, entangled spectacle of silks wrapped around the body. As an audience member, I have always identified and received aerial silks and aerial arts to be queer, emerging from a queer circus, which has historically celebrated 'difference' and 'other'. The suspension of the body from the rig in aerial silks rather than from the floor

enhanced the reimagined reversed world of *Heterophobia*. The queerness was enhanced by the immersive use of the space and the disruption of normative limitations of the body to only explore vertical space. Aerial work isn't fixed, it is fluid and offers an audience an alternative perspective of space and performance. Aerial silks are still a fairly new art form emerging from a combination of circus, cabaret and dance with critical and queer potential but an absence of scholarly discourse. As an art form, aerial silks performance takes a substantial amount of upper body strength further contradicting gender stereotypes. The aerial silks and silk projection cloths effectively juxtaposed the hard, metal scaffold structure of the set. The sensory aesthetics of the aerial silk dance sections were enhanced by lighting and haze.



Figure 5.2 one of Ryan's mothers and aerial artist suspended in sensory aerial silks above the audience.

In using Lady Gaga (Figure 5.3) in the performance, I was looking to offer the young audiences a queer representation and role model, a cultural reference who actively disrupts gender and sexuality norms. Lady Gaga embodies this queer role model, although part of popular culture. Gaga

stands for queer politics, by her ever-shifting image which has included wearing raw meat as a costume, wearing pyrotechnics attached to her breasts, entering a performance via a coffin or dressing in drag and impersonating her own make-believe male partner at a televised video music awards event.



Figure 5.3 Artist performing as Lady Gaga in *Heterophobia* (2015)

Gaga is a cutting-edge artist who takes risks in her performance, resists definitions and categorisations. Lady Gaga follows suit of other popular queer artists such as the aforementioned Pink, Gwen Stefani, Madonna, Cher and Yoko Ono. Gaga (2011) reaffirms her queer political stance in the lyrics of “Born this Way” which the artist playing Gaga sang in *Heterophobia*, the lyrics are,

Don't be a drag, just be a queen
Whether you're broke or evergreen
You're black, white, beige, chola descent
You're Lebanese, you're orient
Whether life's disabilities

Left you outcast, bullied, or teased
 Rejoice and love yourself today
 'cause baby you were born this way

No matter gay, straight, or bi,
 Lesbian, transgendered life,
 I'm on the right track baby,
 I was born to survive.
 No matter black, white or beige
 Chola or orient made,
 I'm on the right track baby,
 I was born to be brave.
 (Lady Gaga, 2011)

Interestingly, in a recent mainstream BBC talent show, *Let it Shine*, a boy band *Iron Sun* performed Lady Gaga's "Born this Way" on 18th February 2017, all the LGBTQ+ lyrics were omitted including 'don't be a drag, just be a queen' and 'no matter gay, straight, or bi, Lesbian, transgendered life'. The BBC stated that all songs are cut for time reasons. Many LGBTQ+ people protested that they had taken away the power and the meaning of the song. This act by the BBC reinforced a very clear message to young people that these lyrics they are familiar with are not appropriate to be aired to a family audience, reinforcing the argument that we live in a society which believes in hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality.

J. Jack Halberstam asserts that Lady Gaga represents 'a new world disorder, and a loud voice for different arrangements of gender, sexuality, visibility and desire' (2012: xii) which Halberstam labels 'gaga feminism' in their (pronoun) book of the same title. Halberstam uses 'the meteoric rise to fame of Lady Gaga to hint at emerging formulations of a gender politics for a new generation' (2012: xiii). My argument is built on the foundations of Halberstam's claim, suggesting that developing a queer aesthetic for / with young people in applied performance could offer a transformed gender politics for the next generation.

Lady Gaga's music is essentially pop which is why it is accessible and enjoyed by the majority of young people; however, both Gaga and her performance could be considered queer because of the controversial costumes she wears and the props she uses, the style of her performance, how she plays with reality, the content of her songs, the semiotics that she uses and the confusion she has created within the media around her gender identity and sexual orientation. There has been a lot of speculation around whether Gaga is a lesbian, whether she is transgender or a hermaphrodite. None of these claims have impacted her popularity with young people as they often have with other popular culture artists. Often, these artists then become popular with a 'gay' audience whereas Lady Gaga is extremely popular with a queer audience but also transcends this to have a diverse fan base in terms of gender and sexuality identity and other demographics, another reason that the non-definable Lady Gaga stands for queer.

As Halberstam asserts 'when she performs in crazy costumes and with wild abandon, we have a sense of the new world that she opens up for young people in particular' (2012: 137). Young people appear to accept and engage with Lady Gaga which is why I used this current recognisable queer icon in *Heterophobia* (2015) to represent this important shift in gender politics. The young audiences sang along and filmed her performing, posting comments on the live Facebook pages and the research questionnaire such as 'Lady Gaga is slay!' Slay is an urban slang word used by young people in reference to succeeding in something amazing, it originates from the expression 'you killed it'. The innovative use of a live social media platform, Facebook during *Heterophobia* also reflected Gaga's queer 'wild abandonment', it opened up a new participatory virtual queer space for the young audiences, a space to recreate identities and reimagine their world. The live Facebook pages and use of social media as a queer virtual community space will be discussed and analysed later in this chapter; in relevance to Lady Gaga it gave the young audience an opportunity to connect with this queer icon and demonstrate their support for her. *Heterophobia* aimed to reflect the politics of 'gaga feminism' how 'our reality is being re-scripted, reshot and reimaged' (Halberstam, 2012: 29) and this is the essence of what *Heterophobia* was about. A world where being

homosexual was accepted, a gay world, where being LGBTQ+ placed an individual in the majority rather than minority. Halberstam describes the non-definable, queer 'gaga feminism' as a

feminism [that is] not about sisterhood, motherhood, sorority, or even women. It is about shifting, changing, morphing, extemporizing political positions quickly and effectively to keep up with the multimedia environments in which we all live. (2012: 29)

This concept of 'gaga feminism' which shifts, changes and morphs fluidly falls into a queer paradigm for applied performance work with young people.

The Pride section of *Heterophobia* (2015) stood as a queer performance section specifically made for young people outside of either fixed binaries or the binary switch. This section would not have had the same impact without the previous development work and learning through *Heterophobia* (2014) or without the context of the binary switch to take these young people on a journey to understand, empathise and embrace different identities and reimagine a non-heteronormative space. From my observation of each performance of *Heterophobia* (2015) the queer Pride section of the performance was when the majority of young people appeared most engaged and animated, singing and dancing, filming, waving glow sticks and cheering. This demonstrated the direction queer performance made for young people take, new work which doesn't focus on coming out, homophobic bullying, oppression, gender and sexual stereotypes or being a minority. Instead it advances a celebration of difference, replacing heteronormative narratives that dominate popular culture and media with creative chaos, diverse lived experiences told through a non-linear narrative, fused art forms, and a hybrid of queer live and digital performance and participatory aesthetics. The queer offer to young people is new ways to conceptualise gender and sexual identities and alternative partnership and family relationships. To achieve this, however, we need to stop assuming children and young people's heterosexuality and offer provocations to disrupt notions of fixed binary thinking at a much earlier age and stage of

development or offer queer work from early years so there's no longer a need to disrupt fixed binary thinking as it no longer exists.

Young LGBTQ+ Mental Health

The queering of this practice-as-research project was in part, identifying the queer intersection where live performance, digital technology, young people, sexuality and mental health met. An element of the queer aesthetic was to enable young people to empathise with Ryan, to connect emotionally with the performance and Ryan, and to feel the impact the heterophobic bullying was having on Ryan's mental health. This thesis has already evidenced that internalised homophobia has a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of young LGBTQ+ people. METRO's *Youth Chances Survey* conducted in 2014 and published in 2016, evidenced young LGBTQ+ people experience significantly higher levels of mental health issues than other young people. These mental health issues include anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. From recent reports, we also know suicide is the leading cause of death in all young males (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

In *Heterophobia* (2015) Ryan's mental health became a focus for the developed narrative. Ryan's mental health clearly deteriorated throughout the piece as the audience watched the impact of others' heterophobic behaviour on Ryan. The spoken word poets were used to reinforce how Ryan was feeling and the impact on his well-being and mental health, Ryan would often remain in the space so that he was visible and the young audience could see his physical body and his emotional state whilst another queer layer was woven into the performance through the spoken word sections, spoken into microphones increasing the audibility, the liveness and the importance of what was being said directly to the audience. This can be exemplified where after a heated discussion with his two Mothers about why Ryan was being bullied, one of his mothers, Jackie, left the space whilst saying, "you might be perfectly happy that our son is straight, but I'm not ok with it." Following which two of the spoken word poets directly address the audience, this spoken word section ends,

Is it easier for you to undo all the memories we've braided into
each other's hearts than It is to trace our steps & acknowledge
what you must've seen?

I am still the same child who needed you when bicycles bit but
now I need you to kiss, hug, make it better when they attack
me with sticks, stones, and words. Protect me, love me,
accept me and you might just save me. (*Heterophobia*, 2015)

Ryan is not protected from external and internal conflict in a
compulsory homosexual world which refuses to recognise or protect a young
heterosexual male. Ryan is bullied in school and online, he is rejected by his
parents, by Alice, by his best-friend Jack, his cry for help from his teacher is
ignored and then he is a victim of hate crime and is physically assaulted. The
possibility of suicide is hinted at through a spoken word piece created
through research of young LGBTQ+ people who have experienced mental
health issues such as depression, anxiety, self-harm and those that have
taken their own life. This spoken word piece stood as a generic suicide note
for all those LGBTQ+ young people that have and those that still might
commit suicide including Ryan if we continue to ignore the mental health
crisis for young LGBTQ+ people, it ended,

and maybe in the next life I won't be judged on my sexuality
you will realise that I was born who I was meant to be
but this world? Isn't meant for me
and the scar they found around my neck the day that I died
the day that the pills didn't work, and my form of self-control got out of
hand
is one that the bullies will forever wear
rest in peace they said
but where was my peace when I was living? (*Heterophobia*, 2015)

After, Ryan is physically assaulted he is taken to hospital where he is
assessed by a Doctor before his mothers arrive. Before they see Ryan, the
Doctor says to them, "Ms Davis & Ms Smith, Ryan is physically alright. He

has a few bruised ribs, which will heal with a bit of rest. Our main concern is his emotional wellbeing. He is incredibly distressed. And we feel he would benefit from some professional support. Someone he could talk to.” His mother, Betty asks, “is there anything we can do?” The Doctor responds, “we have a mental health team, I could put you in touch...” but is cut off by Ryan’s mother, Jackie who says, “we are his mothers, Ryan can talk to us.” This was also an attempt to signpost the young audience to support services. It is especially important to work in partnership with third sector or public-sector organisations when applying performance around issues of health and well-being to ensure young people are able to access further support following the performance.¹⁰

Queer Participation

‘Choice’ became a key element of all of the participatory and immersive strands of *Heterophobia* (2015). In Chapter Three, I highlighted the significance of choice or autonomy within the creative pedagogical experience supported by White (2012) who identified the right of the participant to choose whether to accept or reject an invitation for participation and therefore whether to participate. Earlier in the thesis, I argued for performance makers to find new innovative and aesthetic participatory methodologies for the specific young audience they are attempting to engage with which are current and reflective of youth culture. I have developed this argument to the development of a queer aesthetic for intermedial applied performance work with young people, suggesting queering pedagogy would enable young people to queer their own worlds, giving them the autonomy to self-identify in the world as they choose, to disrupt heteronormativity, hegemonic gender roles and systems of

¹⁰ This project was in partnership with Birmingham LGBT, there was a Birmingham LGBT stall outside of the performance space with cards with support contact details and a Birmingham LGBT representative at each performance in case any young person required immediate support. Support services details are also on the accompanying *Heterophobia* website.

<http://heterophobia.co.uk/contact/>

power and oppression. Through a queer aesthetic, young people become activists, experts and their imaginations are inspired to reimagine other ways of being in the world.

To make *Heterophobia* feel relevant and current to young people and in response to Andelina Ong (2018) positioning urban street arts as an applied performance praxis with young people and an opportunity for place making, I developed the use of participatory urban street art forms in *Heterophobia* (2015). These art forms in *Heterophobia* (2014) had been performance-based, including breakdance, spoken word, MC, rap and beat boxing (Figure 5.4). In *Heterophobia* (2015), I added other forms of street art, such as graffiti, skateboarding and blading, which is a form of skating that uses skates known as 'blades' and street scooters.



Figure 5.4 a break-dancer performing in *Heterophobia* (2015)

Although these street art forms have a specific cultural relationship with the urban sites they inhabit, I was convinced that bringing these art forms into the theatre would increase accessibility to a building-based theatre for young people. It would support the creation of a reimagined space which felt current and youthful and would offer young people a sensory experience. The origins

of street arts began at the end of the 1960s, through 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, starting in New York rather than the UK, making artistic social comment on taboo public issues as a form of political protest. Nicholas Alden Riggle suggested that street art challenges modernism by putting art 'into the fractured stream of everyday life' (2010: 243). The activist nature of the art form that seeks to subvert, disrupt and to form and shape identities specific to their location positions urban street arts both as a praxis of applied performance and a queer aesthetic for work with young people. The fluid nature of queer means that this setting would not be queer for another piece of work made for young people but for *Heterophobia* (2015), this piece of work, at this specific time, context, space with this company of queer artists and young audiences, it was. In the pre-show of *Heterophobia* (2015), young people were encouraged to participate in any of these street art forms such as breakdancing, skateboarding, or by adding their own artwork and tags to a graffiti wall (Figure 5.5). This space and the participation in these street activities although queer and reimagined distracted from the subject matter of the performance, it didn't look like a 'gay' play. It appeared as a new exciting space that the young people could choose to explore, experience, claim, collaborate and reimagine. The urban street art forms used offered these young people a new applied performance participatory aesthetic which was both relevant and queer for this performance and these inner-city Birmingham based young people, at this specific time, space and place.

This thesis claims that this 'participatory pedagogy' is an aesthetic of applied performance with young people and that the methodology and forms of these aesthetics need to be current, evolving and relevant to young people. I would argue these urban street arts evidenced this argument and, in this performance, offered these young people a new applied performance participatory aesthetic which was both relevant and queer for this specific performance, for these specific inner-city Birmingham based young people, at this time and in this space.



Figure 5.5 graffiti wall for young people to add their own art and tags.

Social Media: A Queer Virtual Participatory Space

Lynne Gardner (2010) wrote a *Guardian* blog suggesting that theatres should ‘embrace digital technology’ as it has the potential to enhance and transform theatre, enable creative risk, experimentation, collaboration and ‘extend the reach of the live theatre experience’ and questions why we are not embracing it to create new forms of theatre. *Digital Culture 2017*, a report commissioned by NESTA and the Arts Council of England, the fourth Digital Culture report to better understand how organisations use digital technology and its impact on their performance, concluded that although use of digital technology is increasing amongst the sector, it is a gradual process. More organisations are reporting on reaching wider audiences through the use of digital technology, particularly young people. Most engagement of social media for theatres seem to be as a marketing tool. The *Digital Culture 2017* study also suggests

Digital ‘experimenters’... tend to experience much higher levels of impact in relation to creation and distribution and exhibition of

content than the sector as a whole. These same organisations also see a significantly higher level of impact in relation to their business model and operational functions, which suggests that organisations that invest in digital content or artistic production and new ways to showcase work also reap rewards in terms of revenue generation and operational efficiency. (2017: 43)

The importance the arts council now puts upon the use of digital technology is evidenced by ensuring all NPOs (National Portfolio Organisations) have a digital strategy in place as a funding criterion.

The focus of this thesis has been positioning digital technology as a participatory queer aesthetic of applied performance with young people. I would argue the collaboration of the digital not only enhances liveness and therefore the queerness but also increases the potential of performance work artistically, aesthetically and experientially. As discussed in Chapter Four, this practice-as-research project evidenced that young people prefer the live performance to digital activity, but it was the combination of the digital technology as part of the live experience which is their preference, eighty-six percent of the young audience in 2014 claimed it enhanced their engagement and connection to the work. Shaughnessy discusses the use of digital technology in live performance in educational and social contexts, pointing out ‘the vocabularies of ‘digital natives’ (to use Mark Prensky’s contested terms) articulate and create new perspectives, new modes of communication and new kinds of interactivity’ (2012: xxi).

In *Heterophobia* (2015) the inclusion of a reimagined digital space through graphic and video projection, not restricted by binary limitations which were consistently evolving and shifting the performance space into new queer dimensions, gave the work a sensory energy and a queer aesthetic. This can be exemplified by young male dancers, dancing in front of enlarged digital versions of themselves as depicted in the image below (Figure 5.6). As Katja Kwastek states ‘digital technology fundamentally alters the conditions in which sensory perception takes place’ (2015: 43). The digital queer space is not restricted by fixed notions of identity, a space where images and identities can evolve, a body can be projected to be larger

than it really is or animated to transform, metamorphose or disappear. The merging of the live and digital, focusing on the movement and identity of the body and enhancing the liveness of the experience, offered a young queer energy which had an undefinable sensory impact. This was offered as a queer provocation and whether it becomes a queer moment is in the response and receiving by the audience member. An objective for *Heterophobia* (2015) became to create a piece of work that was aesthetically exciting for young people in a queer way and would enhance their engagement with a queer dynamic which may resonate further for young LGBTQ+ people. In the further comments section of the survey, one young person commented, 'I thought about a lot of stuff going on in my own life and this has helped me answer a lot of questions, so thanks'.

