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Discourses of queer futurity in mainstream and LGBTQI+ news media in Ireland

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**Discourses of Queer Futurity in
mainstream and LGBTQI+ news
media in Ireland**

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The thesis is presented in part fulfilment of the academic requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Limerick

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Holmes

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Abstract

Discourses of Queer Futurity in mainstream and LGBTQI+ news media in Ireland

Mark Ryan

There is a common assumption that matters relating to gender and sexuality are on a linear progression towards a ‘better’ destination. This thesis explores how such linear understandings of progress are entangled with a pragmatic political agenda, focused on legislative parity, where sanitised LGBTQI+ scripts are foregrounded at the expense of queerer lives and experiences. Operating under the assumption that reality is discursively constructed, this thesis applies a queer utopian lens to the interpretation of linguistic and semiotic constructions of LGBTQI+ people, communities, and values in both mainstream (*The Irish Times*) and community-led (*Gay Community News Magazine*) media.

Specifically, this research builds on current scholarship in the area of queer linguistics and proposes a theoretical framework, based on the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009), which foregrounds the notion of futurity and highlights transformative and radical practices that challenge (or have the potential to challenge) problematic representations in mediated discourse contexts. The analysis in this thesis uses established techniques in corpus-assisted discourse studies and draws on both textual and visual data. The discourse contexts under investigation are inherently ideological and the reality that is portrayed therein is contingent on a number of external factors, which include the social positions and interests of the text producers. By examining the choices that are made in the production of texts (both linguistic and semiotic), this thesis reveals how particular representations of the LGBTQI+ community coalesce to endorse particular versions of progress, community, and collectivity, and highlights for whom these are most beneficial.

Notably, this thesis shows; how mediated representations of LGBTQI+ people can act as both normativising and disruptive social forces; how spatialities and community building constitute an important part of a productive form of futurity; how activism, political resistance, and the deployment of disorder are powerful tools for the LGBTQI+ person; how engagement with the arts and popular culture can be perceived as an act of subversion; and finally, how there is radical transformative potential in the representative strategies currently used in the Irish media landscape. These findings are relevant for education, social policy, and journalistic best practice.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other award at this or any other academic institution. Where use has been made of the work of others, it has been fully acknowledged and referenced.

Mark Ryan, May 2024

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List of Abbreviations

BAI – Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

CADS – Corpus-assisted Discourse Studies

CAMDA – Corpus-assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis

DHA – Discourse Historical Approach

EDI – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

GCN Magazine – Gay Community News Magazine

GHA – Gay Health Action

GLEN – Gay and Lesbian Equality Network

IGCRM or IGRM – Irish Gay Civil Rights Movement or Irish Gay Rights Movement

IT – Irish Times

IWLM – Irish Women’s Liberation Movement

LGBTQI+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex

NGF – National Gay Federation

NXF – National LGBT Federation

MSM – Men Who Have Sex With Men

PrEP – Pre-exposure Prophylaxis

RTÉ – Radio Teilifís Éireann (Irish State Public Broadcasting Service)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There is a common assumption that matters relating to gender and sexuality are on a linear progression towards a ‘better’ destination. This thesis explores how such linear understandings of progress are entangled with a pragmatic political agenda, focused on legislative parity, where sanitised LGBTQI+ scripts are foregrounded at the expense of queerer lives and experiences. Operating under the assumption that reality is discursively constructed, this thesis applies a queer utopian lens to the interpretation of linguistic and semiotic constructions of LGBTQI+ people, communities, and values in both mainstream and community-led media. I argue that such an undertaking facilitates a deep understanding of the LGBTQI+ community in-context, and highlights both limiting and transformative practices in relation to the envisioning of a (better) future of LGBTQI+ communities, a perspective that would otherwise remain shrouded.

This chapter begins with some opening remarks on the rationale and background context of the research and proceeds to explore how this thesis enters a dialogue with established scholarship in the field of language, gender, and sexuality by outlining the dominant narratives and trends within the field. In doing so, the niche that this research occupies is elucidated. The chapter then outlines the aims and objectives of the research and explains how specific points of interest are addressed analytically and theoretically. In addition, Chapter 1 explores the challenges related to the use of language itself within studies of language, gender, and sexuality, as well as the researcher's positionality and subjectivity in research that is necessarily personal. The issues of potential biases, skewed perspectives, and structural privileges that may influence the results are addressed. The chapter concludes with sections that outline the structure and organisation of the thesis.

1.2 The Context for the Study

In the context of the Republic of Ireland, a state which has traditionally been severe in its treatment of so-called ‘gender and sexual deviants’, it is tempting to believe the aforementioned linear narrative of progression towards a ‘better future’, especially in light of recent legislative developments and changing social attitudes (see Chapter 3 for a full discussion of the socio-historical context of this research). However, a lack of criticality when it comes to our understanding of progress for LGBTQI+ lives may lead us to draw a number of dangerous conclusions. The first of these is that there is no more work to be done. This assumption allows space for dissenting voices to rise, risking the undoing of the progress that has already been achieved, and carries with it the false notion that legislative equality and social acceptance and assimilation are the only goals of the LGBTQI+ community. The second of these potentially dangerous conclusions is that things have improved for everyone equally. A report by BeLonG To Youth Services (2021, p.4), the Republic of Ireland’s national civil society organisation advocating on behalf of the LGBTQI+ community, claims that 97% of LGBTQI+ young people are struggling with anxiety, stress or depression compared to 53% of young people. Of these, 63% are struggling with suicide ideation, 50% with self-harm, and 58% regard their mental health as bad or very bad. Although these figures were collected in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is still a notable difference between this community and their contemporaries in the general public. What emerges as key from the report, however, is that *within* the LGBTQI+ community, the disproportionate statistics further compound. For example, “over 75% of trans young people who responded to the survey spoke about experiencing suicide ideation” (BeLonG To Youth Services 2021, p.4). Clearly, there is much work to be done, and more importantly, much more targeted work for the more marginalised groups within the community. These statistics raise an important consideration; the LGBTQI+ community cannot be thought of as a monolithic political