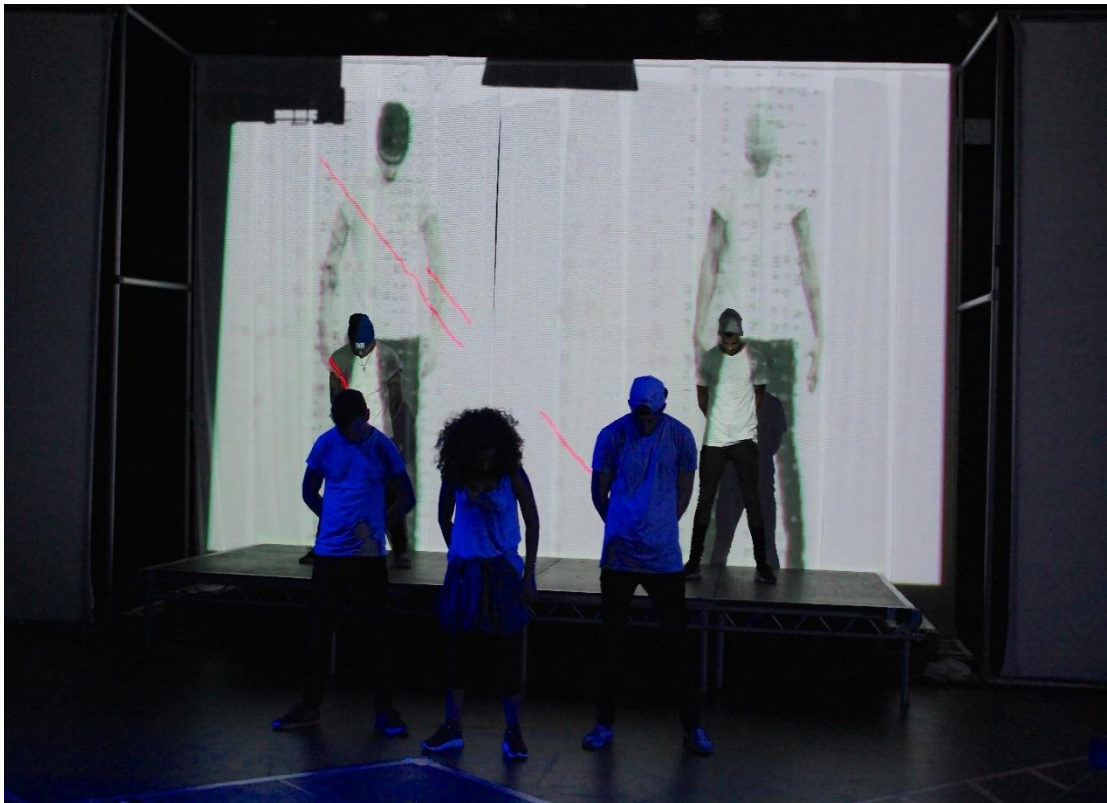


Figure 5.6 dancers dancing in front of and towards enlarged videos of themselves dancing. This queer imagery was where the live and digital performance intersected.

I became increasingly interested in the potential of the digital space as a queer aesthetic and the intersection of live and digital applied performance throughout the process of making and even more so in the period of reflection which has followed this practice. Sue Broadhurst (2007) explores

how performance practice which collaborates with digital technologies has the potential for further social and political impact. Broadhurst claims, 'the digital does what all avant-guard does; it is an experimental extension of the social-political and cultural of an epoch' (2007: 185). She explores digital technologies from the perspective of our own receptive processes when viewing the work which is interesting in terms of queer aesthetics and the framework, I am using which is the queer offer made by queer artists and the queer acceptance by an audience. Her theoretical position for digital practice is an emphasis on the body, she states, 'in digital practices, instrumentation is mutually implicated with the body in an epistemological sense' and, quoting Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests 'the body is our general medium for having a world' (2007: 186). Broadhurst explores the spaces in between the physical body and the virtual, between the live and the digital, this space becomes a 'body of potential creativity' (2007: 187). Broadhurst interrogates how we perceive a digital aesthetic experience through the introduction of 'neuroesthetics' into the field. Exploring a biological understanding of aesthetics to enable us to fully understand our responses to digital practice. This interrogation into neuroscience and neuroesthetics could also be used to explore the queer responses Farrier and Campbell refer to when discussing live queer performance practice, the 'corporeal, gut level' (2016: 2) experience and being 'queerly moved' (2016: 2). Neuroscience studies in its most basic form, looks at how the brain receives information both externally and from the body, how it processes such stimuli, how neurons behave in response, and finally, how those neurons affect the body. An investigation into the response of the body and our nervous system to experiencing a queer performance moment is beyond the scope of this PaR but queer neuroesthetics and the interdisciplinary field of applied performance and neuroscience initiate interesting areas for future investigation. In Broadhurst's final analysis she suggests that 'the implication for digital practices is that the embodied self is delimited, hybridized and indeterminate' (2007: 97) and in doing so develops the argument for such liminal spaces as a site of potential disruption and re-imagination which supports the potential of digital space in live performance and the space between the live and digital for queer exploration and queer aesthetics.

I have also become progressively interested in digital disruption in my reflection of *Heterophobia* (2015). During the performance of *Heterophobia* (2015) which local newsreader, Joanne Malin attended, a glitch occurred during her video in the live performance, it was only during this specific film and it only happened at this isolated performance. I felt extremely anxious as I knew she was in the space, I apologised after the performance, she had wondered if we had purposely distorted the video or had changed it into an audio recording as once the pixelated and out of time video stopped visually playing the audio continued. This experience and the anxiety of it didn't leave me for some time, I questioned the unpredictability of using digital technology in live performance. I overthought the experience, in a vain hope of reimagining the video working correctly during the performance, as it was planned, normatively. This reflection led me to explore the potential of purposeful digital disruption in live performance and where queer potential may lie in this deliberate disruption of the normative live event. Discourse has started to arise around digital disturbance and purposefully applying a digital glitch to live performance. Evidence of interest in this area is evident in a future TaPRA event entitled *Digital Disruptions: Bugs and Glitches in Live Performance* is planned for the New Technologies Working Group in April 2020. Christiane Paul and Malcom Levy (2015) outline the term 'glitch' as referring to 'images and objects that have been tampered with' or 'corrupted' which can be developed 'by using machines or digital tools in methods different from their normative modalities' (Paul & Levy, 2015: 31). Michael Betancourt (2017: 3) refers to the 'glitch aesthetic' when discussing the digital in visual arts. He refers to the visual form of 'glitch' as 'pixelated images that re/compose reality as a juxtaposition of discrete fragments – suggests the translation of visual space into virtuality, cyberspace' (2017: 2). This is particularly interesting as the first iterations of *Heterophobia* (2009, 2010) began with this 'glitch aesthetic' visually projected throughout the live performance (Figure 5.7). Future queer potential may be situated in non-normative, reimagined use of digital technology which purposefully disrupts live performance and explores 'glitch aesthetics'.



Figure 5.7 'glitch aesthetics' projected throughout *Heterophobia* (2009, 2010).

Selwyn warns of 'digital hegemony' (2013: 138) in schools and suggests that teachers and students need to intervene and collaborate to develop forms of digital technology which best suit their needs. He argues for increasing the 'informality surrounding technology processes and practices in school' (2013: 141). He suggests that thought should be given to spaces where this informal use of digital technology is implemented: 'digital technology could well be an area where increased trust in the opinions and actions of students is merited' (2013: 143). This thinking is reminiscent of the earlier discussions about relevant, youth led, intermedial applied performance with young people. It is imperative that performance makers use the technology young people are utilising to engage them with the work. For this reason, I removed the Augmented Reality from *Heterophobia* (2015) and replaced it with the use of the social media platform, Facebook to create an online narrative at the same time as the live performance.

In *Heterophobia* (2015) the characters in the play had their own Facebook profiles and the young audiences were able to join 'Ryan's' page at the beginning of the performance and interact with him and other

characters throughout. This 'participation' created a virtual community for *Heterophobia* interacting during the performances through social media apps on their smart phones. Social media was used as a tool to challenge homophobic cyberbullying. The lines between 'performer' and 'audience' became blurred in this queer virtual performative space. The performers and audience shifted between 'performer' and 'audience member' throughout the performance. This consistent shifting of identity and state of flux in itself, is queer. Interestingly, whilst one hundred per cent of the young people watching *Heterophobia* stated that the element of social media made the performance better only twenty-six per cent joined in with the Facebook narrative (See Appendix B). When evaluating any aesthetic experience, we need to account for the individual and subjective aesthetic experience; however, the overwhelming response to the inclusion of digital technology and social media is reflective of youth culture and how the interactive visual is an important aesthetic for young people because of their virtual lives. The most popular reason was that the young people felt that the social media element enhanced their engagement and that they could participate. It would be interesting to find out why, therefore, so few did participate. Who was included and who was not included in this participation? Was there equity and diversity? Which of the young audiences wanted to connect with the queer emerging performers, did the anonymity of participation empower LGBTQ+ voices? What were the stakes of participating or not participating? This could be because these young people preferred the 'liveness' as discussed and evidenced in the previous chapter but felt it important that the 'choice' to participate was available and that it was a digital choice which was familiar and current to them. I noted any of the young people who participated in the initial game show as part of the pre-show *Who Wants to be a Minority?* continued to interact through Facebook throughout the performance so although choice is important that initial facilitation of participatory activity is as important with digital participation as live participation, for young people to feel confident to interact. In projects since *Heterophobia*, I have used a digital platform called *Kahoot* for initial interactive quizzes which set up the issues explored in the socially engaged performance. The audience is invited to connect to Kahoot and play the quiz.

Six statements relevant to the issue about to be explored in the performance are shared with the young people as a pre-show activity before the performance starts. The young people can play individually or as part of a group, the statements are projected on the screen and the individual or team press true (red) or false (blue) in response to the statement on their smartphone or the group IPADS we provide for anyone without a phone. The statements set up some of the issues we are inviting the young people to think about during the performance and in reflection after the event. I always ensure that these statements are the most up to date information, accurate data and ensure the statements correspond with our third sector partner's objectives for young people and I will consult with the partner when writing these. In our last piece of work exploring young mental health this was with Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. It is a competitive game, speed as well as correct answers are important, a leader board is revealed after each round and there's a winner at the end with five runners up. The young audiences are always very engaged in this process, they visibly and vocally always appear to enjoy the 'game' element of *Kahoot*. Following this process, they are offered the choice to continue to interact with the rest of the performance via social media and I find a majority continue to digitally participate which I now believe is due to the setup of the digital participation they have been taken through in the pre-show. They have been supported to digitally connect as there is a facilitator running this pre-show section and the other artists walk around the space facilitating smaller groups or supporting individuals; they have already digitally participated. In *Heterophobia*, many felt the inclusion of social media made the performance more believable as social media is an essential part of young lives. They also felt it helped them identify and empathise with the characters. This response supports the idea that young people expect social media and digital technology to be a functioning part of all their experiences. By using social media as part of a performance about young lives, they found it to be a true reflection of their own lives and therefore believable which enhanced engagement and empathy.

Patrick Lonergan explores the 'interactive and immersive' (2016: 71) and 'performative' (2016: 73) nature of social media. Lonergan suggests to engage with social media is inherently a theatrical act. Lonergan is referring to using social media as a means of a pre-show and post-show engagement and marketing tool rather than using it within a performance as an online platform for performers and audience members to communicate and yet he still observes the participation and performative potential for social media. This is attributed to audience members becoming active and engaged, their views are read, followed or re posted by others which is why they step into a role as a performer with an audience following. The immediacy and globalised nature of the social media platform also can empower any audience member to become a reviewer who can positively or negatively impact a performance they have experienced. The use of social media within a performance is performative, it can be used as a pedagogical participatory aesthetic and in this performance offered a queer space not restricted by binaries where the live performance met the digital performance and the queer performers met the audience / participants in a live, digital, queer applied performance exploring issues of sexuality and mental health for young people.

Social media tools 'increase our ability to share, to co-operate, with one another, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutional institutions and organizations' (Shirky, 2008: 20f). Christian Fuchs refers to 'online sociality: collective action, communication, communities, connecting / networking, co-operation / collaboration, the creative making of user-generated content, playing, sharing' (2014: 37). Fuchs suggests the foundations of this thinking lies in an understanding of sociality and social theory. He refers to the three notions of sociality, Emile Durkheim's notion of social facts, 'a social fact is every way of acting' (1982: 59). Max Weber's (1978) definition of sociology as social action and social relation and Ferdinand Tonnies (1988) and Karl Marx's (1867) notions of community, co-operation and collaboration to enhance our understanding of 'social': 'by social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end' (Marx and Engels, 1846: 50). It was this socialist perspective alongside learner centred

philosophies which influenced the work of early DIE and TIE practitioners such as Augusto Boal (1979), especially Marxist analysis of social processes as TIE work was socially motivated and engaged. It is entirely fitting that when rethinking TIE / applied performance participatory methodologies and pedagogies in a digital age we would turn to social media platforms as an alternative virtual strategy for new work with young people.

The live Facebook dialogue between the characters in the performance and each live audience throughout each performance was displayed on a large screen within the performance space and was accessed by the audience and the performers via their smartphones. It is important to look at some of the content here to examine the impact of the performance on changing attitudes. An example of a Facebook transcript from one of the performances can be found in the appendices (See Appendix C). A new Facebook event was created for each performance. There was a video of Ryan and Jack inviting the audience to join Ryan's Facebook event / page at the beginning of the performance enabling the young people who joined the event on their mobile phones to comment throughout the performance. The characters also posted throughout the performance. There were comments added to the Facebook page from the young people in support of Ryan, such as, 'Ryan don't worry it will all die down eventually'. The same young person posted the lyrics of the final song inserting Ryan's name into it and asking the characters to think about the message of the piece, commenting 'how to find wisdom how to find freedom?? Think bout Ryan he's not a machine he hurts and he bleeds he's only human, you gotta move on cause it can't go on.' There was also support for Ryan and Alice as a couple, one young person commented 'don't listen to dem you suit it's bout u two not dem.' It's interesting if the same support would have existed for a gay couple; however, throughout the Facebook pages and the performance piece there were gay kisses and relationships represented with a platform open for comments.

The characters in the play chose to write quite strong heterophobic comments in this Facebook dialogue during the performance which hadn't been previously devised or rehearsed and, although they were subject to directorial notes at the end of each performance, these comments were

improvised. Interestingly, the diverse young audiences did not join in with this behaviour although my research from *Heterophobia* (2014) confirmed that online was the second most popular space for homophobic bullying. This may have been because it was a school trip and they thought there might be consequences, that they thought their comments might be recorded or that it was some type of tactic by the performance company. This may also have been because it was heterophobia not homophobia which was being explored and they didn't want to be heterophobic. One young person commented, 'I cd laugh n say things about u guys being gay but that's none of my business so leave them alone' interestingly, identifying that she could use this opportunity to be homophobic but also identifying that she shouldn't as it wasn't her place to do that but in return she expected them to stop being heterophobic. In terms of the binary switch, this was a really interesting comment. It demonstrated that for this young person the objective of the piece had been achieved, she was making her own switch of heterophobia for homophobia and identifying both discriminatory behaviours to be unacceptable. She was also actively intervening by posting a comment on Facebook to the bullies and highlighting their discriminatory behaviour as inappropriate and telling them to stop. The majority of responses on Facebook focused on the style of the performance and the art forms used or their response to the performance rather than the issue being explored. The young people were demonstrating sensory and gut responses and connections to what they were experiencing. Social media offered *Heterophobia* a queer, participatory, digital aesthetic.

When using social media within performance, Lonergan reminds us to be mindful of ethical issues as we are endorsing social media platforms and benefitting social media companies by increasing their profile. He states, 'the fact that we give authenticity and credibility to services when we use them requires greater consideration, and not just from theatres' (2016: 79). Social media is embedded into our lives, young people are using social media platforms and will continue to do so. Using social media as a collaborative, participatory pedagogical tool demonstrates to young people how social media can be used in a positive way, for peer to peer support and intervention. Social media platforms empower young voices, demands their

expertise reflective of Heathcote's (1995) 'Mantle of the Expert' methodology and enables a participatory democracy. As Fuchs indicates 'discussions about social media remind us of the need to think and act in respect of the question about what sociality, what society, and what kind of media we want to have' (2014: 266). Social media acted as a strategic queer tool controlled by the young people and the emerging artists. A queer meeting point of live and digital performance, a virtual democratic space, an agency which enabled young people to disrupt, to reimagine and to mobilize.

Conclusion

Heterophobia (2015) tested a queer live section of performance which worked outside of binaries and was informed by 'gaga feminism' and as argued in this thesis formed part of a shift in thinking towards a queer aesthetic rather than queer characters and narrative. I would conclude, the future of queer performance making with and for young people lies in the development of queer aesthetics and queer representations moving away from LGBTQ+ characters represented as victims and linear narrative around issues of bullying and homophobia.

This practice-as-research project teased out what a new queer performance aesthetic with young people could look like. The queer aesthetics in *Heterophobia* (2015) were achieved through a fusion of forms and the hybrid nature of the piece. This approach included the use of street arts and social media which did not only offer the performance a queer aesthetic, but also a participatory, pedagogical aesthetic for this new applied performance work. In both cases of queer and participatory methodology, this project recognises these art forms were considered queer and current for young people at this time but both queer performance and digital technology is ever evolving so what may be considered queer or current for one project may not be for the next. Making queer work and developing queer aesthetics for and with young people is specific for that age group and would not necessarily be considered queer for an adult group or a group of younger children. This thesis argues that to make work in a queer way with young people is a sensory, non-tangible experience, it is about a queer intention by queer makers and artists and a reciprocal feeling and a connection to the

work by queer young people. However, in this process it became clear to disrupt young people's binarized, heteronormative views of sexual and gender identities queer performance would need to be introduced to children in their early years, using an age appropriate queer aesthetic developed specifically for babies, toddlers and children. The practice would use a framework for a queer aesthetic as 'different', 'other' and 'non-normative' relevant to the age the queer work is being made for. This approach would then continue throughout young lives and the focus of making the work would be the 'queer aesthetic' as opposed to anti homophobia, anti-bullying and coming out dramas. Further potential lies in a queer aesthetic for / with / by children and young people which does not only focus on sexual and gender identity but enables young people to reimagine other areas of their identity and contexts and will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Six.