or social entity. Indeed, this thesis is not the first to highlight this fact, and attention has begun to shift towards these more marginalised and vulnerable groups in a diverse range of contexts, both in advocacy work and across academic fields, including; language and sexuality (see, for example, Coombs Fine 2019), sociology (see, for example, Reid-Buckley 2023), and psychology and health (see, for example, Bowling *et al.* 2023). I do not wish to argue that being gay or lesbian is without challenges, rather, I simply wish to highlight that a queer subjectivity is not experienced in an identical way by everyone across the community, and criticality and reflexivity will always be required for meaningful progress to be made. This more nuanced view of progress is not one that is shared by everyone. For example, McDonagh (2017) remarks that,

In a society such as Ireland, which, since the foundation of the state up to decriminalisation in 1993 had viewed sexual acts between men as criminal activity and homosexuals as sick and perverted, how is it that Ireland has now become a beacon for the LGBT community throughout the world?"

(McDonagh 2017, p.66)

This was also the sentiment directed towards the Republic of Ireland on the international stage. The transition from being a conservative Catholic country that criminalised homosexuality until 1993, to the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote certainly captures the imagination as it captured the attention of global media. Indeed, this thesis does not dispute the notion that tangible progress relating to LGBTQI+ lives in the Republic of Ireland has been made since the latter half of the 20th century – of course it has. However, we must think about the form this progress takes, and indeed, whom it most benefits. To say that Ireland is now a ‘beacon’ for the LGBTQI+ community may be premature at best, and misguided and harmful at worst. The last number of years have seen continued efforts to marginalise and subjugate minority groups, transgender people and women in particular, and it is clear that the rights and gains made by minority groups, which have been hard-won, are being challenged and in some cases undone, notably by far-right groups. In the Republic of Ireland over the past number of

years, there have been increasing anti-LGBTQI+ protests; libraries across the country have begun restricting access to young adult LGBTQI+ books, anti-LGBTQI+ protesters have stormed libraries hosting drag story-time events, harassment and physical violence has increased against LGBTQI+ people on the streets of Cork, Drogheda, Dublin, and Navan, and homophobia-motivated attacks led to the tragic deaths of Aidan Moffitt and Michael Snee in April of 2022. These observations call into question the notion of progress as linear and further highlight the need for sustained criticality in relation to what progress means, whom it most benefits, and how it can be measured. Despite a somewhat bleak and seemingly regressive climate in many ways, it is the belief of this author that myriad examples of positive future-building are occurring across the queer landscape of Ireland. As such, this thesis aims to mine these productive practices and articulate the very real and meaningful progress that is happening in the Republic of Ireland.

Through a theoretical framework based on the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009), this thesis argues that new ways of imagining progress, collectivity, and community are necessary for any meaningful progress to occur and shows that this is already happening and visible in the queer Irish landscape. The theoretical framework aims to present an innovative way of conceptualising progress (expounded upon in Chapter 2 and applied in Chapter 6) that is both more beneficial and more transformative relative to relying on linear legislative constructions of progress. The model offers a more qualitative and context-sensitive way of understanding progress for a minority group and facilitates insights into the *aboutness* of such progress. This allows us to ascertain more easily who is or is not benefitting from particular ideas of progress and community and, crucially, how. Further, it is more equitable as it does not foreground any particular sub-culture or identity group within a community, instead opting to focus on processes of participation and access to the community. While there is value in the statistics and insights gained by the research conducted by advocacy groups, such as those cited above, unless we understand the

processes of collective future building done for and by a given minoritised community, we cannot know who is privileged in or excluded from future versions of that community. It is this researcher's belief that such information is available, particularly within mediated discourse contexts wherein a group or community is being represented by powerful actors. Such discourse contexts are inherently ideological and the reality that is portrayed, by a newspaper or magazine, for example, is contingent on a number of external factors, which include the social positions and interests of the text producers. Subsequently, this is the domain in which this research is situated. By examining the choices that are made in the production of such texts, this thesis seeks to understand how particular representations of the LGBTQI+ community coalesce to endorse particular versions of progress and community.

The following section situates this research within the broader field of critical sociolinguistics, and within the field of language and sexuality specifically, as it is the previous work done in this domain, in particular, which forms the foundation upon which this research builds.

1.3 Situating the Research within the Field of Language, Gender, and Sexuality

The explication of the relationship between 'real language' (Bucholtz 2003) and its systematic use by social actors has been the unifying feature in studies across the now hugely divergent field of sociolinguistics. Much of the research conducted in this field possesses a commitment to laying bare the regulatory processes that uphold hegemonic structures, thereby aiding our understanding of the dynamics of power at play in communities, whereby certain individuals or groups are privileged at the expense of others. The field of queer or lavender linguistics is one such domain within the wider field of sociolinguistics, and its commitment to interrogating the organising structures and processes of 'normativity' (heteronormativity and homonormativity), gender-binarism, as well as identity politics is well documented (see Chapter 2, section 2.4). Studies in the

field of queer linguistics have consistently shown how these regulatory processes combine to oppress, misrepresent, and marginalise members of the LGBTQI+ community. The power behind such oppression, misrepresentation, and marginalisation is not only exerted by an external mainstream, but can also be exercised from within, where hierarchies and internal power imbalances exist.

At the time of writing, the field of language and sexuality is experiencing an encouraging surge of diverse research, with studies being conducted in a multitude of contexts. Though broad in its scope, a number of trends have been identified within the wider field. Chapter 2, section 2.4, more fully discusses previous work that has been done in the field of language and sexuality, however this section outlines the dominant narrative of the field in order to situate this research project within the wider scholarship taking place.