Digital technology offers opportunities for making queer work for /with /by young people as it is not limited by binaries and can enhance the 'liveness' of live performance. The medium of media is fluid rather than fixed and can create a reimagined space, form new identities and disrupt. Digital technology also offers applied performance for and with young people a new participatory pedagogical aesthetic. Digital technology provides a new strategy for implementing historic TIE and DIE participatory methodologies. In *Heterophobia* (2015), the social media platform, Facebook was used as a participatory tool. Built within the framework of social theory and the concept that social media can offer a virtual co-operative community, Facebook offered this intermedial applied performance and its young audiences a queer, immersive, participatory aesthetic.

Chapter Six

Heterophobia (2015): Queering Performative Pedagogy

Chapter Overview

This penultimate chapter reports on the research findings of *Heterophobia (2015)*, the assessed PhD practice, demonstrating that the vast majority of young people's preconceived ideas around issues of homosexuality were disrupted and for seventy minutes heterosexual hegemony was subverted. The young audiences suggested their future behaviour in regard to homophobia would be impacted as a direct result of experiencing this performance. *Heterophobia* had a clear objective of engaging young people self-identifying as heterosexual to challenge their preconceived ideas around heteronormativity and hegemonic gender identities. Research was also conducted with teachers in 2015 as the *Stonewall Teachers' Report (2014)* demonstrated teachers would benefit from training around complex issues of gender and sexual identity and an understanding of the impact a culture of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity in schools has on young people's achievement, self-esteem and mental health. Further attention is given in this chapter to the use of digital technology as a pre- and post-performance queer participatory aesthetic for applied performance with young people which can enable them to make their own choices, create their own endings for performances, therefore enabling young people to recreate identities, narrative and contexts.

The argument in this chapter builds on the concept of a queer aesthetic to empower queer young people as identified in the previous chapter and moves to the idea that queering pedagogy for all children and young people could offer an innovative learning and teaching tool, a new paradigm for young people to reimagine identities, challenge social and political issues and question issues of power and privilege.

Heterophobia (2015): Research with Young People

Having made queer choices specifically for a young audience it was essential to ensure young people evaluated the work and impact was

measured and assessed by the young people experiencing the work. To achieve a queer aesthetic is in part the response of the audience. As argued throughout this thesis, applied performance with young people needs to be evaluated by young people and be youth led. When creating queer work for young people there would be ethical and safeguarding implications questioning who may identify as queer and whether they had a queer response to the work. However, the queer aesthetic lies within the response of the audience member to a queer intention (Campbell & Farrier, 2016: 1-2). So, alternatively, in this project the queer aesthetic was measured by engagement, connection, aesthetic appreciation and a desire to disrupt, evidenced in a change in thinking and suggested behaviour. In *Heterophobia* (2015), I was looking for specific moments when changes in thinking occurred due to a disruption of a hegemonic heterosexual world into a reimagined queer world and whether this shift in thinking and attitudes which went beyond the binary switch could have an impact on behaviours. Post-show surveys (See Appendix B) suggested *Heterophobia* enabled young people to empathise not only with Ryan, the heterosexual protagonist but with the wider issue of homophobic bullying and begin to understand the impact this may have on an individual. The binary switch not only supported the young people to be able to empathise, it gave them permission to empathise as the story was about a heterosexual character. There are of course, dangers in reinforcing the supremacy of heterosexuality by doing this or reinforcing homophobia by continuing to contextualise homosexuality and heterosexuality in opposition. However, as previously discussed, this is young people's reality. Equally, it would be concerning to suggest that through experiencing a role reversal performance it is then possible to experience the pain of oppression, discrimination and marginalisation. This is clearly not the case and this research project understands the limitations of empathy. This piece of work was a stepping stone to investigate whether the process of watching the work gave the young people time to engage with and reflect on the issues involved for someone being bullied because of their sexuality whilst also being offered moments of queer performance and representations to disrupt fixed binary thinking. When the young people were asked in research questions what they thought *Heterophobia* was about, all

responses demonstrated an understanding of the subject matter; most common responses included 'accepting everyone', 'homophobia', 'a gay world where being gay was normal', 'bullying', 'equality', 'opposite world' 'being different' and 'being yourself'. The majority of responses were politicised and socially aware which supports the earlier discussion that young people do know that homophobia is wrong; however, their frame of reference is only compulsory heterosexuality which may suggest to these young people that society does not support a homosexual lifestyle. The words to describe the performance that appeared most frequently on the questionnaires for *Heterophobia* (2015) were 'amazing', 'fantastic', 'awesome', 'emotional', 'inspiring', 'truthful' and 'different /unique'. No negative comments appeared on the questionnaires in *Heterophobia* (2014) or (2015). This could be due to the design of the questionnaire and young people wanting to offer the 'correct' response as mentioned earlier. But responses to other questions seem to indicate a genuine engagement with the performance and the issues explored. I asked the young people what their favourite section in *Heterophobia* was (2015). Interestingly, the vast majority answered through art forms such as 'dancing', 'the singing at the end', 'rap', 'Lady Gaga' and 'the glow sticks' rather than through specific narrative content. This digital generation have high aesthetic expectations: they expect laser lights, video, projection fused with live performance as this is what they see on their digital flat screens, iPads and smart phones on a daily basis. They did not seem surprised to watch an aerial silks artist mid-way through the Lady Gaga tribute act during the Pride celebrations and they instantly accepted and celebrated a new art form such as dance graffiti. In the optional final comments section of the questionnaire the majority of comments asked what happened next, whether they could come again or see another performance by this company evidencing that they had engaged with the performance and the queer aesthetic offered by *Heterophobia*.

I asked the young people research questions around caring for and wanting to help the protagonist character, Ryan and whether the young people felt that there were other characters that could have helped Ryan. Of the one hundred and eighty-one young people responding to the questionnaires for *Heterophobia* (2015) ninety-nine per cent stated that they

cared about Ryan, ninety-seven per cent wanted to help him. The most popular responses to when they wanted to help him were when he was being bullied or physically assaulted. Others suggested they wanted to help him throughout or as soon as he was upset, or his peers were being unkind which was from the onset of the piece. The young people identified that Ryan's best friend, Jack, his girlfriend, Alice, his mothers and the teacher could have helped Ryan. It was clear the young audiences empathised with Ryan and identified with this type of behaviour at school. The young people frequently commented that the other characters needed to 'accept' Ryan in response to questions about helping Ryan, referring to his sexuality which was 'different' to the mainstream sexuality represented in *Heterophobia*. They identified that Ryan needed support and intervention not only from his peers but also from the school and his parents to effectively negotiate the bullying he was experiencing. There was also one comment which identified that what happened to Ryan was a crime and should have been reported to the police.

I asked whether they had witnessed homophobia at school to which the majority replied they had. I also asked them if their actions would now change as a result of seeing *Heterophobia* if they were to experience this behaviour in the future. Of the one hundred and eighty-one young people responding to the questionnaires for *Heterophobia* (2015), eighty per cent suggested their actions would now change if they witnessed homophobic bullying at school or online, ten per cent stated they already knew that it was wrong. As mentioned earlier, this could have been due to the young people trying to give the right answers or them giving a positive response as they were excited and had enjoyed the show. A longer-term research project might observe if this change in thinking was sustained and implemented through action. I was mostly interested at this point whether the young people were engaged with the queer aesthetics offered, their immediate responses to the practice and if the performance content was disrupting any preconceived ideas around gender and sexuality. The suggested statistic of eighty per cent changing their future behaviour was also supported by their comments throughout the questionnaires which demonstrated engagement,

consideration of the issues and in many cases a change in thinking and through the observation of the young people at the performances.

The data obtained from the questionnaires although limited for the reasons stated above suggested the vast majority of the young people who experienced *Heterophobia* (2015) felt that some of their preconceived ideas around homosexuality had been challenged and some were now suggesting this would change their future behaviour and actions. From their comments it was clear that some of the young people had never considered homophobic bullying because this hadn't seemed previously relevant to their lives, so they weren't able to empathise. This was evidenced by their comments when asked why their actions would change if they now witnessed this kind of behaviour at school or online, such as 'I think it has opened my eyes to how everyone is equal no matter their sexuality.' Another stated, 'I can help them more now, I see it works both ways' similarly, 'I would help them now as have an insight into their feelings.' Some stated they could relate to being 'straight' rather than 'gay', but it would now change their action towards homophobic bullying. The binary switch made a performance about issues of sexuality and homophobia accessible and relevant for a majority of young people who didn't previously consider this as an issue which concerned them. It disrupted their view of a heterosexual world and gave them a reimagined alternative to consider. One young person stated, 'I reacted before but when you see it happen in person it changes your point of view.' Many commented that they would now 'stand up for them' or 'help them'. Some identified that they had previously 'judged people' and that they would now do this less. There was still a binary in existence of 'them' and 'us'. Others empathised because they wouldn't like it if it was happening to them demonstrating that they had related to these characters. A few likened the bullying to their own experiences of being bullied for different reasons demonstrating that they had emotionally connected with the performance and that they now understood homophobia as a form of bullying. This research project also demonstrate that a change in thinking was sustained over a period of a few months through digital post-show activity which will be discussed further on in this chapter but a further research project might

interrogate whether this change in thinking was sustained over a much longer period of time and if future actions did change.

***Heterophobia* (2015): Research with Teachers**

Stonewall's *Teachers' Report* (2014) published after *Heterophobia* (2014), found that eighty-six per cent of teachers are aware of homophobic bullying happening in their schools. Reflective of a compulsory heterosexual society and the legacy of Section 28 (1988), thirty per cent of secondary school teachers don't know if they are even allowed to teach about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues and shockingly, more than a third of staff have heard homophobic language from other school staff. This research along with feedback from the 2014 performance led me to believe that as well as working with young people to challenge homophobia and offer queer representations, we also need to be focusing on training teachers appropriately to understand the complex issues of compulsory heterosexuality in schools and to be able to confidently challenge homophobic bullying and gender stereotyping with children and young people and how they could offer LGBTQ+ representations in their teaching and resources. Teachers should be supported to avoid teaching through a heteronormative lens. Training is required to ensure teachers are not using homophobic language themselves or to be equipped to challenge colleagues using homophobic language, understanding the impact this can have on young LGBTQ+ people and their mental health. However, *Heterophobia* transcended LGBTQ+ content as it was offering a queer aesthetic to young people, the principles of which could also be beneficial to other areas of learning and teaching. Ultimately, asking young people to consider their queerness is asking them to consider the social-political structures of gender and sexuality which also intersect with other areas of identity such as race, ethnicity, disability and class. To ask young people to queer their world is to ask them to consider, to question and to disrupt their contexts, their oppressions and their privileges. As discussed, there is fear around any exploration of sexual identity with young people due to a compulsory heterosexual society and the legacy of Section 28 (1988). To queer requires

risk and experimentation, too queer with children / young people may appear extremely risky; however, this response is adult anxiety. As Stockton (2009) posits, childhood is a queer experience and Dyer applies queer theory to child studies to consider in 'children's art and art about childhood, we might notice the historical by-products of injustice; not necessarily frozen, but reimagined in ways that move towards a different future' (2019: 133). Queering pedagogy by developing non-normative learning strategies, methodologies and aesthetics which are young person led could reveal new ways of thinking about learning which are sensory, experiential, virtual and aesthetic.

Heterophobia (2015) involved a game *Who Wants To Be A Minority?* This game was part of the participatory pre-show. A volunteer would play the game with the host but the rest of the 'studio audience' could digitally participate via a Facebook poll. This participatory game show added to the queer aesthetic as the content of the questions were LGBTQ+ themed and there has always been a 'campness' associated with gameshows: it is a space where queer hosts have been welcomed. The title of the game show was queer, and the space swiftly evolved into a game show studio from an urban indoor skate park which the young people were part of physically as a live studio audience and also encouraged to participate in a virtual space. There were two questions, firstly in a recent survey by Stonewall, *The Teachers' Report* 2014, "what percentage of teachers said pupils in their school were bullied for being Gay?" At all performances the young people got this wrong assuming the answer was lower than the correct eighty-six per cent, going for the sixty-eight percent option. The second question was, "teachers were asked if they challenge homophobic language. What percentage said they don't challenge homophobic language?" The studio audience always got this right responding with the highest percentage answer which was fifty-five percent. This suggested that the young people thought that teachers would not challenge homophobic language which was most likely due to experiencing this as we know homophobic language is used regularly in schools and if they had witnessed teachers challenging this language their answer to this question would have been one of the other three lower percentages.

In 2015, I also involved teachers in the research process, designing a specific teacher research questionnaire for them that asked questions about whether in their opinion homophobia exists in their school and whether they had heard homophobic language from students or staff. If they witnessed homophobic behaviour, did they feel able to challenge it? Teachers who work in a Further Education College in Birmingham City Centre all affirmed that homophobia does exist in their educational institution in their opinion, both amongst staff and students. Whereas, at an academy school chain where the Executive Head at that time was openly gay, teachers commented there is a 'zero tolerance to homophobia', one hundred percent of the teachers responded that in their opinion there was no homophobia amongst staff and half of the teachers responded that there was no homophobia amongst students whereas the other half suggested there was still homophobia amongst the students. Supporting Ruth Hunt, former Chief Executive of Stonewall proposition in her introduction to the *Teachers' Report* (2014) 'school heads need to lead from the front and visibly demonstrate their commitment to tackling bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity' (2014: 4). Hunt goes on to urge that 'every member of school staff, teaching or not, needs to be proactive in challenging bullying and prejudice wherever it occurs' (2014: 4).

There were many inconsistencies and contradictions in the teachers' responses one teacher claimed that homophobia existed in their school amongst students but not staff but then said that they had heard staff use homophobic language. Another teacher claimed that homophobia doesn't exist in their school amongst students and staff, which conflicted with the other member of staff from the same school and the students who attended that school. They gave very brief answers to all questions, missing many of the questions out but did state if they witnessed homophobic behaviour at school, they would not challenge it as 'this is a personal matter'. This type of response is concerning and similar to the response of the teacher portrayed in *Heterophobia*. The accompanying teacher from the same school didn't commit to a 'yes' or 'no' in response to being asked whether they would

challenge homophobic behaviour at school if they witnessed it, they responded, 'much of the behaviour or language used is general'.

I was curious whether they thought a performance like *Heterophobia* could be used as a tool to challenge homophobia in schools. There was one hundred per cent agreement from all the teachers who watched *Heterophobia* 2015 that this original piece of work could be used to challenge homophobia in schools and ten of the twelve teachers who completed the research questionnaires stated that they would use further online resources linked to this performance.

They were asked whether the performance encouraged them to think any differently about homophobia in schools and if they could identify any key moments that supported their own learning around issues of homophobic bullying. The vast majority of teachers didn't reply to this question or replied 'no' or 'N/A'. I found it very interesting that professionals working within education, trained in learning and teaching, who stated this work was 'excellent' and also stated homophobia occurred in their school amongst students and in some cases, staff, could not identify a key moment of learning for themselves even though they were expecting this of their pupils. It was particularly interesting that some of the teachers felt that learning was 'not applicable' to them. I have argued that compulsory heterosexuality exists both in society and in schools. This is an issue that will also impact upon teachers and it is crucial for teachers to recognise this if we are going to do anything about changing it and altering the experiences of young LGBTQ+ people in schools and challenging homophobic behaviour.

The four teachers who did identify key moments of learning also gave much fuller answers to the questions, demonstrated a deeper understanding of the issues explored, likening homophobia to racism and misogyny and they very clearly stated how important it is for a teacher to always challenge discriminative behaviours. They also identified barriers to learning and teaching these issues within their schools such as 'parents', 'misunderstanding' and 'a lack of awareness' whereas the other teachers chose to not respond to this question. They also demonstrated a greater interest in the performance style, art forms and content engaging with the queer aesthetic of the work. This feedback is from a very small percentage of

teachers who chose to attend *Heterophobia* and bring a group of students along as they felt homophobia was an issue which needed to be explored with their students and yet there was still cause for concern in some of their feedback. I can assume from this and the evidence in the Stonewall *Teachers' Report* a greater response from a much wider demographic of teachers would possibly be a cause for concern.

A group of student teachers who were on placement at different schools in Birmingham as part of their Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) attended one of the performances of *Heterophobia* 2015. There was one hundred per cent agreement amongst the PGCE students that homophobia existed in their school amongst students, one stated amongst staff and that they had heard staff use homophobic language. There was also one hundred per cent agreement that they would challenge homophobic behaviour if they witnessed it, that this performance could be used to challenge homophobia in schools, and they would access further online resources linked to this performance if they were available. Of the ten PGCE students who completed the research questionnaire, nine identified key moments which supported their own learning around issues of homophobic bullying, all ten identified how they would use key moments in their own teaching and the majority didn't view barriers in their school around learning and teaching sexual orientation and homophobia as an issue. There was an enthusiasm about the work and its importance. The student teachers used vocabulary such as 'loved it', 'fabulous', 'brilliant', 'truly engaging', 'dynamic', 'interactive' and 'current'. These young teachers had engaged with the queer and youthful aesthetics implemented in the practice. The majority commented on the use of social media and how they could incorporate the innovative use of social media into their own teaching around this issue and other issues, recognising the pedagogical and collaborative potential of social media. These teachers, at the beginning of their careers, valued this work and had the energy and vision to use this creative resource as a tool for both their own learning and to engage their students in learning. As part of teacher training programmes teachers could be trained and empowered to challenge all types of bullying and discrimination.

In summary, the teachers' feedback confirmed the existence of homophobia in schools amongst both students and staff. All teachers could see the benefit of *Heterophobia* and the post-show digital resources in challenging a compulsory heterosexual culture. Student teachers were more open to exploring the complexity of issues and identified areas for their own learning. *Heterophobia* stood as an effective model of practice, an innovative pedagogical tool for both young people, student teachers and teachers. Homophobia could also be replicated for other areas of bullying and discrimination in school settings as part of the Government's health and wellbeing agenda and investment for young people and children. However, I would argue that the issue as discussed through this chapter is bigger than challenging homophobic bullying, it is necessary to enable teachers to recognise these wider issues of compulsory heterosexuality, gender normative roles and hegemonic masculinity. Teachers' should be able to access training which supports them to recognise the importance of not teaching through a heteronormative lens and to understand the impact these hegemonic heterosexual and gender stereotyping practices have on society, schools and young people and how they result in homophobic bullying, misogyny and underachievement for young males. This thesis also identifies opportunities for educators to facilitate youth led projects which explore issues of identity and social and political areas of concern for them, enabling children and young people to reimagine their future environments whilst utilising participatory digital technology in cultural contexts as a queer pedagogical strategy.

REPWrite

Pupils at Perry Beeches II secondary school in Birmingham took part in a pilot project to collaboratively write their own endings to *Heterophobia*. Year nine pupils who had seen *Heterophobia* worked in groups of three and four to write what happened next in the play using REPwrite, a digital playwriting tool that connects multiple writers to write at the same time. Its collaborative framework facilitates group work and also aims to develop empathy by inhabiting a character through the process of writing in a situation where they have to react in the moment to the obstacles in the form

of other characters and their differing objectives. It has been piloted as a teaching and learning tool within Higher Education across disciplines and in professional practice. Could *Heterophobia* go beyond a single socially engaged performance in a theatre for young people and, through the use of this digital tool, continue to connect young people to each other and to the debate around homophobic bullying in schools and online? The play offered many opportunities to identify moments where things could have been handled differently so that the outcome of a heterophobic physical assault could have been avoided. The pupils, who were one of these digital communities in the performance, were asked to actively explore the narrative and not just their immediate reactions to actions happening in front of them. They were asked to explore the characters and their relationships and to see if the assault enacted in the play could change characters' behaviour. The pupils had creative freedom, and over four workshops they developed new characters and explored existing ones. The REPWrite workshops were facilitated by Caroline Jester, a former dramaturg at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre who created REPWrite. She had not been part of the process of making *Heterophobia* but had attended both the versions in 2014 and 2015, and I had given her a brief for these workshops. I felt it was very important that the person facilitating this work had not been part of the company or the research project up to this point and was able to remain impartial and that the young people didn't recognise her from the performance. I had purposely left the ending for *Heterophobia* open as I was interested in the young people who had seen the performance continuing their own narrative for this reimagined world, choosing and developing their own endings for the piece, recreating the characters' futures through which they would be exploring issues of identity and reimagining their own contexts. In the final scene of *Heterophobia* (2015,) Ryan was in hospital following a homophobic assault and clearly very distressed, in the final song, sung by the full company the audience are left with questions and time to reflect. In the final song "I'm Only Human" the audience are asked,

It's there in the things we all read every day,
It's easy to rail against all of the pain!

Media obsessions turn love into hate,
 Are people just looking for someone to blame?
 Is it a weakness to watch what you say? Hm...

Must we change all the laws of the land?
 To accommodate those who can't understand
 Heels dug in hard against those on the brink
 Who's gonna be the first one to blink?
 Is it defeat to rethink what you think? Hm...
 How can it go on? How can it go on?

How to find wisdom? How to find freedom?
 Ask yourself & everyone else all the right questions.
 How to find answers? Fight the delusions.
 I'm not a machine, I hurt, and I bleed - I'm only human!

Did they feel such pain?
 Did they suffer such shame?
 Did they die in vain? Will it happen again?
 Can we really change? (*Heterophobia*, 2015)

The twenty-seven, year nine students who had seen *Heterophobia* experienced four workshops using the digital playwriting tool as part of their PSHE curriculum during LGBT History Month in their school setting. An example of a scene using REPWrite by one of these groups of young people is situated in the appendices (See Appendix D). The students felt comfortable challenging why the parents did not support their son and examining the complexity within peer groups. Solutions were even found, and characters were showing signs of breaking away from the prejudice that had led to the physical assault. They were not afraid to tackle mental health issues and even suicidal thoughts and found creative ways of using social media in a positive way as this is what ultimately saved Ryan in this scene written by the pupils. In contrast, no group decided to write about the teacher's response and lack of support for Ryan and there was not one

character of a teacher in any of the scenes that were written. The scene that was read as a group in the first workshop included the character of a teacher as the last person Ryan talked to before his attack, but this was not developed by any group. The young people did not feel comfortable challenging the character of the 'teacher' or the establishment of the 'school' in their school setting although they identified this to be an issue on their anonymous research questionnaires after the performance at the theatre. This could be an issue of setting or anonymity which supports the argument for this work being set outside of school and for the development of post-show digital tools and resources in which young people can remain anonymous and use a setting outside of the school. For research purposes, the use of REPWrite needed to be better structured and facilitated.

The year nine students also wrote new scenes as well as endings. By the final workshop, their scenes started to identify solutions such as classmates and friends who started to support Ryan. They developed a new line of narrative around a suicide note which appeared on the internet and revealed the seriousness of the situation to Ryan's mothers, which prompted them to intervene and help Ryan. Interestingly, the young people also used social media as part of their narrative and a 'coming out' space in terms of sexual identity and mental health, the young people identified social media space as an intersection for live and digital, youth, mental health and sexuality. The pupils introduced new characters that were able to help Ryan, such as Will, Alice's brother, and a new character at school that starts to affect change on the others. Apart from one scene that suggested that Ryan's only option was to leave the country, the revisions all showed signs of characters changing their behaviour and starting to show signs of empathy. Through the process of writing the endings, the students showed how they could explore some of the communities within and around the piece and the relationships between them more closely. In their writing, they demonstrated that they could understand how Ryan's physical assault in the play had an impact on a range of characters within the multiple communities and in the wider society. Their enthusiastic engagement with this writing tool after they had seen *Heterophobia* was further evidence of their engagement with the live performance, the characters, the narrative and the issues *Heterophobia*

had explored. It also demonstrated the effectiveness of intermediality and the use of digital technology to enhance and sustain the learning experience of a live performance. The young people were the experts, disrupting the narrative, making final decisions, disrupting the status quo and reconsidering and imagining non-normative narratives, endings and ways of being in the world. This digital post-show activity continued to develop a queer aesthetic which was young person led.

A Queer Digital Aesthetic

The young audience could decide their own ending to *Heterophobia*. Their decisions could impact the direction of this story, the choice of what happened next was up to them in either their own private reflections about the piece after the performance, in discussions with peers, on the website¹¹ resource where there are fourteen short film clips that tell the story of *Heterophobia* and as a school activity they are invited to write / devise, rehearse and film the final clip or for those that were participating in the follow up workshops using REPWrite they too were asked to write the final scene of *Heterophobia*. The 'choice' element was a very important part of this process, how they wanted *Heterophobia* to end was also a metaphor for the choice to change their and peer attitudes and behaviours around homosexuality and homophobic bullying in schools. This control of what happened to Ryan reflected the control each young person has to make a difference and support their peers; this queer intervention could potentially save lives.

The live social media running throughout the performance offered a space where the young audiences could directly connect with Ryan and offer him support during the performance. The live Facebook page at each performance directly connected the performers and the audience, this was the intersection of the live and the digital as what was happening digitally was also live and a space for the young people to support Ryan's mental health. One young person used the online social media platform to make the following comment, 'I still find it hard to speak up especially in situations like

¹¹ <http://heterophobia.co.uk/video/>

this but please be aware of the LGBT bullying and suicide prevention page on Facebook. And I hope that as a society we can all change for the better.’ The Facebook medium clearly enabled this young person to write this comment and have a digital queer voice and offer a form of digital intervention, disruption and peer to peer support for other young people who may need mental health support when dealing with issues surrounding gender and sexual identity.

Digital technology provides an intermedial applied performance programme the opportunity of offering a virtual package with further pre-show and post-show activity. Engaging virtually offers young people the individual choice of whether to participate and to the level they wish to participate, whilst allowing for anonymity within that participation which is important when exploring challenging and sensitive issues which a young person may not be ready to do collaboratively or during a live event. In *Heterophobia* (2015), I used a pre-show video trailer¹² to enable young people to engage with the work in both content and style before they had attended the performance. Young people are accustomed to video trailers for television, Netflix and cinema. The urban style of the graphics and animation and the content of the direct address, spoken word in the video trailer is accessible and demonstrated to young people that this performance may be a little different to others they may have seen or more queer, the video also suggests the work has been made specifically for young people. In the foyer area of the mac arts centre, as well as live pop-up performances happening around the space with the characters there was also a space where we projected a video of the making process of *Heterophobia* (2015)¹³ which included rehearsals, interviews with the performers and myself. This enabled the young audiences to experience and understand part of the making process before they entered the space or the performance and to understand why we felt it was important to make this new piece of work for and with them. As previously discussed, part of the making strategy was to queer the work and this video enabled the young audience to be part of that process.

¹² <https://vimeo.com/83669142>

¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=42&v=iPzaXRlwyK4

The young audiences and the teachers were offered access to a *Heterophobia* website¹⁴ as a post-show resource, one hundred percent of teachers said they would use digital pre-show and post-show activity. TIE programmes have often been accompanied by a resource pack, hard copies handed or posted to teachers or later downloadable from a website with a programme of drama activities related to the performance. I am interested in resources that aren't only teacher led and can be accessed and utilised by young people individually or collaboratively in informal settings. The website offered the videos mentioned above, a digital poll, imagery from the show, support services, news and short videos of each section of the performance so that it could be watched by young people who had or hadn't seen the performance and they had the opportunity to decide how *Heterophobia* should end and the opportunity to make and film their own live ending. The concept of young people digitally choosing and controlling how performances end, digitally realising Boal's (1974) forum theatre methodology is an immensely powerful concept for the future of applied performance with young people.

Conclusion

The research questionnaire findings for *Heterophobia* (2015) demonstrated that the vast majority of young people empathised with Ryan and this was due to the binary switch of homosexuality and heterosexuality. As a result, the young people suggested the experience of this intermedial applied performance would impact upon their future behaviour and they would intervene if they witnessed homophobia in school or online. This evidence of a change of behaviour, suggests disruption and to disrupt heteronormativity is a queer act.

Current barriers to making queer work for young people lies in our compulsory heterosexual and hegemonic masculine society which results in misogynistic and homophobic behaviour so an introduction to queer performance work which offers alternative gender identities, partnerships and family representations needs to begin for children during their early years

¹⁴ <http://heterophobia.co.uk/>

before views become fixed or binarized. Similarly, training could be conducted with teachers and student teachers, so they fully understand the impact that fixed notions of heteronormativity has on LGBTQ+ young people and their mental health. Along with the impact hegemonic gender identities has on all young people; their teaching and resources should not rely on heterosexual or fixed gender models. This chapter suggests by offering a queer aesthetic to all young people, potentially we can engage all young people corporally and allow their imaginations to consider other, non-normative ways of being in the world. A queer aesthetic in applied performance with young people could therefore not just be about the sexual but also the social and by thinking about pedagogy in queer terms and as a means of queer activism, where young people can digitally change the ending and reimagine their futures. We can then begin to question whether queer combined with a sociological approach can signify other areas of identity for young people other than gender and sexuality, such as, race, ethnicity, disability and class.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This PhD research project process commenced in 2013, running until 2020, and within this timeframe, same-sex marriage was legalised in 2014, and regulations for LGBTQ+ inclusive education in schools in the UK to commence in September 2020 were passed in April 2019. However, in a Conservative, Brexit era which appears to be sidling to the far right, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime has significantly increased. Recent work by Andrew Moffat (2016) and his *No Outsiders* inclusive LGBTQ+ learning programme was met with extensive, religious fundamentalist protest in Birmingham which happens to be where this practice-as-research project was located. Some parents and other protesters suggested Moffat was ‘promoting homosexuality’ in primary schools, which was reminiscent of Section 28 (1988) rhetoric. Britain now has a new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, responsible for LGBTQ+ and human rights. Although he has a generally positive voting record on LGBTQ+ rights, the former journalist of the right-wing newspaper, *Spectator*, has also been quoted as referring to gay men as “tank topped bumboys” and objecting to ‘Labour’s appalling agenda, encouraging the teaching of homosexuality in schools, and all the rest of it’ (Johnson, 2000: 8). Johnson has appointed Gavin Williamson as education secretary who has previously voted against equal LGBTQ+ rights and same-sex marriage. It is Williamson who will lead in the conflict resolution around the protests against LGBTQ+ education in Birmingham. In January 2020, Johnson appointed Caroline Nokes who voted against same-sex marriage as parliament’s new LGBT and equalities chief. Nokes was the only MP to put her name forward to chair the equalities committee; her supporting statement made no reference to LGBTQ+ issues. This practice-as-research project and further practice-as-research in this area is critical to safeguard the mental health, well-being and rights of young LGBTQ+ people.

This thesis and practice-as-research project evidenced the existence of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity in society due to the pathologization and criminalisation of homosexuality throughout history.

Homophobia in schools is largely a result of the legacy of Section 28 (1988) evidenced in this thesis by Stonewall (LGBT) Charity and other third sector reports (2003, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019) conducted with young people and teachers, alongside research studies using sociological theories of gender, queer theory and educational frameworks and contexts. This claim is further supported by my own initial qualitative and quantitative research conducted with young people through the practice-as-research pilot project, *Heterophobia* (2014). This widespread homophobia leads to internalised homophobia for young LGBTQ+ people impacting mental health and well-being.

Heterophobia (2015) demonstrated a disruption of heteronormativity and an engagement with both a live and digital performative queer aesthetic. *Heterophobia* also proved to stand as an innovative pedagogical tool for teachers and student teachers. Through the process of this practice-as-research PhD, it became apparent that both research and training in this area were required for teachers to fully understand the impact that compulsory heterosexuality has on young people and their mental health and the importance not to only teach from a heteronormative lens. This practice-as-research project understood that young people and teachers in schools were not able to fully work outside of binarized frameworks because of a culture of compulsory heterosexuality and concludes the only way to effectively eliminate this thinking would be to introduce children to a queer aesthetic and queer narratives during their early years. This queer aesthetic within applied performance practice with young people could continue and develop through their young lives at an age appropriate level. The focus would then be about empowering young LGBTQ+ people, giving visibility to a diversity of young queer lives, identities and alternative family arrangements as opposed to homophobia and coming out narratives.

This learning is outside the scope of this practice-as-research project which was focused on working with young people aged thirteen to eighteen years to interrogate whether a queer piece of intermedial performance was able to disrupt their preconceived ideas around compulsory heterosexuality in an attempt to challenge homophobia in Birmingham schools. However, the shift in thinking is significant to inform future queer performance work with

children and young people. If these complex and sensitive issues were recognised and explored effectively in early years settings and primary school, it would no longer be necessary to teach them in secondary school. Stonewall's *Teachers' Report* (2014) confirmed nearly half of primary school teachers say that their pupils have experienced homophobic bullying, seventy per cent hear homophobic bullying and they have witnessed children become very upset if they are called 'gay'. Although, there has been research demonstrating that non-heterosexual young people are more likely to self-harm, be depressed or commit suicide as discussed earlier, previous research has not pinpointed when this develops or how it progresses. A new research study, published four years since this project began *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* journal demonstrated that children as young as ten who identify not to be heterosexual are more likely to demonstrate depressive symptoms than those who identify as heterosexual and these symptoms increased with age to a larger extent. The researchers concluded that prevention and early intervention were a priority and that more mentors and role-models are needed for sexual-minority young people (Irish et al, 2019: 91). Queer performance work with young people needs to start at a much younger age to protect young LGBTQ+ self-identifying children and young people's mental health.

Lindsay Amer argues for the importance of queer themes in children's theatre citing Catherine Wheel, Theatre Company's *White* (2012) and Emily Freeman's play, *And Then Came Tango* (2011). Amer uses Kathryn Bond Stockton's (2009) queer child construct and Matthew Reason's (2010) research investigating young children's perceptions of theatre to underpin her argument for the importance of queer themes in children's theatre. I managed to see Catherine Wheel Theatre Company's *White* (2012) at Imagine Children's Theatre Festival in 2011 before it went out on tour. Having seen the piece, I would describe its style of non-verbal, visual and physical storytelling and clowning for early year children as having an undefinably queer energy and aesthetic. It was made with queer intention; the piece explores a white world invaded by colour as a metaphor for diversity through two friends 'Cotton' and 'Winkle' who live together and are played by male actors. These characters look after the birdhouse and collect

the eggs that fall out of the sky, assigning a gender to each, 'girl' or 'boy' until a red egg falls, they have never encountered colour before, and they don't assign this egg with a gender. Slowly throughout the piece they begin to welcome further 'colour' into their lives and the birdhouse. *And Then Came Tango* (2011) was a controversial piece made in the US for children and family audiences, which depicting a same-sex couple of penguins at New York's Central Park Zoo. A later piece, *Penguins* was made by Paul Bosco McEneaney about the same same-sex story and is currently touring, internationally. This visually beautiful performance queerly dances through themes of friendship, identity, play and the ever-evolving meaning of a 'family' through the lens of two male penguins to which I had a queer sensori-emotional response, as an audience member I received the queer aesthetic offered to me through the performance by a queer maker with queer intention which was predominantly focused on younger audiences. Amer positions these two pieces of work as pioneering queer narratives for young children by making the argument that

Queer artistic content and progressive storytelling can have immense cultural impact with a potential to break apart pervading stigmas about LGBTQ+ people, particularly when considering children. When queer stories begin to be told and treated with the same level of normalcy with which heterosexual stories are treated, then queerness itself will then be perceived as the everyday, mundane way of life that it truly is, rather than as the inflammatory, inappropriate calamity it is still treated as today. (2016: 25)

In 2020, a practice born of a queer aesthetic for children and young people which is not only queer in narrative is beginning to emerge. I recently experienced *Fantabulosa*, with my queer family, a queer-positive children's drag-show made by Adam Carver, exploring the fluidity of gender through playful, interactive storytelling and dressing-up in public spaces. The piece was made and premiered in Birmingham in response to the *No Outsiders* protests and then went on to tour festivals across the UK. Similarly, Outbox Theatre uses a queer aesthetic in interdisciplinary performance practice to

tell unheard queer stories by queer artists. Outbox Theatre's work founded by Ben Buratta is intergenerational, therefore it is not only young person focused, but aims to bring LGBTQ+ communities together, across generations and cultures. All Outbox's live work is accompanied by a queer workshop outreach programme and they work with LGBTQ+ youth groups across the UK. Milk Presents, an associate company of Derby Theatre also create and tour queer protest work around the UK and are currently at the onset of creating a new piece of work specifically for/with young people. Intermedial queer applied performance if introduced to children in formative years could continue through their school years and this would then enable work to develop in an age appropriate queer fashion throughout young people's lives as a form of intervention against fixed, binarized thinking and heteronormative assumptions made about children. This work would no longer need to challenge homophobia or work within binaries but would be a space to explore identity, uncertainty and cultural visibility. The focus would be the empowerment of the young queer person as opposed to challenging the hegemonic heterosexual bully or challenging the young queer bully trying to remain invisible through homophobic bullying. Queer could stand for difference rather than the binary opposition of normative in a new area of queer intermedial performance for, with and by children and young people. The impact of the work would be measured through improving young LGBTQ+ mental health and a reduction in young LGBTQ+ suicide.