A diachronic analysis of Lavender Languages and Linguistics conference abstracts (the only conference dedicated to language and sexuality and queer linguistics) conducted by Baker (2013) revealed a distinct evolution in the focus of the research in this field. He highlights that early studies predominantly utilised specific identity labels like 'gay,' while more recent investigations increasingly employ broader and less essentialist terms such as 'LGBTQI+' and 'queer.' This shift indicates a growing emphasis on inclusivity and a recognition of the diverse nature of non-normative sexual identities (Jones 2021). Despite this, Jones (2021) identifies a significant gap in research during the past decade, one that foregrounds the more marginalised members of the LGBTQI+ community. Although some scholars have made efforts to address this gap in recent years (see, for example, Webster 2018; Zottola 2018; Coombs Fine 2019; Ryan 2019) there remains a need to further explore and understand the processes of subjugation and (mis-)representation of these groups. In the field of language and sexuality, this occurs through studies which focus on the discursive construction or linguistic practices of one or two distinct marginalised identity groups (see, for example, García León and Rodríguez-Castro 2023),

but also through engaging with ideas of community, collectivity, and theoretical innovation. However, it can be argued that such abstract work is much less frequently done (though see, for example, Zimman 2020 and Konnelly 2021). As alluded to in the introductory remarks, this thesis joins the latter endeavour. By examining representations of the LGBTQI+ community in mediated discourse contexts, it becomes possible to consider the meaning of community, collectivity and notions of progress. Usually, the research into mediated and online discourses aims to understand how language plays a role in the construction of specific sexual identities or identity-based group subjectivities (see, for example, Zottola 2018; Adegbola 2022). This thesis builds on this approach but focuses more on the implication of such representations and identity constructions to on the more abstract notions of community, collectivity, and progress. Mediated discourse contexts have proven ripe for study in this field, with platforms such as dating and hook-up sites (Baudinette 2017; Adams-Thies 2019; Thompson 2021) and social media representations of LGBTQI+ communities (Baker and Jabarooty 2017) facilitating valuable insights from cultural contexts that might be challenging to investigate through traditional means. Given the increasing prevalence and influence of online spaces and their mediated discourses in Irish society, exploring the linguistic and semiotic practices within these contexts would appear to be a relevant avenue for research. Further, within the field of language and sexuality, there has also been a focus on same-sex marriage, as well as on discursive strategies within discussions of same-sex marriage (Van der Bom *et al.* 2015; Findlay 2017; Paterson and Coffey-Glover 2018). Relatedly, studies on family structures (Sokalska-Bennett 2017) and negotiating normativities in this sphere (Mackenzie 2023) have also been conducted. This thesis touches upon these topics (see Chapter 6, section 6.4.1) through the application of a queer utopian theoretical framework and explores them in the context of representations of community values and kinship structures.

The above observations underscore the importance of exploring and understanding the discursive environment in which LGBTQI+ Irish people navigate their identity construction; on the one hand to enrich the field of language and sexuality, and on the other, to shed light on the work that must still be done. The lack of research that has been conducted in Irish context reveals a crucial need for studies such as this, as it is only by understanding the particular configuration of discourses, historical factors, cultural values, and contextually specific power processes at play in Ireland that we can fully understand the experience of Irish LGBTQI+ people, and particularly the challenges faced by the more marginalised groups. By examining top-down representations of community (rather than on identity groups in isolation) in both mainstream and LGBTQI+ community-led media, this thesis adopts a broader perspective that foregrounds hegemonic beliefs, ideologies, and normativities within the Irish LGBTQI+ community.

Additionally, this thesis lays the groundwork for future research by identifying gaps, silences, and (in-)visibilities in the data, thus enriching the field and pinpointing areas for targeted investigation. Furthermore, given the increasing significance of digital platforms and their mediated discourses in Irish society, investigating the linguistic and semiotic practices within online spaces presents a promising avenue for exploration. Moreover, this thesis endeavours to explore the utility of a theoretical framework that has not yet been explicitly operationalised in studies of language and sexuality. This theoretical lens holds particular promise in its transformative potential when considering family and kinship structures and the negotiation of normativities within this domain. In sum, this thesis seeks to advance our understanding of language and sexuality, and the experience of LGBTQI+ people in the Irish context, and to contribute to the wider landscape of sociolinguistics and social sciences. Having outlined these broad aims and context, the next section outlines the specific aims and objectives of the overall thesis, as well as how these will be achieved.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this thesis is to examine the representation of gender and sexual minorities in mediated discourse contexts, by looking specifically at one mainstream news media publication, as well as one LGBTQI+ community media publication from the Republic of Ireland. As alluded to in section 1.2, the purpose of this aim is to interrogate constructions of community and collectivity, as well as the values within this community. By doing so, we can identify what type of progress is being made, and thus, who is most privileged in this future version of community. Within this examination, this thesis aims:

- (i) to critically examine representations of the LGBTQI+ community in mediated discourse contexts in order to highlight the ways in which oppressive discourses continue to be (re-)produced – in both a mainstream and community-led publication
- (ii) to reveal the ideological underpinning of the dominant discourses at play in these mediated contexts
- (iii) to highlight transformative and radical practices that challenge (or have the potential to challenge) any problematic representations through a queer utopian theoretical framework based on the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009).

In doing so, I mirror Jones' (2023, p.3) aim of reaffirming, “the vital and emancipatory role that language, gender and sexuality scholarship plays in resisting discrimination and demanding change.”

In section 1.2 above, McDonagh (2017, p.66) designates Ireland as a “beacon” for the LGBTQI+ community worldwide and frames this status as relational to what is or is not criminalised. However, the uneven mapping of these legislative gains and vastly differing lived experiences of LGBTQI+ people necessitate a critical examination and reflexivity.