Funding cuts in schools under a Conservative government have resulted in a reduction of mental health and well-being services in schools. An inquiry in 2017 by MPs from health and education committees which joined forces for this purpose, suggested that half of all mental health conditions occur by the age of fourteen and loss of funds are resulting in a loss of counsellors and pastoral support as they try and cover funding gaps (DfE and DoH, 2017). Funding cuts in schools have also resulted in a rapid decline of cultural education and significant devaluing of the impact of the arts and arts education. In a political era in which Boris Johnson had appointed culture secretary Nicky Morgan who in her former role as education secretary previously said that 'arts subjects limit career choices' (2014) and that choosing art subjects 'could hold them back for the rest of

their lives' (2014). In February 2020, Oliver Dowden has taken over the post following Johnson's Cabinet reshuffle, we know little about Dowden's vision, but it is unlikely to be the inclusive vision a Labour government were offering. In response to Labour's suggested policy to integrate all private schools into state schools, Dowden suggested that losing private schools would be 'criminal.' (2019) The arts and education sectors have to find alternative methods for young people to access arts education. Dowden (2020) tweeted about the 'huge opportunities the UK has in tech, media and creative industries.' In a digital age and in the current political, financial and social climate, digital technology offers alternative pedagogical tools for arts education. I recently live streamed a performance, *Dead End*, into schools, the interdisciplinary and digitally immersive performance explored issues of male mental health in relation to sexual identity. Schools across the UK and an English School in Madrid asked for free access to the live streaming of this digitally immersive performance. Students were able to experience the live performance through a large screen at school as it was being performed. It was filmed in a way which enabled an audience to feel as if they were in the space watching it live and the students were able to digitally participate, interacting via social media platform Instagram, which enabled them to connect to the virtual *Dead End* community. Live streaming performances made specifically for young people into schools could potentially replace the former models of Theatre in Education in schools or school trips to the theatre, increasing accessibility and enabling further impact to much larger numbers and increased geographical areas, also, enabling young people to experience practice individually from their own homes whilst still being able to digitally connect to an online community. This practice-as-research project has enabled my later work to move in this direction.

The practice part of this PhD, *Heterophobia*, tested art forms with young people and positioned both digital technology and urban street art forms as new aesthetic forms of applied performance with young people, reflecting their digital culture and young lives. This thesis understands that this claim was valid in 2015 but recognises digital innovation and youth culture is ever evolving and needs to be young person led. That, in turn, suggests that all applied performance work made with young people needs

to be tested and evaluated with children and young people during the process. The findings of this practice-as-research project were that aesthetics are important to young people and that they have high aesthetic expectations. On a daily basis, young people are taking photographs on their smart phones, editing them and adding filters. They are making memes for social media and videos using their smartphones which they are sharing on YouTube and TikTok. They are artists, producers, participatory audiences and social media influencers. Surprisingly, the young audiences preferred live performance to the digital offer, but it was a combination of the two which enhanced their engagement, enabled a change in thinking around issues of sexuality and made the work feel authentic for them. It is recognised that this PaR happened five years ago, and it is possible the results now may be different. The digital technology used in practice needs to be current and familiar to young people, it needs to be easily accessible to them and currently trending for them to engage with it.

This project rejected the outreach concept of taking the work into schools due to existing issues of power and oppression which this thesis has evidenced to exist in schools. It was situated in a theatre as requested by the young audiences. The practice at mac Birmingham was able to create a transformed space which disrupted heteronormativity and traditional theatrical expectation. This thesis continues to question how theatres can become more versatile and flexible spaces to enable and support digital applied performance practice with young people and claims that digital technology is an essential element of the work because it is the digital dimension which offers young people a democratic space to create digital communities and reimagine their identities and futures. Digital technology is presented as a queer participatory pedagogical aesthetic in this practice and an opportunity for future queer exploration, disruption and experimentation with young people. Digital technology was used for pre-performance and post-performance activity. Including the use of REPWrite and a *Heterophobia* website which gave the young people the opportunity to create their own endings for the performance, reimagining a potential queer future for Ryan. This project recognised the value of young people making choices, leading the narrative, having the opportunity to disrupt normative narrative and form

and reframe their future contexts. The social media platform, Facebook, was specifically used as a strategy to form a virtual participatory community. One hundred percent of the young audiences agreed the inclusion of Facebook, enhanced the performance. The use of the social media platform, Facebook, was identified in this project as the queer intersection for live and digital applied performance, young people, sexuality and mental health.

I have since made work continuing to experiment with the concept of the young audiences / participants choosing and controlling the direction of performance. This has included young people using their smartphones to decide what happens next during the performance, using technology to activate forum theatre methodology so that the live performance follows the young people's digital choices. I have also offered young audiences an opportunity to digitally select whose character they would like to see developed in the next Outspoken performance.¹⁵ The young audiences across eight performances had the choice between two brothers, both struggling with their mental health. Reece had recently come out of prison and was demonstrating anger management issues and Kyle had underlying issues around his sexual identity. The young audiences overwhelmingly selected Kyle's story as the one they wanted to see developed. In 2019, this was developed into a production called *Dead End*¹⁶ the performance which explored Kyle's issues of mental health intersecting with his sexual identity enabled young people to use the current social media platform, Instagram, throughout the performance. The young people received extra narrative directly to their smartphones in the form of images with filters, emojis and hashtags throughout the performance and then they had the opportunity to collectively prevent the homosexual protagonist character's suicide via Instagram which was given an associated hash tag, #changetheending which they did overwhelmingly at every performance. The young audiences were in control of the performance and used social media to prevent a young male with mental health issues instigated by his sexuality committing suicide.

¹⁵ Short video edit of *Hyped* showing young people select the character's story they wanted to see developed in Outspoken's next piece of work:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP1yqokE7_c

¹⁶ Short video edit of *Dead End* showing innovative use of Instagram and young people #changetheending <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjOSkcQYt90&feature=youtu.be>

They disrupted the live ending; this represented a queer action. This disruption was part of the queer aesthetic of the piece. Social media offered a space for the queer intersection of the live and digital, youth, sexuality and mental health. This practice would not have been possible without the practice-as-research conducted by *Heterophobia* to better understand digital queer aesthetics in applied performance with young people and the opportunity social media provides as both a live and digital, participatory, queer, intervention tool. Similarly, I now use social media for pre and post show engagement rather than building websites as the platform enables the same engagement and content for less investment and is more likely to be utilised by young people.

The exciting concept about fusing live and digital performance is thinking in futuristic terms and trying to imagine what hasn't been created yet or what future audiences may want. How do we link the present with a possible future? When we discuss young people, we are also considering a future discourse as well as the present, as they not only represent current artists and consumers of culture, but they also represent future adult artists and audiences. The future of interactive digital technology in theatre most likely lies in the development of video gaming, virtual reality, avatars and holograms, motion graphics and capturing and 3D, 4D and 5D. The future of performance for and with young people has to be digitally immersive, experiential, sensual, engaging a range of emotions and senses in creative ways. This will require collaboration with videographers, digital experts, IT specialists, engineers, graphic designers, animators, sound designers and video game designers. The lines between immersive live art and applied performance will potentially blur in a climate which will force work to become more socially engaged and demand action. New work for and with young people may grow in importance as arts are removed from school curriculums and future thinking will focus around our future generations. Audience participation in performance which fuses live and digital performance will involve making choices using digital devices, developing virtual democracies and actively changing outcomes digitally. This will not take away from the liveness of the experience but the digital will enhance the aesthetic experience and what is possible, enabling an interactive, immersive and

participatory theatre. This sensori-emotional digital immersion lends itself well to the ongoing development of queer digital aesthetics in live performance.

Queering pedagogy offers queer applied performance makers the opportunity to politicise our work with young people, ensuring it is relevant and current to young lives. The use of digital technology and urban street arts offer both new and queer aesthetics for applied performance whilst queering work with children and young people can offer a new paradigm for applied performance practice with young people which has social and political objectives. A queer aesthetic in performance for queer young people empowers queer identities and voices; however, a queer aesthetic in applied performance for all young people offers an aesthetically accessible way of using the arts as a form of activism to shape and queer their futures, their identities and their world. There are currently examples of young activists who are achieving political change such as Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani activist for female education who was shot after taking an exam by a Taliban gunman in an attempt to take her life for her activism and the youngest Nobel prize winner. Similarly, Greta Thunberg, a sixteen-year-old Swedish climate and environmental activist living with Asperger's syndrome, gave a passionate and powerful speech to the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019 criticising world leaders for a lack of urgency or policy to respond to climate crisis. The meeting of current art and young activism was realised through DJ, Fatboy Slim's fusion of Thunberg's speech and his track "Right Here, Right Now" demonstrating the potential in this approach to fuse art and activism to increase accessibility, visibility and a young voice. Queering applied performance, could offer young people a performative form of protest, potentially providing intersections with other pressing issues for young people such as the environment and mental health as decided by them and other areas of identity such as disability, race, ethnicity, religion and class.

This thesis has unpacked the emergence of alternative gender and sexuality politics through the development of a performative queer aesthetic for work with young people (Figure 7.1). A queer applied performance aesthetic utilising the potential of digital innovation as a queer space could

offer all young people an opportunity to reimagine their identities and empower their voices to change their world! In the words of Campbell and Farrier, 'the performance event comes first: the articulation is what follows. We are interested where performance can lead queer' (2016, p. 4). I am now interested where children and young people can lead queer applied performance and digital queer participatory aesthetics? The queer space in between live and digital applied performance and the potential for digital disruption of live performance as a queer aesthetic. The intersections of queer applied performance with other areas of identity such as race, ethnicity, religion, disability and class; with other disciplines such as neuroscience and neuroethics and the queer potential of reimagining future contexts with children and young people.



Figure 7.1 Image from *Heterophobia* (2015) depicting a queer aesthetic for young people

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Appendix A

Research Findings from *Heterophobia* (2014)

Questionnaires were given to all young audience members at the schools performances of *Heterophobia* on Thursday 3rd April at 1.30pm and Friday 4th April at 10.30am at The Birmingham Hippodrome to fill in immediately before the performance (pre-shop research cards) in the foyer and immediately after the performance in the theatre (post show research cards). The young people posted their research cards into boxes once completed.

The schools and Further Education Colleges which attended the school performances and were part of this research were Ellowes School (Dudley), Walsall College, Great Barr, Birmingham Metropolitan College and Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls.

*(Further info about schools and groups needed)

On Thursday 3rd April:

61 young people filled in and posted pre-show research cards.

57 young people filled in and posted post-show research cards.

On Friday 4th April:

86 young people filled in and posted pre- show research cards.

75 young people filled in and posted post-show research cards.

PRE-SHOW:

Q1. Have you ever been to the theatre before?

Thursday:

Yes: 57 (93.4%)

No: 4 (6.6%)

Friday:

Yes: 80 (93%)

No: 6 (7%)

93.23%

Analysis: The majority of these young people had been to the theatre before. It appears through answers to other questions and from correspondence with teachers that the majority of school groups who came were drama groups and young people who had selected drama / performing arts as an option to study at either Level 2 or 3.

*It would have been useful to ask their age, gender, school and whether they were studying drama within this research questionnaire.

Q2. If yes, which theatres have you been to?

All theatres listed were ticked but the most popular answer was the Birmingham Hippodrome followed by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Thursday:

The Birmingham Hippodrome: 41 (67.2%)

The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: 30 (49.2%)

Friday:

The Birmingham Hippodrome: 50 (58.1%)

The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: 35 (40.7%)

* It would have been useful to ask the young people what genres of theatre they had seen and how often they attended the theatre. I would assume many attend the large-scale musicals or pantomimes at the Birmingham Hippodrome. It would have been interesting to know if they had attended performances in The Door or main house at The REP.

Q3. Do you enjoy going to the theatre?

Thursday:

Yes: 57 (100%)

No: 0 (0%)

Friday:

Yes: 79 (98.8%)

No: 1 (1.3%)

Analysis: These young theatre attenders enjoy going to the theatre. When asked why they enjoyed the theatre, the most common responses included:

'live'

'It's exciting'

'It's fun'

'I want to do it as a job'

'It's my passion.'

Filling these questionnaires in a theatre may have had an impact on these results.

Q4. Have you experienced any Theatre in Education at your school?

Thursday:

Yes: 52 (85.3%)

No: 6 (9.8%)

Didn't answer question: 3 (4.9%)

Of those that had experienced TIE:

38 found it exciting (**73.1%**)

14 found it good (**26.9%**)

0 found it boring (**0%**)

Friday:

Yes: 63 (73.3%)

No: 18 (20.9%)

Didn't answer question: 5 (5.8%)

Of those that had experienced TIE:

42 found it exciting (**48.8%**)

18 found it good (**20.9%**)

1 found it boring (**1.2%**)

2 didn't answer the question. (**2.3%**)

Analysis: The majority of the young people had experienced TIE and had found it exciting or good.

Q5. Do you prefer the theatre or the cinema?**Thursday:**

Theatre: 32 (52.5%)

Cinema: 26 (42.6%)

2 (3.3%) young people ticked both boxes and 1 (1.6%) didn't tick either.

Friday:

Theatre: 50 (58.1%)

Cinema: 29 (33.7%)

5 (5.8%) young people ticked both boxes and 2 (2.3%) didn't tick either.

55.3% preferred the theatre to the cinema.

Analysis: Over half of the young people who filled these research cards in prefer theatre to cinema.

Q6. Do you do any of the following?

Dance, act, sing, MC / Rap, DJ / VJ, Produce and make music, spoken word, write, make videos and films?

Thursday:

55 (90.2%) did 1 or more of the art forms listed above.

6 (9.8 %) did none of them.

Friday:

80 (93%) did 1 or more of the art forms listed above.

6 (7%) did none of them.

91.6%

Analysis: The majority of these young people are engaging with the arts as artists. In some of the cases the 6 who did none of these art forms were none-attenders of theatre; however, some of these none- attenders of theatre were still engaged in art as artists.

Q7. Do you think young people are bullied for being Gay?**Thursday:**

Yes: 57 (93.4%)

No: 4 (6.6%)

Friday:

Yes: 83 (96.5%)

No: 3 (3.5%)

Analysis: A high majority on both days suggested young people were bullied at school for being Gay supporting the Stonewall and Youth Chances statistics. They were asked were this happened and could tick more than 1 box:

At School: (Thurs) 55 – 90.2% (Fri) 79 - 91.9%

Online: (Thurs) 47 – 77.1% (Fri) 77 – 89.5%

In the Street: (Thurs) 36 – **59%** (Fri) 65 – **75.6%**
 Other: (Thurs) 19 – **31.2%** (Fri) 37 – **43%**

On both days, 'at school' was the most popular answer with very similar results closely followed by bullying 'online'. The most common causes suggested by the young people were because:

People thought it was 'wrong' or 'didn't agree' with it.

'Fear' or people were 'scared'.

'It was different'.

People were "ignorant".

People 'judge' or are 'judgemental'.

People 'don't understand'.

Because of 'society'.

Because of 'pressure' and 'bullying'.

People look 'different' or 'strange'.

POST SHOW:

Q1. Which bit of Heterophobia did you enjoy or not enjoy?

Of those that filled it in:

	Thursday - Enjoy	Thursday – Not Enjoy	Friday – Enjoy	Friday – Not Enjoy
Dancing	55 (96.5%)	1 (1.8%)	74 (98.7%)	0 (0%)
Singing	55 (96.5%)	1 (1.8%)	73 (97.3%)	0 (0%)
Spoken Word	54 (94.7%)	1 (1.8%)	69 (92%)	0 (0%)
Acting	56 (98.2)	0 (0%)	71 (94.7%)	0 (0%)
Music	55 (96.5%)	1 (1.8%)	70 (93.3%)	3 (4%)
The videos / film / animation	50 (87.7%)	3 (5.3%)	68 (90.7%)	3 (4%)
The Game Show	52 (91.2%)	3 (5.3%)	62 (82.7%)	8 (10.7%)
Lights	53 (93%)	1 (1.8%)	69 (92%)	0 (0%)
Set	51 (89.5%)	1 (1.8%)	54 (72%)	6 (8%)
Costume	48 (84.2%)	6 (10.5%)	63 (84%)	6 (8%)
Pre-show – AR / VJing etc	45 (78.9%)	6 (10.5%)	64 (85.3%)	3 (4%)

Analysis: The 'live' elements of the performance scored higher than the 'digital' elements.

Q2. Did you find the performance exciting, good, not good or boring?

Thursday:

Exciting: 44 (**77.19%**)

Good: 12 (**21.05%**)

Not Good: 1 (**1.75%**)

Boring: 0 (**0%**)

Friday:

Exciting: 62 (**82.66%**)

Good: 13 (**17.33%**)

Not Good: 0 (0%)

Boring: 0 (0%)

1 young person added 'awesome'.

Q3. How do you think the performance should have ended?

The majority felt they liked the ending as it was and used words such as '*perfect*', '*amazing*' and '*powerful*'.

The next most popular endings were:

- Happy ending.
- Mum accepting Ryan.
- Ryan and Alice together.
- Everyone accepting Ryan and Alice.

There were a few suggestions of 'individual bows' and 'fireworks'

Q4. Did the performance make you think any differently about people being bullied because of their sexuality?