As mentioned, this thesis interrogates the construction of the notions of community, collectivity, and progress, and it does so by tracing imagined temporalities, spatialities, and processes of future building in the representations of the LGBTQI+ community within the data. Using the complementary theoretical lenses of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’ (Muñoz 1999; 2009), this thesis shows how these temporalities, spatialities, and processes can be accessed by examining the linguistic and semiotic resources employed in both mainstream and community-led media representations of LGBTQI+ people. Doing so allows the researcher to identify the primary beneficiaries of such constructions, thus revealing hierarchies of power.

In a review of recent scholarship that aims to understand representational processes and, in particular, discourses of oppression and exclusion, Jones (2023) states that while,

we have made huge strides in the field of language, gender and sexuality in understanding how language creates inequalities and enables discrimination, [...] there is still much progress to be made in challenging these discourses ‘in the real world’.

(Jones 2023, p.14)

This thesis also explores applications to real world contexts, namely to educational, journalistic, and policy-making domains (further discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.4.1). For instance, in showing how a community-led publication can innovate (comparative to a mainstream publication), this thesis highlights the potential for change to be enacted through linguistic interventions (for example, through normalising pronoun usage). In this way, journalists demonstrate the application of sociolinguistic expertise in meaningful and productive ways. Jones (2023, p.14) proceeds to remark that, “The prevalence of discriminatory discourse [...] demonstrates the urgency with which we must engage with them.” This thesis both reveals these discriminatory discourses and engages directly with them.

1.5 Positionality and Terminology

Researchers in the field of language, gender, and sexuality are presented with an ironic challenge relating to their own language use in describing and labelling individuals and groups under the LGBTQI+ umbrella. Labelling is, necessarily, reductive, and generalising about this community is, as this research shows, problematic. Scholarship in this field often showcases innovative language and naming practices, including neologisms and neopronouns for example, but attitudes are often contested (see, for example, Hekanaho 2022). How then should the researcher remain both sensitive to preferences and up to date with developments, when often there is no consensus on what is best? Further, how should the researcher ensure that their own subjectivity and experiences of their own gender and sexuality do not affect the interpretation of the data? These, and other related, questions are addressed in the subsequent sections. Firstly, the researcher's positionality is outlined, before a discussion of the politics of labelling and the move towards queering terminology takes place.

1.5.1 Positionality

As a member of the LGBTQI+ community, and as someone who has experienced instances of sexuality-based discrimination, this research is necessarily personal and political, which raises questions about bias, objectivity, and the emotional distance of the researcher from the data. These factors combine with my academic knowledge as a queer linguist as well as with my broader research and work with EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) departments in a number of universities to shape my views on language, gender, and sexuality accordingly. On the one hand, the perspective of the 'insider' can provide valuable insights about the data and allow the researcher access to community knowledge, culture, social practices, and intertextual references that might be extremely difficult for an 'outsider' to recognise. However, this insight must be accompanied by the ability to be reflexive and critical about this positionality and subjectivity vis-à-vis the emergent

issues in the research. In an attempt to address this issue, I wish to acknowledge my privileged position as a white, cisgender man. Relative to many members of the LGBTQI+ community, my life has been rich in opportunity and privilege, despite some experiences of exclusion and verbal violence. While I make every effort to enter into a dialogic discussion with a diverse group of researchers in the field of language, gender, and sexuality, and attempt to ensure methodological transparency to reach empirical conclusions, it should be acknowledged that any findings and discussion can only be considered as partial. Moreover, there are a number of sections throughout this thesis which are specifically reflexive to further ensure transparency and mitigate any excessive biases. That said, it is my belief that who we are, as people, is important to our research, and while these reflexive mechanisms are in place and central to the integrity of this thesis, it is not desirable to efface the researcher altogether. Indeed, it is my hope that my voice comes through strongly.

1.5.2 The Politics of Labelling and Queering Terminology

This section explores the issue of terminology in studies of language and sexuality, as well as the historical and linguistic construction of sexuality categories, their changing nature, and approaches taken in this thesis to overcome the challenge of describing sexuality using terminology that is both historically and contextually accurate as well as appropriate and inclusive by present standards. Language, in any context, plays a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of the world (see Chapter 2, section 2.6 and 2.6.1 for a full discussion of the constitutive nature of language and discourse), which includes the complex and multifaceted nature of human gender and sexuality. Within the Western-tradition, in particular, language has given rise to a category-based framework that has long influenced how sexuality is conceptualised and understood. Though this category-based framework is still frequently used, over time the categories themselves have evolved and a queerer (in the sense of a more anti-normative) conceptualisation of gender

and sexuality has emerged, one which challenges traditional or taken-for-granted notions about gender and sexuality. However, describing identity, a spatio-temporally-, and context-dependent phenomenon, using language in constant flux presents unique challenges. As this thesis, at its most fundamental level, examines the intersection between language and sexuality, it is imperative that we reflect on how sexuality itself is represented in language, and acknowledge that these representations are spatially and temporally framed, where each evolution of language as it relates to sexuality holds important ideological information and is involved in renewed meaning making of sexuality itself. While Chapter 2 provides a detailed description of the phases of research in studies of language and sexuality (see section 2.2.1), it is important to reflect on the question of terminology at this point, too, to justify what terms will be used, in what contexts, and why.