Thursday:

Yes: 38 (66.7%)

No: 19 (33.3%)

5 of the 'no' answers commented they already knew it was wrong. (8.8%)

Friday:

Yes: 35 (46.7%)

No: 29 (38.7%)

13 of the 'no' answers commented they already knew it was wrong. (17.3%)

If yes, how?

The most common comments:

- 'It showed a different side to it'
- 'Made me more aware'
- 'Made me see people judge too much'
- 'Made me think'
- 'Showed how people are treated'
- 'Shocking'
- 'Statistics'
- 'Can now relate'
- 'Didn't know how much it would affect them'
- 'Now more accepting – still wrong'
- 'They are the same'
- 'Think about what you say'

Analysis: The majority felt that it did change their thinking.

* I hadn't accounted for those who already felt homophobia was wrong or identified to being LGBTQ.

Q5. Did the digital technology – the films, animation, AR make the performance better?

Thursday:

Yes: 51 (89.5%)

No: 5 (8.8%)

Didn't fill it in: 1 (1.8%)

Friday:

Yes: 62 (82.7%)

No: 9 (12%)

Didn't fill it in: 3 (4%)

Added not sure: 1 (1.3%)

If yes, how:

Common answers:

'set'

'showed inside and outside'

'connect with young people'

'added to story'

'visually pleasing'

'alive'

'better'

'standout'

'realistic'

'believable'

'mixed acting and technology'

'more emotion'

'helped tell the story'

'more exciting'

'effect'

'action'

Analysis: The majority felt the digital technology made *Heterophobia* better.

Q6. If there was further online stuff available after this performance would you go and have a look?

Thursday:

Yes: 41 (71.9%)

No: 14 (24.6%)

Didn't fill it in: 2 (3.5%)

Friday:

Yes: 63 (84%)

No: 9 (12%)

Didn't fill it in: 3 (4%)

*I should have asked would thy prefer this to be on a website or app.

Q7. Would you like to be a performance artist?

Thursday:

Yes: 49 (86%)

No: 7 (12.3%)

Didn't fill it in: 1 (1.8%)

Friday:

Yes: 60 (84%)

No: 11 (14.6%)

Didn't fill it in: 4 (5.3%)

Added not sure: 1 (1.3%)

Analysis: The majority of these young people wanted to be a performance artist.

Appendix B

Research Findings from *Heterophobia* (2015)

Questionnaires were given to all young audience members at the school performances of *Heterophobia* on Wednesday 14th, Thursday 15th and Friday 16th January 2015 at 10.30am and 1.30pm at mac Birmingham to fill in immediately after the performance in the theatre. The young people posted their research cards into boxes once completed.

The schools and Further Education Colleges which attended the school performances and were part of this research were Ellowes School (two groups at different performances), Great Barr School, Arthur Terry School, Four Dwellings School, Perry Beeches School and Birmingham Metropolitan College.

181 young people filled in post-show questionnaires over the three-day period.

Q1. Was there a moment you started to care about Ryan?

Yes: 178

No: 1

Didn't answer: 2

99% of the young audiences cared about Ryan

Q2. Did you want to help Ryan?

Yes: 170

No: 6

Didn't answer: 5

97% of the young audiences wanted to help Ryan.

Q3. Do you think any of the characters could have helped Ryan?

Most identified 'Mums', 'teacher', 'Alice' or 'friends'. One suggested 'the police'.

Q4. What do you think *Heterophobia* was about?

Sample of responses:

'being different', 'equity', 'conforming', 'homophobia', 'discrimination', 'being gay and lesbian', 'people finding straight people strange', 'gays', 'everyone is equal', 'straight people coming out', 'an opposite world', 'gay people not accepted in society', 'reverse', 'sexuality'.

Q5. Have you ever experienced or witnessed this kind of behaviour at school or online?

Yes: 107

No: 69

Didn't answer: 5

61% had witnessed / experienced this kind of behaviour at school or online.

Q6. Having seen *Heterophobia* would your actions now change if you witnessed this kind of behaviour at school or online?

Yes: 140

No: 12

Didn't answer: 7

18 answered they already know it is wrong.

80% suggested their actions would change and 10% suggested they already knew homophobic behaviour was wrong.

Q7. Did you join in with Facebook comments during the performance?

Yes: 45

No: 125

Didn't answer: 6

No, but wanted to: 3

26% joined in with Facebook comments. All could see the Facebook activity as it was projected on a screen.

Q8. Do you think the use of social media and digital technology (films / projections) added to the performance?

Yes: 181

No: 0

100% of the young audiences felt social media added to the performance

Comments:

'Real life posts'

'allowed audience to take part'

'real'

'modern'

'how it is'

'interactive'

Q9. Which art form did you find most enjoyable?

'All of it' scored highest

Second highest 'pre-show' and 'digital'

Q10. Do you think this performance related to young people?

Yes: 173

No: 3

Didn't answer: 5

96% of the young audience felt the performance related to them.

Why?

'because they were young'

'this is how it is'

'used social media'

'because people get bullied'

'it's happening'

Q11. What word would you use to describe this performance?

Most popular words used:

'amazing', 'slay', 'awesome', 'emotional', 'truthful', 'different', 'unique', 'true', 'deep', 'emotional', 'inspirational', 'perfect', 'inspirational'.

Q12. Which was your favourite bit?

Most popular responses:

'Lady Gaga', 'dancing', 'all of it', 'glowsticks pre-show', 'rap', 'kiss', 'song at the end'

Q13. Any further feedback or comments?

'I would like to see what happened in the end'

'I loved it'

'I would definitely like to watch it again'

'Well done'

'I would come back a third time'

'I thought it was amazing'

'I loved the dancing'

'more plays should be like this, more relatable.'

'one of the best uses of social media I have ever seen.'

'when's the next one?'

'it was amazing and touching and made me think about how those who are gay feel.'

'can I have a free pass to the next play?'

'I thought about a lot of stuff going on in my own life and this has helped me answer a lot of questions, so thank you.'

'when we can join in means we focus more'

'I think it opened my eyes to how everyone is equal no matter their sexuality.'

PGCE Student Teacher Feedback

10 PGCE Student Teachers attended and completed post-show questionnaires.

Q1. In your opinion, does homophobia exist in your school**Amongst Students?**

Yes: 10 (100%)

No: 0

Amongst Staff?

Yes: 2 (20%)

No: 8 (80%)

Q2. Do you hear students use homophobic language?

Yes: 10 (100%)

No: 0

Q3. Do you hear staff use homophobic language?

Yes: 2 (20%)

No: 8 (80%)

Q4. If you witnessed homophobic behaviour at school would you feel as though you could challenge it?

Yes: 9 (90%)

No: 1 (10%)

Q5. Do you think performances like this could be used to challenge homophobia in schools?

Yes: 10 (100%)

No: 0

Q6. Was there any part of the performance that made you think differently about homophobia in schools?

'I knew it was present at schools, but it has now made me aware how to tackle it.'

'I know this is an area that needs to be addressed.'

'I knew a lot already.'

'That we as teachers need to be aware of our student's emotional needs.'

'schools need to use this information in small workshops / assemblies.'

Q7. Would you use further online resources linked to this performance?

Yes: 10 (100%)

No: 0

Q8. Can you identify any key moments that supported your own learning around issues of homophobic bullying?

'social media', 'Facebook' 'online bullying'.

'Current society are very vocal so abuse can become more destructive.'

'Feelings of isolation Ryan and Alice felt, showed that bullying can devastate across the board.'

Q9. How would you use these key moments in your teaching?

'In drama lessons'

'With dealing with abuse or bullying.'

'I'm a drama teacher which is perfect for exploring these things.'

'Be aware as a teacher need to take time out and support learning.'

'students would be able to identify with the emotion even if this area of bullying not impacting on them.'

'workshops with company'.

Q10. What would be the barriers in your school to this learning and teaching?

'Students and teachers' willingness to change'

'None, the school recognises homophobia'

'there wouldn't be any'

'private school – very reserved upper-class backgrounds'

'appropriate to all ages'

'some members of staff might object to such open content, depending on the school'

Q11. Any further feedback or comments?

'Excellent',

'loved it, somebody hug Ryan for me he needs it'

'fabulous performances'

'I really enjoyed this performance'

'it was a brilliant performance'

'fab, interactive, engaging'

'loved the song at the end'

'very good performance, truly engaging, dynamic, current performance.'

Teacher Feedback

12 Teachers completed post-show questionnaires.

Q1. In your opinion, does homophobia exist in your school

Amongst Students?

Yes: 10 (83%)

No: 2 (17%)

Amongst Staff?

Yes: 4 (33%)

No: 8 (67%)

Q2. Do you hear students use homophobic language?

Yes: 8 (67%)

No: 4 (33%)

Q3. Do you hear staff use homophobic language?

Yes: 4 (33%)

No: 8 (67%)

Q4. If you witnessed homophobic behaviour at school would you feel as though you could challenge it?

Yes: 10 (83%)

No: 12 (17%)

Q5. Do you think performances like this could be used to challenge homophobia in schools?

Yes: 12 (100%)

No: 0

Q6. Was there any part of the performance that made you think differently about homophobia in schools?

Yes: 3

No: 2

Didn't Respond: 7

Q7. Would you use further online resources linked to this performance?

Yes: 12 (100%)

No: 0

Q8. Can you identify any key moments that supported your own learning around issues of homophobic bullying?

'lack of parent support'

'nothing in particular'

'peer pressure, notion of mob-mentality'

'monologue self-harm and suicide'

'spoken poetry and monologue'

'there's not a lot of overt homophobic bullying to teachers'

5 x N/A

Q9. How would you use these key moments in your teaching?

'It would be difficult to explore this subject, apart from PSHE where it is part of the curriculum.'

'in dance and drama'

'approach the issue especially with black and Asian males.'

'non-teaching -support staff'

'to discuss real characters experiences'

'challenge right / wrong'

'thought situation scenarios'

4 x no responses

Q10. What would be the barriers in your school to this learning and teaching?

'nobody has the time, but we need to make the time to listen and understand.'

'there wouldn't'

'finding the appropriate people to talk about such issues'

'misunderstanding / lack of awareness of its importance'

'the curriculum'

'parent objections, student attitudes'

'getting parents sometimes to support'

'language'

4 x no responses

Q11. Any further feedback or comments?

'Stunning'

'Please take it to the Fringe'

'Absolute pleasure to watch'

'Great performance – could you tour schools'

'outstanding and moving performance'

'please record for future use to support PSHE whole schools'

'a workshop after performance at school would be great.'

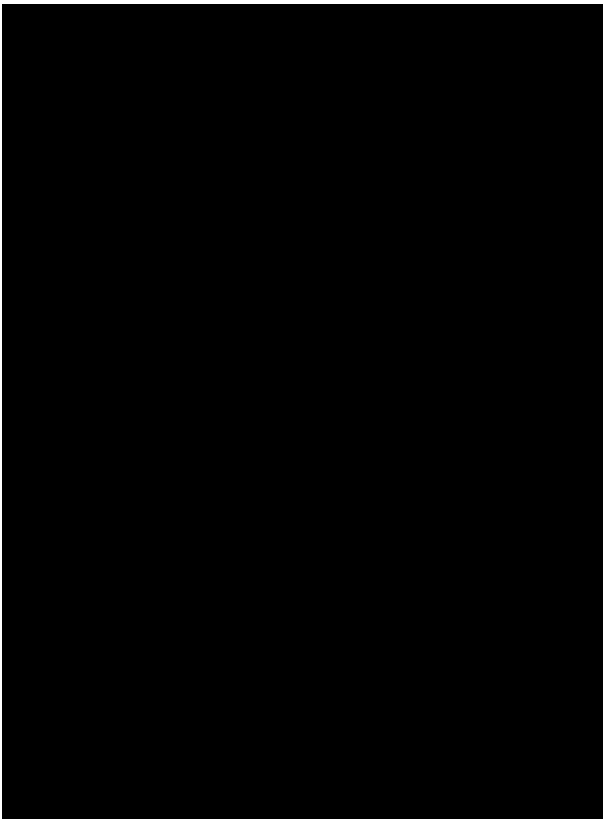
Appendix C

A Facebook Transcript from 10.30am performance of *Heterophobia* (2015) 15th January 2015.

██████████ with ██████████

[7 mins](#)

CANT WAIT TO SEE MY BABY. Hurry up!!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[5 mins](#)

Am so not about skool right now

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- ██████████ likes this.
-

██████████ at ██████████

[36 mins](#)

In ██████████ class again! What is my life!!! Man needs to get gonnneeeee!!!!

[Like](#) · [Share](#)



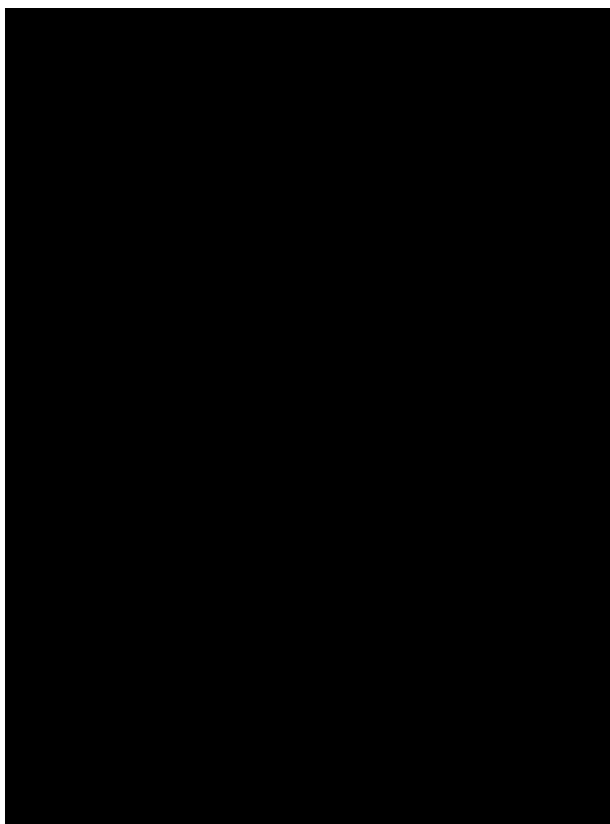
██████████ U ain't getting me in that class unless I have to yo

[5 mins](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

██████████

[2 mins](#)

WHERE ARE YOU ██████████ SCHOOL SUCKS WITHOUT MY GIRL!!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[2 mins](#)

So bored of school already! YAWN

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.

██████████ is going.

[13 mins](#)

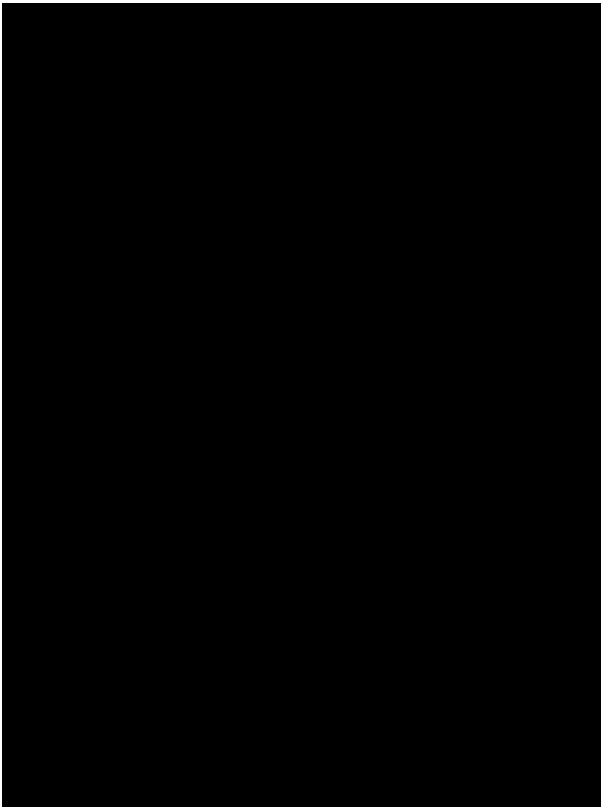
[Like](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.

██████████

[5 mins](#) · ██████████

[#standard](#) behavior in ██████████ Class!!!! Me & ██████████!!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.

██████████

[5 mins](#) · ██████████

dis man be too much mahn!!!!