Language, as a social construct, reflects and perpetuates cultural norms and values. Throughout history, societal attitudes towards sexuality have been codified into linguistic categories that reinforce heteronormative assumptions. For instance, the binary division of sexuality into ‘heterosexual’, and ‘homosexual’ emerged in the late 19th century, largely influenced by medical and psychiatric discourses. This dichotomy constructed homosexuality as deviant, abnormal, and a pathological condition. In the 20th century, terminology expanded to include ‘homophile’, and ‘sexual deviant’, and these labels were assigned to those who we now view as members of the LGBTQI+ community. This thesis will, at times, use terms such as these, but only within a historical context in order to construct a narrative of the past insofar as it is relevant to understanding the discourses of sexuality of the present. Further, ‘LGBTQI+’ is used in favour of shorter terms such as LGBT in an effort to be more representative of the community the label attempts to represent. There are two notable exceptions to this. The first is when citing work that uses a different iteration of this label. The second related to the appropriateness of the

initialism LGBTQI+ and is most evident in the review of queer linguistic literature in Chapter 2, the exploration of the socio-historical context of Ireland in Chapter 3, and the discussion of some findings in Chapter 6. At times, due to the focus in the literature on sexual identities (rather than gender identities), the social and historical context in Ireland (which focuses on gay men and lesbians), or specific findings that are not applicable to the wider LGBTQI+ group, the initialism LGBTQI+ is not appropriate. In such cases, the term LGB is used instead of the full initialism to render the discussion more accurate. While the attempt to use the more inclusive LGBTQI+ moniker is important to the author, it is at times disingenuous to do so, particularly when the more marginalised identities (for the reasons stated above) are not part of the discussion. This will be flagged to the reader at each relevant section. Additionally, it is important to remark that queer can also be viewed as a distinct political identity, where queerness is conceptualised as an antinormative force that can be embodied and enacted by individuals and groups, inside and outside of the LGBTQI+ community. The researcher has striven to ensure this use of the term ‘queer’ is clear from context. It is worth noting here that the necessity of this explanatory section to circumvent discord calls into question the future of a category-based collectivity structure. Indeed, as Spencer and Patterson (2017, p.296) say, “Sexual and gender minorities have long quibbled over whether the ‘LGBT’ moniker (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) is inclusive enough”. This is not an obstacle that has been satisfactorily surmounted with unanimity, however, this thesis’ interest in collectivity and community allows us to explore other conceptions of kinship and collectivity (see Chapter 6, section 6.4.1).

The following sections outline the overall structure of the thesis, and broadly outlines the contents of each chapter.

1.6 Structure of Analysis

The analysis in this thesis uses established techniques in corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS; see Chapter 4, section 4.3.3) to examine the representation of LGBTQI+ people at two sites. It examines both mainstream (*The Irish Times*) and community-led (*Gay Community News Magazine*) news media and draws on both textual and visual data. As mentioned in the preceding sections, by examining the choices that are made in the production of texts (both linguistic and semiotic) within these publications, this thesis seeks to understand how particular representations of the LGBTQI+ community coalesce to endorse particular versions of progress and community. Further, while certain priorities and aspects of community, collectivity, and progress might be similar and coalesce across these distinct datasets, there are also a number of significant differences. Moreover, these differences are tied to the important differences between the sources, the data collection context, and their intended readership (discussed in Chapter 4). By analysing both the outsider's perspective of community (via *The Irish Times*) as well as an insider's perspective (via *GCN Magazine*) we become equipped to draw comparisons between the representations of the LGBTQI+ community at each site. Ultimately, each of these perspectives provides a snapshot of the attitudes and ideologies underpinning representational strategies that are being produced by those who wield discursive influence in the Republic of Ireland. The nuances of such similarities and differences are then discussed through the lens of the theoretical framework of this thesis (outlined in Chapter 2), and grant insight into both the discursive environment in which LGBTQI+ people are navigating their identities in the Irish context, as well as any new or transformative representational practices. In short, this thesis is not only combining these sources and arguing that they represent a single discourse, but it is also showing where these discourses diverge. Given that this thesis is problematising the idea of progress as linear and linked to legislative progress, as highlighted in section 1.2 above, it is also

useful that the data from one source (*The Irish Times*) is situated at the critical discourse moment of the marriage equality referendum, whereas the data from the other (*GCN Magazine*) was collected in the years after this legislative milestone. The linear conceptualisation of progress as tied to these legislative gains would suggest that we should see a decrease in heteronormative influences in public discourse and given *GCN Magazine's* target audience (the LGBTQI+ community), we would especially expect that to be the case. Chapters 5 and 6 explore to what extent, if at all, this is true. Chapter 4, sections 4.3.7 and 4.4.2, present both *The Irish Times* and *GCN Magazine* and outline why these were chosen as suitable data sources for this thesis, while Chapter 4, section 4.5, addresses the methodological implications and limitations of such choices.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 takes the form of a literature review of work on discourses of sex, gender, and sexuality, with the aim of defining some of the key concepts in the thesis. The first part of Chapter 2 focuses on the study of language and sexuality, and maps the trajectory of studies within this field from early phases of pathologising discourses to later queer approaches. Parallel to this mapping, a review of this literature is also conducted, and connections are made between other scholarship in the field and this thesis. This mapping reveals promising avenues of scholarship within the field of language and sexuality, and as such, a section outlining one such promising avenue - the theoretical frameworks underpinning this research - follows. Specifically, the areas of queer inquiry (section 2.3), queer and lavender linguistics (section 2.4) are discussed, and the utility and potential of the complementary theoretical lenses of 'disidentification' and 'queer futurity' (section 2.5) are explained (Muñoz 1999; 2009). Chapter 2, then, explores why a discourse approach is appropriate in this research and provides a definition of discourse, before a more detailed reflection on the ideological and historical nature of discourse and its relationship with power, and how studies in

discourse analysis have taken a visual turn. Then, Chapter 2 turns to the media as a site of discourse and discusses the specificity and characteristics of mediated news discourse in particular, and highlights the importance of studying this genre of discourse due to its potential to shape and influence public opinion.

Chapter 3 constitutes a contextualising chapter for this research and provides an overview of sexuality, the Irish State, and discourses of sexuality in Ireland. This chapter zooms in on historical trends and sociocultural practices in the Irish context to give significance to the matrix of discourses of sexuality that have been at play in the Irish media and that are consumed and (re-)produced by both LGBTQI+ communities and the general population. The chapter is divided into two distinct sections; the first traces the trajectory of the understanding of sexuality in the Irish context by looking at key influential factors and events throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, including Catholic influences and values, the Irish Gay Civil Rights Movement, the AIDS Crisis, as well as legislative and social movements leading to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 and marriage equality in 2015; the second part of the chapter focuses on the media and how it has interacted and intersected with the LGBTQI+ community in recent decades.

Chapter 4 outlines the methods used in this research as well as the data drawn upon in its analysis and is split into four distinct sections. Firstly, it presents a guiding methodological ethos which reconciles the disruptive motivations of queer inquiry with the rigidity of established methods. Then there is a section dedicated to the textual data and its treatment (CADS) and another to the visual data and its treatment (CAMDA). The affordances and limitations of each approach are explored, particularly in relation to conducting research on ideology and representation in contexts that focus on mediated news discourse. Additionally, within each of these sections, the data is presented and the analytical procedure for each data type is outlined. The final section presents reflections

on the methodological issues that arose during the course of the research, and engages with issues of ethics, reliability, and validity.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of this thesis. This chapter is situated at the descriptive level of the emergent findings so that they may be considered and interpreted through the lens of the complementary theoretical frameworks of ‘disidentification’ and queer futurity. As mentioned, data from two sites is being analysed - one external to the community, and one internal. To that end, this chapter elucidates the findings derived from mainstream representations of the LGBTQI+ community (*The Irish Times*), allowing the researcher to access constructions of the community by the external ‘other’ as well as findings related to ingroup representations of the LGBTQI+ community (*GCN Magazine*), facilitating the analysis of constructions of the community by the ‘self’.

Chapter 6 takes more of an interpretative look at the extrapolated findings from Chapter 5. However, it begins by reiterating the core ideas within, and value of, the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2 in an effort to frame the discussion. Within this, the synergy between the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this thesis and the data and research questions is discussed. This is necessary as, if we recall, the aim of this thesis is not only to critically examine the discursive framing of representations of LGBTQI+ identities in mediated discourse contexts (as well as their ideological underpinning), but also to highlight transformative and radical practices that challenge (or have the potential to challenge) such problematic representations through the theoretical framework based on the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009). As such, a key point of interest within the discussion needs to focus on this theoretical experiment so to speak. Then, each of the analytical foci, based on the work of Muñoz, will be treated in turn. Chapter 6 constitutes an attempt to draw meaningful conclusions from the data by bringing together theoretical elements of Chapter 2, contextual elements from Chapter 3 and the findings from Chapter 5.

Chapter 7, the final chapter in this thesis, outlines the contribution of this research by re-entering a dialogue with previous scholarship in the field of language, gender, and sexuality to highlight the significance of the discussion that takes place in Chapter 6. Further, it proposes some potential ‘real world’ applications of the research in areas of education, policy, and journalism. This chapter also offers reflections on the limitations of this research, firstly in a general sense, and then in terms of its methodological design and theoretical underpinning. Taking into account the limitations of the thesis as well as its contribution to the field, the final section in this thesis outlines some suggestions for further study, by proposing some potentially illuminating theoretical and methodological innovations and fruitful research contexts, in particular.

Chapter 2: Discourse Approaches to the Study of Language and Sexuality: Foundations and New Directions

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the stage for the research by introducing the central concepts and theoretical framing of the thesis. It begins by tracing the field of language, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the shift to the queer linguistic perspective adopted by this thesis which foregrounds how queer subjectivities themselves are materialised through language. It then describes the primary theoretical lens of this thesis, derived from Muñoz's (1999; 2009) complementary notions of 'disidentification' and 'queer futurity'. This chapter explains how these theories, which hold synergy with queer linguistics through their shared motivation to challenge hegemonic norms, facilitate an exploration of new ways of being and doing in the discourse context in question. A further section outlines how they can be operationalised, and why this is a valuable pursuit before the focus shifts to why a discourse approach to the exploration of queer futurities is appropriate and useful. This chapter then explores the various understandings of discourse, and highlights the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology, as well as the historical nature of discourse, and comments on how this is important in the context of research on representations of gender- and sexual-minorities, especially in mediated news contexts. The connection between the two central themes of this chapter – discourse and the study of language, gender, and sexuality – lies in the argument that reality is discursively constructed. The implication of this is that representations of LGBTQI+ people and communities are therefore not only reflective of queer lives but are actively involved in creating them. If queer subjectivity, and by extension queer futures, is discursive in nature then we become equipped to intervene (for better or worse) and understand through a discourse studies approach. This argument is further explored in section 2.6 below.

2.2 The Study of Language, Gender, and Sexuality

The study of language and sexuality began with rather different assumptions to those widely held in the field today. Rather than viewing identity as the effect of a mesh of specific semiotic practices, an extra-diagnostic perspective, or a view from the outside, was traditional when considering the nature of sexual identities. Less than a century ago, sexual desire itself, was heterosexual (Cameron and Kulick 2003). Pre-1950, homosexuality was understood and articulated through the lens of heterosexuality and heteronormativity. It was, “inconceivable that males might desire other males as males [...] Instead, clinicians insisted that males who desired other males possessed a female subjectivity” (Cameron and Kulick 2003, p.81). In other words, they were psychologically female, and as far as language was concerned, any ‘abnormal’ qualities were symptomatic of this disposition. The subsequent section traces the deep roots of these binaries and explains the phases of research that led to the relatively recent paradigm shift and re-conceptualisation of language and sexuality.

2.2.1 Phases of Language and Sexuality Research

The queer approach of this thesis to the study of language, gender, and sexuality (discussed in sections 2.3 and 2.4 below) is a relatively new trend in the field. Queer theory itself emerged as a critical perspective at the time of the gay and lesbian rights movements during the 1970s and 1980s in the U.S.A., but an explicit queer approach to research into language and sexuality was a later pursuit, with earlier phases of research subscribing to more essentialist and what we might now consider outdated modes of inquiry. Cameron and Kulick (2003) helpfully trace the primary phases of research in the field of language and sexuality, and I summarise their findings below so the reader may understand the trajectory that research in this area has taken.