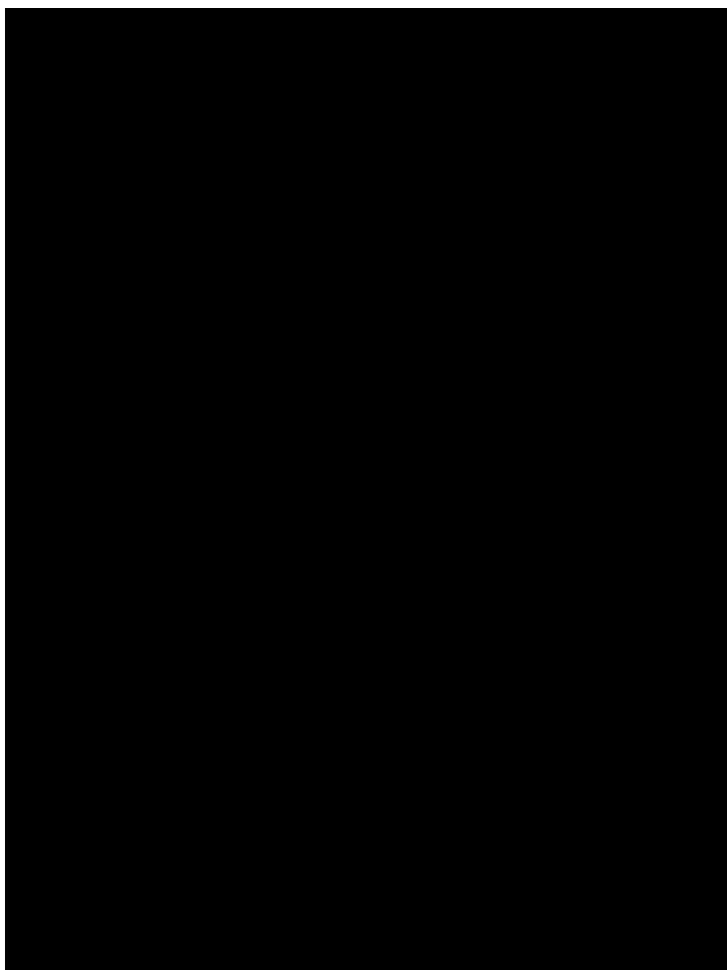
[Like](#) · [Share](#)

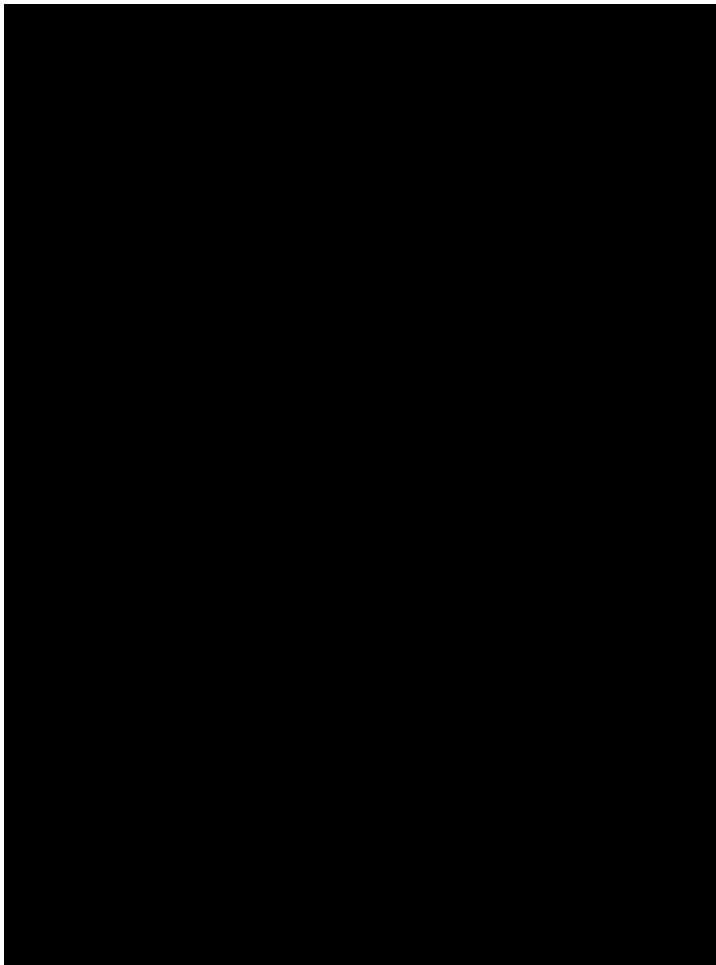
- ██████████ likes this.

██████████

[5 mins](#)

HURRRRRRRY UP. I MISS YOU!!!!





[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[Just now](#)

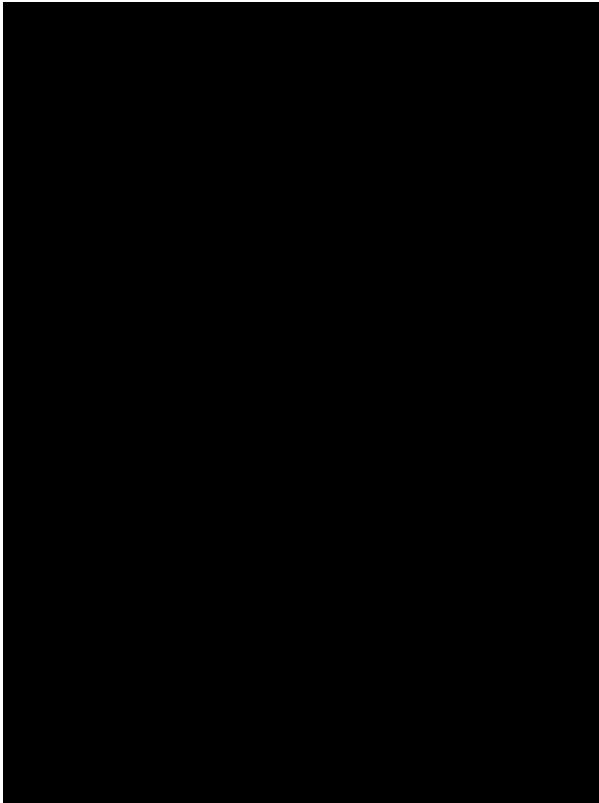
Fight in class so early in the morning! Skool is pure bashment today!!! Guess it ain't gonna be too bad after all

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[5 mins](#) · ██████████

Dat Str8 boi in trouble agen ██████████



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.

[REDACTED]

[3 mins](#)

Seriously hyped for Pride this weekend!!! 'We're here, we're queer, so everybody cheer' 🤩

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.

[REDACTED]

[5 mins](#)

OMG [REDACTED] GAGA IS AT PRIDEEEEEEE

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.
-

[REDACTED]

[5 mins](#) · [REDACTED]

SHUT THE FRONT DOOR!!! Just been told by ma bro that GAGA is headlining PRIDE!!!n [REDACTED] i got you that backstage pass bruv!!!! [REDACTED]

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.
-

[REDACTED]

[4 mins](#)

PRIDEEEEEEEE!!!!!! Hope straight boy isn't there. VOMMMM.

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.
-

[REDACTED]

[4 mins](#)

[REDACTED] u going pride?

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.
-

[REDACTED]

[5 mins](#)

Who's going pride?

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] and [3 others](#) like this.
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Meeeeeeeeeeee baby duh

[5 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Well obviously!

[REDACTED]

[3 mins](#) · [REDACTED]

BEST BE SEEING Y'ALL @ PRIDE !!!

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

[REDACTED]

[3 mins](#)

Straight boy came in late today but that ain't none of my business though

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.

[REDACTED]

[6 mins](#) · [REDACTED]

Hiiiiii *smile emoticon*

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.

- [View 3 more comments](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Did u hear about the fight earlier girl? Straight boy came in late

[4 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Yeah but why did you have to start on him?

[4 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Coz he's a straight boiiii man! We all know he ay normal!!!!

[3 mins](#) · [Like](#) · [2](#)

[REDACTED]

[5 mins](#)

I am so about pride right now!! Imma get on like I mek myself!

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I pride

[3 mins](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I know remember last pride?! lol

[REDACTED]

[3 mins](#)

That couple on the news is are so wrong!! Stop for in your rules on people!! Stop ruining it for everyone else!

[REDACTED]

[5 mins](#)

Omg so pride my girlfriend is at work!! Please post all your photos so i can show her x cheers luv ya!!22

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.



[REDACTED] She loves Gaga!!

[REDACTED]

[8 mins](#)

That couple on the news is are so wrong!! Stop for in your rules on people!! Stop ruining it for everyone else!

[Like](#) · [Share](#)



[REDACTED] I know right its so gross!!

[7 mins](#) · [Like](#)



[REDACTED] Don't even

[6 mins](#) · [Like](#)


[REDACTED]

[11 mins](#) · 

Hiiiiii *smile emoticon*


[Like](#) · [Share](#)

-  likes this.
- 

 Yo yo yo what up!?


[12 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- 

 HOLLA @ YA GURRRLLLLL!!!!


[12 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- 

 Just at Heterophobia lol


[12 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- 

 Did u hear about the fight earlier girl? Straight boy came in late


[12 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- 

 Yeah but why did you have to start on him?

[11 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- 

 Coz he's a straight boiiii man! We all know he ay normal!!!!

[9 mins](#) · [Like](#) · [2](#)

- 

████████ Allow!

[6 mins](#) · [Like](#)

████████

[8 mins](#)

████████, can you let my sister know that she has to be back at 8? Xxx

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- ██████████

████████ That's if she can peel herself away from your sister hahahahaha xxx

[7 mins](#) · [Like](#)

████████

[8 mins](#) · ██████████

Question for Y'all how can dat ██████████ even go to pride man when he's straight? ITS A GAY WORLD ██████████ ██████████

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- ██████████ and ██████████ like this.
- ██████████

████████ Vommm

████████

[4 mins](#)

See me right, I am so proud of who I am! Not everyone here can say that...

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.
-

[REDACTED]

[3 mins](#) · [REDACTED]

WAVE YA GLOWSTICKS IN THE AIR SAY WAVE YA GLOWSTICKS IN
THE AIIIIIRRRR!!!!!!!!!!

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.
-

[REDACTED]

[3 mins](#)

Pride



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[10 mins](#)

DO PEOPLE REALLY THINK ITS OK TO BE DIFFERENT. URGH. OPINIONS FRIENDS?!!!

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

• ██████████

██████████ URGHHHHHHH STRAIGHT BOY

[6 mins](#) · [Like](#)

• ██████████

██████████ ██████████ !????

[6 mins](#) · [Like](#)

• ██████████

██████████ Yeh when it comes to hair colour and music taste etc Yeh!!!!!! Anything other than that Na man that's dutty!!! ██████████

[6 mins](#) · [Like](#)

• ██████████

██████████ Urghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh not straight though. Stand out but at least be normal in it?!

[5 mins](#) · [Like](#)

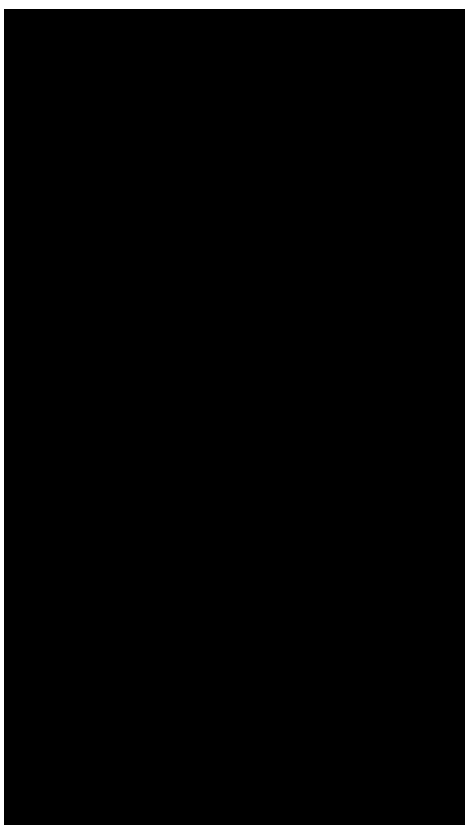
• ██████████

██████████ Well I mean I suppose it don't matter does it? It's not like it's the end of the world. Everyone's being a bit extra don't u think?

[REDACTED]

[4 mins](#)

Omg its Gaga



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] like this.

[REDACTED]

[4 mins](#)

Pride cake me and the gf made



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] and [2 others](#) like this.

[REDACTED]

[5 mins](#)

Jheeeze



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] like this.
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Amazing!!!!

[4 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] OMG GAGAAAAA I THINK I JUST PEED

[REDACTED]

[4 mins](#)

Wooah!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.

██████████

[1 min](#)

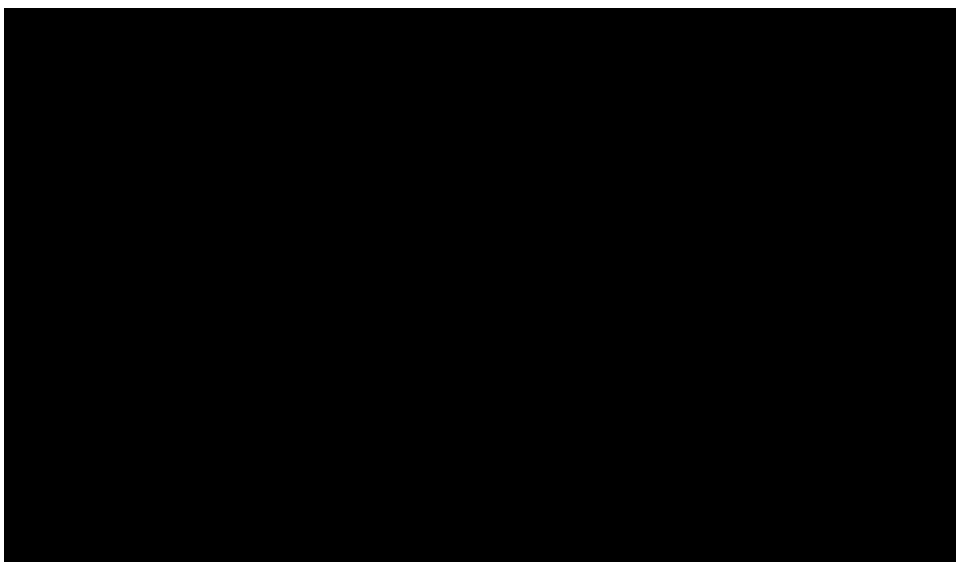
Dis boy needs tuh stop he chat

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████████████

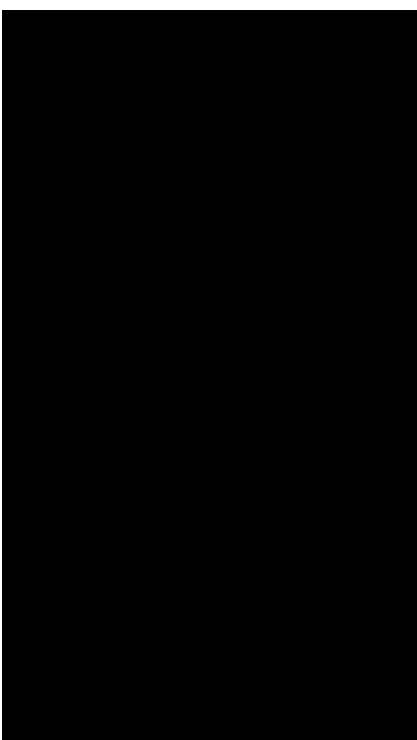
[Just now](#)

██████████ that bass



[Redacted]

[3 mins](#)



[00:10](#)


[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.
- [Redacted]

[Redacted] As if i missed this ! Mom got stuck in traffic

[2 mins](#) · [Like](#)



 Ahhhh sorry babes it was amazin



[Just now](#)

Go Gaga! X



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [4 people](#) like this.



[1 min](#)

[#Moves](#)



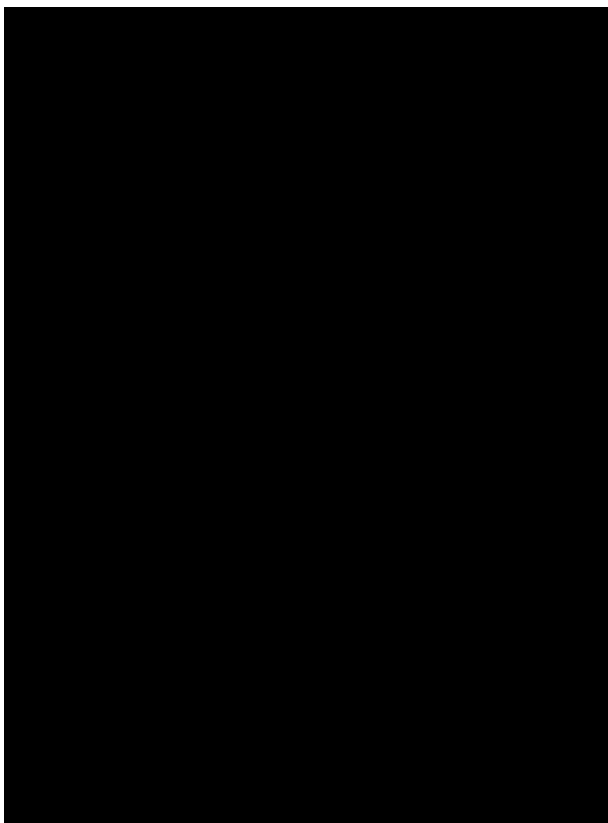
[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.



[2 mins](#)

Happy up I'm de ppl place



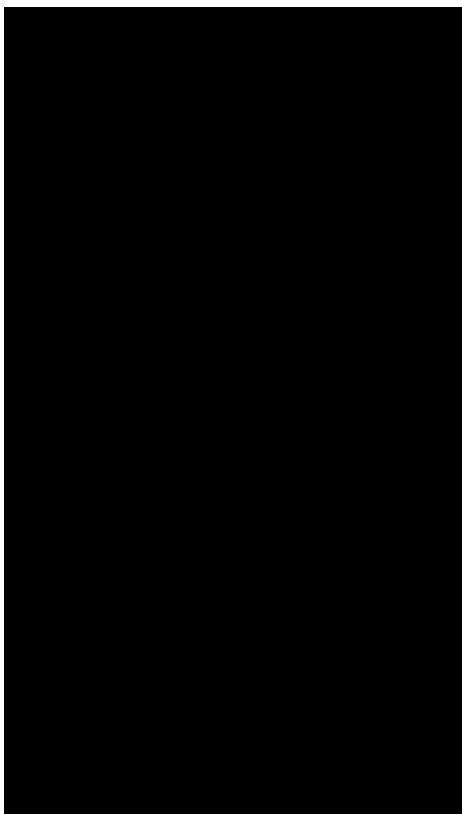
[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.

[REDACTED]

[1 min](#)

OMG I MET HER!! LOVE HER SO MUCH [REDACTED]



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

•

[4 people](#) like this.

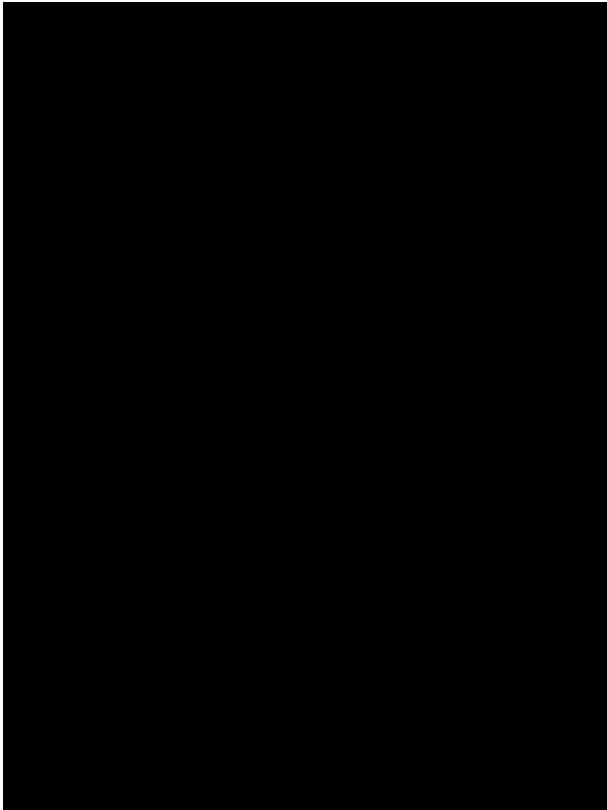


 Waaaaah lucky



[1 min](#) · 

Best mates @ last she knows man she knows!!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] likes this.