2.2.1.1 The Language of ‘the Homosexual’: the Pathological Perspective

From the 1920s to the 1940s homosexuality was regarded as a pathology, and what we now might consider tools in the construction of personal identity were considered pathological symptoms. During this period research focused on lexis and gender inversion (see, for example, Legman 1941). An example of this is the use of female names and pronouns by homosexual males to designate themselves and other men. In terms of linguistic studies, “exotic lingo” was viewed as a secret code used to index deviant sexuality. Rosanoff (1927) spoke about a clannishness of homosexuals and compiled a glossary of terms of special slang expressions he designated as specific to homosexuals in his *Manual of Psychiatry*. Any precise characteristics of this ‘secret language’ were usually left vague, however this glossary became the basis for ‘The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary’ by Gershon Legman (1941). Some examples from this are, ‘sister in distress’ which refers to a homosexual male in trouble with the police, or ‘fish’, a derivative of which has been reclaimed and is still used today in some queer sub-cultures, which was used as a predicate nominative to refer to male homosexuality of the effeminate type. While compilations such as this were extremely limited in themselves, their very existence reveals how homosexuality was regarded at the time and offers insight into the social context of the period. This phase is defined by research into a covert ‘lingo’ that was viewed as symptomatic.

2.2.1.2 Sexuality as a Social and Oppressed Minoritised Identity: Gay and Lesbian ‘Language’

From the 1950s to 1960s, the conceptualisation of homosexuality as a medical condition shifted to being more of a social identity, and this was a period framed by activist struggles, notably the Homophile and Gay Liberation Movements. Research at this time by gay and lesbian scholars themselves was primarily concerned with the political advancement of homosexual people. The literature emphasises divisions between those who were

considered as ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘misguided’ (see, for example, Hanson 1972) homosexuals who used gay language (the ‘lingo’ that was associated with pathologised identities) and those who were politically progressive and avoided using gay language. In fact, activists condemned this language as retrograde and undesirable. Then, from the 1970s to the 1990s, Gay Liberationist rhetoric expressed confidence that old-style homosexuals had gone, and a new type of community had been formed. During this phase divisions within the gay community are toned down and homosexuality becomes framed as an oppressed minority identity (similar to a minority ethnic or racial identity). Studies of language at this time were influenced by arguments about ‘Black English Vernacular’ or ‘women’s language’, and scholars claimed that there is a ‘Gayspeak’ (see, for example, Chesebro 1981), thereby positioning homosexuals as part of a homogenous social group.

2.2.1.3 Queer Perspectives

The ‘queer’ critique adopted by this research project came into play from the 1990s. Butler (1990; 1993) was particularly influential in this regard, notably through the concept of *performativity* as it relates to gender. Butler (1990) challenged the conventional understanding of gender as a stable identity or essence, instead, arguing that gender is not something one is but something one does. In this sense, gender is performative, meaning it is constituted through repeated actions, behaviours, and discourses that align with societal norms. Collectively, these ‘performances’ give the illusion of coherence in the context of gender identity, but Butler reminds us that there is no intrinsic or pre-existing gender truth. This notion of performativity destabilised previous binary frameworks and created space for a more fluid understanding of identities. Indeed, Butler’s influence extended to the linguistic approach to the study of gender, sexuality and queer studies, where scholars such as Leap (1995), who incidentally founded the Lavender Languages and Linguistics international conference where much work in this field continues today, as well as Livia and Hall (1997) build on her ideas.

Diversity of ‘performance’ within the previously conceptualised ‘homogenous’ group was highlighted in scholarship of the time (see, for example, Leap 1994; Livia and Hall 1997). The enquiry shifted from looking at how homosexual identity is reflected through language to investigating the ways in which queer identities themselves are materialised through language. In other words, the focus shifted from seeing identity as the source of the particular forms of language to seeing identity as the effect of specific semiotic practices. The limiting conceptions of sexuality in previous phases of research posed a fundamental problem to research in this field by ignoring the other integral facets of a person’s identity, such as age, class, and ethnicity, and their inseparability with an identity as a whole. Further, as identity itself became a contested notion, with research into communities of practice highlighting the malleability of identity across contexts (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), the previous paradigms became unhelpful. Incidentally, this shows how problematic the idea of an LGBTQI+ ‘community’, which can be researched and analysed as a whole unit, can be. The following sections explore the affinity between Queer Inquiry and Queer Linguistics and highlight some of the work that has recently taken place within the field, particularly work in the area of mediated discourses of sexuality.

2.3 Queer Inquiry

Queer theory evolved as a reaction to the gay and lesbian rights movements in the USA in the 1970s and 1980s, when, as mentioned in the previous section, many began to question the existence of a coherent LGBTQI+ community or subject on which political agency or research could be based. Queer theory has been chosen as the theoretical underpinning for this project because it takes sexuality as the starting point for its interrogation. Barrett summarises the affinity between queer theory and the study of language in society below.

[Q]ueer theory is important, if not for sociolinguistic theory, at least for understanding sociolinguistic practice. If we, as sociolinguists are content with a research paradigm that places individuals in exclusionary categories that simply reinscribe prejudiced cultural assumptions about appropriate and 'normal' behavior, then queer theory is not important at all. If, on the other hand, our desire is to truly understand the role of language in society without simply reproducing cultural ideology (and the prejudice, exclusionary practices, and methods of social domination inherent in that ideology) then queer theory might indeed prove to be very important.