[REDACTED]

[Just now](#)

Word on the street [REDACTED] doesn't want [REDACTED] any more she wants
[REDACTED]

XOXO Gossip Girl

[REDACTED]

[Just now](#)

Gaga why did you go... !?



[REDACTED]

[Just now](#)

Omgggg!!!! HETERO!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [REDACTED] Stop hatin

[10 mins](#) · [Like](#)



[REDACTED] How u mean don't hate? U wuld want dat to be ur brother?

[2 mins](#) · [Like](#)

[REDACTED] Mi nuh care hes blud at d end of d day i wud styl luv him

[1 min](#) · [Like](#)



[1 min](#)

Word on the street [REDACTED] doesn't want [REDACTED] any more she wants



XOXO Gossip Girl

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.



██████████ Mad ting

[1 min](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)



██████████ WHAT?!

[Just now](#) · [Like](#)

██████████ Just saw them kissing

- ██████████ Das not right b? U serious?!

[2 mins](#) · [Like](#)

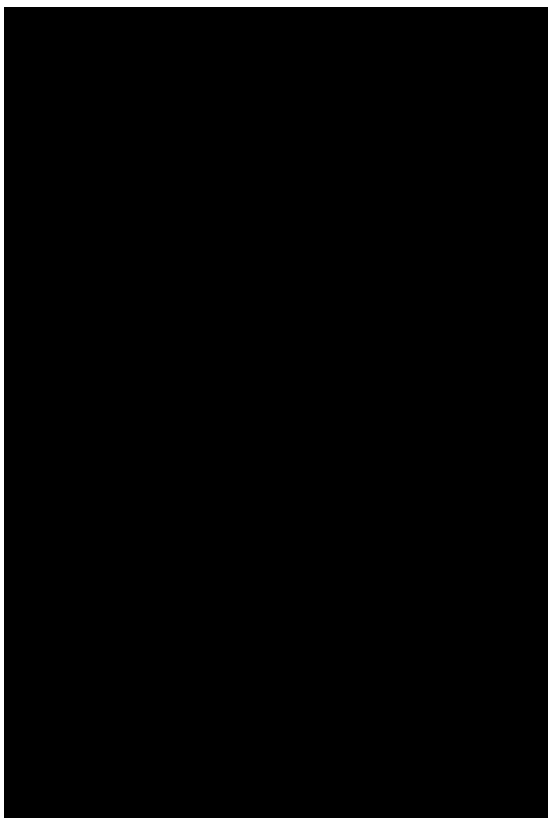


████████████████████ That's so straight... ew



[4 mins](#) · ██████████

Dutttyyyyy straight boiiiiiii ! FILTHY!!!!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [redacted] likes this.
- [redacted]

[redacted] What!!! That is distugusting!!!

[3 mins](#) · [Like](#)

- [redacted]

[redacted] Wheeeeeyyyyy

[redacted] Seriously?! Do you have to post it everywhere?

[2 mins](#) · [Like](#)

[redacted]

[2 mins](#)

Heartbroken. Single AGAIN!!

[redacted]

[2 mins](#)

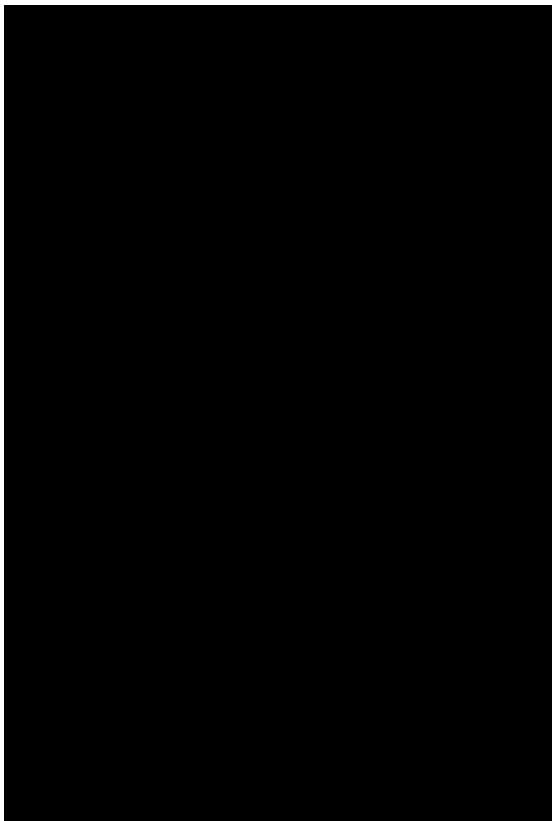
Uggh feeling sick hetreo kissing!! How does it make you feel? Sickening too?

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[3 mins](#) · ██████████

If I was his moms id disown it!!!! Boiiii is diseased!!!!

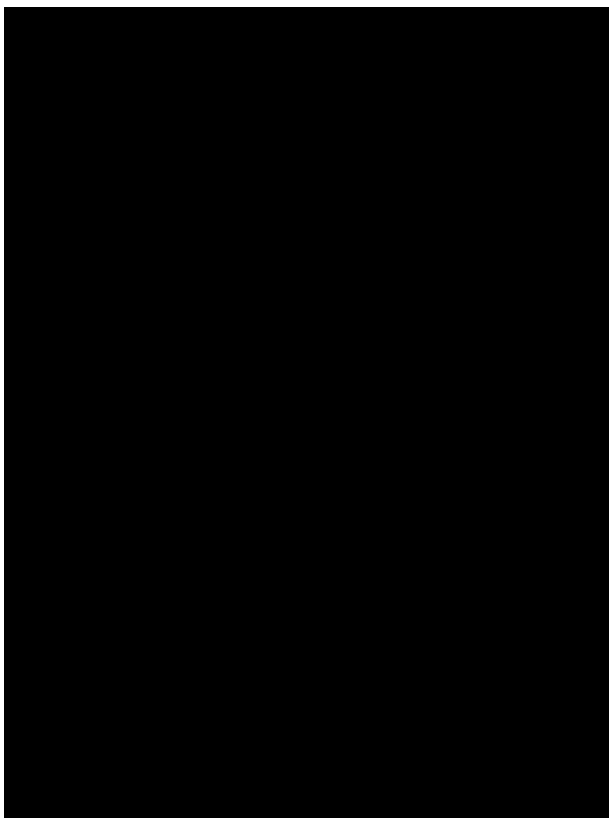


[Like](#) · [Share](#)

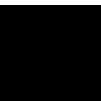
██████████

[2 mins](#)

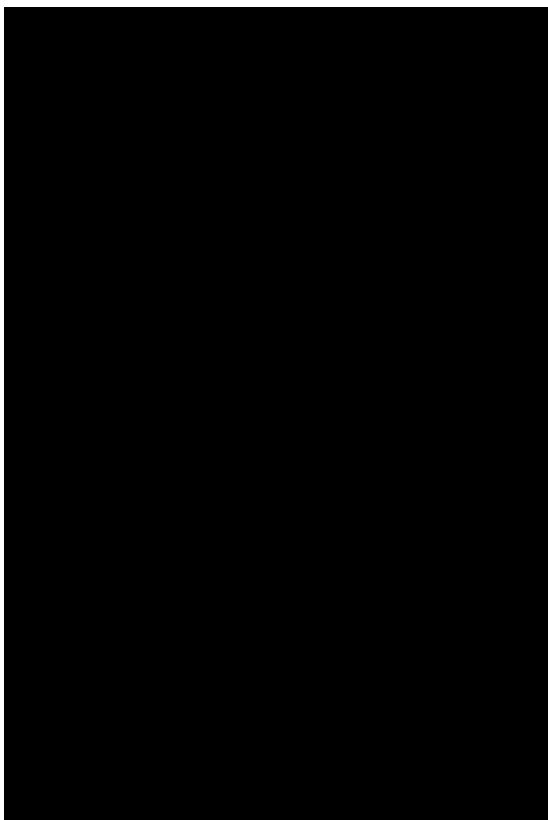
Straight up duttiness! Guys, vise a friend of mine at skool got cheated on at pride but not even with another girl yo it was with a guy! I mean dats just worse? What u wuld do? Done know I would switch!!!



[Like](#) · [Share](#)



[2 mins](#) · 



[Like](#) · [Share](#)



[1 min](#)

I never thought you would do this to me. I thought we were gonna be together forever. Why would you treat me like this? Hope you're both happy together. DIRTYYYY STRAIGHTTTTS. It's sick.

[Like](#) · [Share](#)



[1 min](#)

Don't you just hate it when you feel like you have no one to talk to? No one understands or listens to how I'm feeling...

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

██████████

[3 mins](#)

I never thought you would do this to me. I thought we were gonna be together forever. Why would you treat me like this? Hope you're both happy together. DIRTYYYYY STRAIGHTTTTS. It's sick.

[Like](#) · [Share](#)



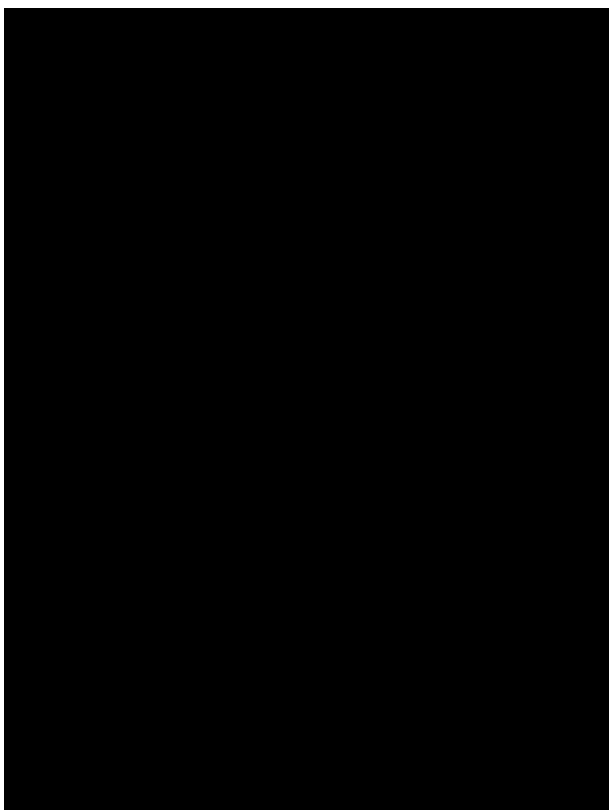
██████████ Come over later we'll have a proper chat over a cup of chamomile

[Just now](#) · [Like](#)

██████████

[5 mins](#)

Look I've got nothing against HETEROS but if you have to do whatever it is you do but DONT SHOVE IT DOWN MY THROAT!!



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- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] like this.
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] HATE TO SAY IT BUT....told you so!!!!!!

[4 mins](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Oh give it a rest now. Haven't you got anything better to do than sit behind a screen and say horrible things. Wow. Alright mate

- [REDACTED], no body ain't blaming u we know he pushed himself on u

[2 mins](#) · [Like](#)



[REDACTED] Surprised you're even on here thought you'd be busy making out with [REDACTED] *cough* HETERO *cough*

[2 mins](#) · [Like](#)



██████████

[13 mins](#)

Heartbroken. Single AGAIN!!

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██████████ Don't worry girl we gun sort it out good enough. He gun get wat coming to he

[4 mins](#) · [Like](#)



██████████ Leave him alone. You're all being pathetic

[1 min](#) · [Like](#)



██████████ [#kmt](#) pipe down hetero princess

[Just now](#) · [Like](#)

██████████ Oh what a comeback. Hahahahaha. Get a grip

[Just now](#) · [Like](#)

██████████

[Just now](#) · 

Right guys...██████████ had the cheek to turn up at school!!!! Filthy!!!! ██████████ ██████████
meet me NOW!!! This needs sorting!

██████████

[7 mins](#)

I never thought you would do this to me. I thought we were gonna be together forever. Why would you treat me like this? Hope you're both happy together. DIRTYYYY STRAIGHTTTTS. It's sick.

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Come over later we'll have a proper chat over a cup of chamomile

[4 mins](#) · [Like](#)



Well did warn ya

[Just now](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Oh so you wanna speak about loyalty? When none of support me because you think I'm 'different'.

U chose dis b das on u

[5 mins](#) · [Like](#)



[3 mins](#)

Hey Facebookians, Why do ppl choose to be straight though?

[Like](#) · [Share](#)




It's not a choice, it's who they are, everyone should be able to be who they want to be!



[Just now](#) · [Like](#)

• Preeeach *clicks fingers*

[1 min](#) · [Like](#)



•  I don't get it. How is it not a choice?!

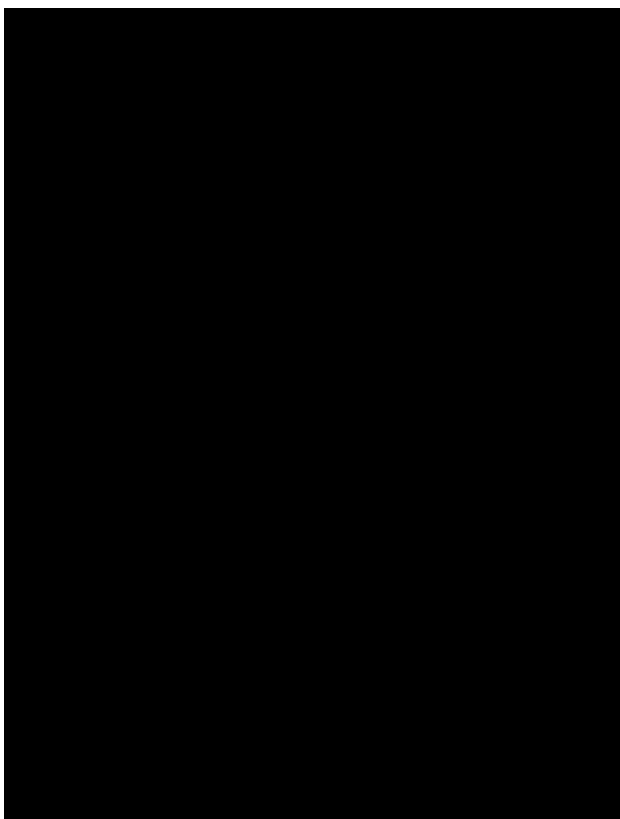
 Did you choose to be gay ?

[3 mins](#) · [Like](#)



[1 min](#)

Thought  was straight?



[Like](#) · [Share](#)



[Just now](#)

Why won't people listen?

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

████████████████████

[9 mins](#)

Guys i wonder if we went too far?

[Like](#) · [Share](#)

- [2 people](#) like this.



██████████ Most definitely, you put him in hospital are you aware of that?

[7 mins](#) · [Like](#)

Appendix D

A REPWrite Transcript by Students at Perry Beeches School, February 2015

B scene 1

K Graham-cole

C ?

T Forrester

start the scene

Caroline Jester

RYAN WALKS THROUGH THE CORRIDOOR

K Graham-cole (ALONE,SULKING)

C jack..jack? can we talk please?

T Forrester

RYAN REACHES OUT FOR JACK.

K Graham-cole

but chris drags him back

T Forrester

C please..

T Forrester

A What you doing here? Ew just move away from me!

T Holmes

C look, i just wanna talk,im not here to start trouble!

T Forrester

B Jack is there a problem?... wait hold on isnt that the hetro boy! ive got a picture of you kissing a girl on my phone. Its all on insta and facebook!

K Graham-cole

A Yes it is, its him alright

T Holmes

good well started

Caroline Jester

C no jack listen i..i..i

T Forrester

A You nothing.

T Holmes

jack interrupts ryan

T Forrester

B No Jack lets see what the hetro has to say.

K Graham-cole

ryan looks down and sulks

T Forrester

C i..i just wanna be friends. you know like how we used to be? i had your back you had mine remember,we could still be like that cant we jack,cant we?

T Forrester

A HA no. You betrayed me, im sorry for you to hear this chris but Ryan i always liked you. Everytime i looked at you, you gave me that amazing feeling of love ... But now its like

T Holmes your a noone to me.

chris give jack a look of confusement

T Forrester

B so jack you dont love me?huh

K Graham-cole

A I do but sometimes i think about Ryan, doesnt mean i like him though, go away Ryan! Your messing up my emotions

T Holmes

B your lost.

K Graham-cole

A Yh he had a chance but Chris was there to make the right move

T Holmes

C but look jack,im straight and i cannot change that,and i can never be with you,my sexuality doesnt change the good old ryan you know

T Forrester

C we can still be friends

T Forrester

B

K Graham-cole

B

K Graham-cole

A Its a gay world! Your not normal, YOUR A FREAK!

T Holmes

C just give me a chance

T Forrester

A No

T Holmes

ryan shouts

T Forrester

what does ryan shout?

Caroline Jester

write what he shouts then - we only have the dialogue on

Caroline Jester stage

C jack,ive known you since i was young dont let the small things ruin our friendship,remember your 10th birthday,we went to nandos and you cried because your red toy car

T Forrester broke?look at all these memories,dont give them up

B we cant be friends with a hetro. imagine what people would think of us?

K Graham-cole

C look ive been spat non,called every name under the sun,beaten black and blue the least you could do is cut me some slack

T Forrester

chris drags jack away

T Forrester

Jack feels guilty and regrets what he just gave up on.

T Holmes

Caroline Jester

think about ending the scene - have they got what they wanted?