(Barrett 2002, p.39)

This is also what makes it distinct across the spectrum of critical academic paradigms. A vital purpose of queer theory is, "the reconceptualization of dominant discourses which shape our understanding of gender and sexuality, often to the detriment of people who, for various reasons, are judged as not meeting the heteronormative ideal" (Motschenbacher and Stegu 2013, p.520). Queer theory's scope and approach are notoriously difficult to define, however, it can be said that queer inquiry challenges understandings of sexuality and gender as fixed or biologically given and posits that they are performative and dynamic for both heterosexual and non-heterosexual identities. A queer view of sexuality and gender (and their associated 'proper' roles and normativities) is part of a wider interrogation of power relations and normalisation. As such, queer thought explores a wide range of 'deviant' sexual subjects and desires beyond the figure of the homosexual. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations (2018) considers 'queer theory' in the following way.

Queer theory's refusal of a clearly bound referent object has produced insight not only on the mutually constitutive relationship between 'normal' and 'perverse' sexual subjects and practices, and thus the contingent and political character of sexual norms and heteronormative logics, but has made possible an engagement with 'regimes of the normal' beyond the sexual, nationally and transnationally.

(The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations 2018)

Relatedly, Giffney *et al.* (2009, p.1) describe a queer line of questioning as an attempt to "resist being made a slave to the discourses one is operating within at any one moment by peeling back the multitudinous layers of meaning contained within each and every announcement." Queer can be considered as neither a question nor a statement, but something which both encourages us to search for possible meanings within it and reflect

on why we are driven to conduct such a search in the first instance. Edelman (2004, p.7) highlights an important distinction between the identity labels with which we have become familiar (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) and the term queer by saying, “queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one”. Rather than providing positivity, a queer approach creates a space for interrogation of the authoritative ‘standard’. To take a queer perspective is to refuse to accept the status quo on its own terms. Something queer necessarily deals with the “messiness of identity” (Giffney 2009, pp.2-3), where desire and desiring subjects cannot be placed into discreet identity categories. It is a term sometimes misunderstood as only referring to contexts addressing issues pertaining to the LGBTQI+ community, however, this lens of queer inquiry can be applied across contexts. In other words, there is always a normative and a queer (or antinormative). Queer inquiry requires, “a commitment to interrogating the social processes that not only produced and recognised but also normalised and sustained identity” (Eng *et al.* 2005, p.1). Finally, Grant (2021, p.1135) tells us that “Queer theory actively critiques the assimilationist politics embraced by gay and lesbian studies, aiming to challenge heterosexual definitions of normalcy.” This thesis demonstrates the utility of such an approach as normalisation processes are taking place inside (intra-group) and outside (inter-group) the community. While queer theory and inquiry lies at the core of this thesis as a whole, the research lies firmly in the field of queer linguistics – sometimes referred to as lavender linguistics. The following sections discuss queer inquiry and queer linguistics in more detail and explore how the core perspectives of queer inquiry enable studies of language and sexuality.

2.4 Queer and Lavender Linguistics

Many domains of linguistics have contributed to the field of language and sexuality, such as sociophonetics, discourse analysis, lexicography, and applied linguistics, which is reflective of the “multidimensionality” (Motschenbacher 2018, p.146) of the relationship

between sexuality and language. In recent years, the field of queer linguistics has grown from this, with sociolinguists such as Leap and Motschenbacher (2012) noting a marked increase in the use of queer theory in scholarship. As an extension of queer theory, the political aim of which is to reveal and problematise that which reinforces essentialist and normative ideologies relating to gender and sexuality (Hall 2013), queer linguistics specifically aims to critically analyse the two central dominant discourses in society: i) (hetero-)normativity and ii) gender binarism. The term ‘heteronormativity’ (Warner 1991) refers to the societal belief that heterosexuality is the default, preferred, or ‘normal’ sexual orientation, which has the effect of marginalising other forms of sexual expression. It also assumes that gender is binary, meaning that only two distinct and ‘opposite’ genders – male and female – exist, where that each gender has so-called natural roles and behaviours linked to their biological sex. Heteronormativity, encompassing gender binarism, not only excludes non-heterosexual relationships but also dismisses and invalidates the experiences of individuals who fall outside traditional gender categories, such as those who are non-binary, genderqueer, or transgender. It shapes societal norms, institutions, and policies, which in turn often perpetuate discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals. Insofar as this is linked to research in the field of queer and lavender linguistics, Leap (2013) states that,

these studies explore, as a primary concern, how linguistic practices reflect, reproduce and validate the heteronormative order; and by doing so, they expose the regulatory processes lending authority and privilege to certain – but not all – forms of sexuality, racial/ethnic background, class position and citizenship and, in some cases, transnational loyalties.

(Leap 2013, p.643)

While the above could be considered a definition of critical sociolinguistics more generally, the queer perspective is necessary for this thesis analytically, as critical sociolinguistics does not necessarily prioritise heteronormativity or gender binarism in its approach. A queer linguistic approach posits that societal processes and structures are necessarily gendered which gives rise to issues for LGBTQI+ people. This, “critical

heteronormativity research from a linguistic point of view” (Motschenbacher and Stegu 2013, p.522) focuses on challenging the heteronormative status quo, which is crucial as heteronormativity often paves the way for more extreme forms of gender- and sexuality-based forms of discrimination. Additionally, queer linguistics’ wariness of the status-quo encourages an examination of regulatory processes that impose limiting normativities, where such normativities can come from sources both outside and within the community. By taking a queer linguistic approach, this thesis shows how the linguistic and semiotic choices made by *The Irish Times* and *GCN Magazine* reinforce particular ideological perspectives. It is the mundane or apparently ‘tolerant’ and impartial discourses that are much more revealing about our collective common-sense assumptions about this community.

The field of Queer Linguistics, or Lavender Linguistics, which has grown exponentially since the early 1990s has changed substantially since its beginnings. Baker (2013) conducted a diachronic analysis of Lavender Languages and Linguistics conference abstracts between 1994 and 2012 and was able to identify a shift in focus over the years. While earlier studies made use of specific identity labels, e.g., ‘gay’, gradually more collective and less essentialist labels, e.g., ‘LGBTQI+’, ‘queer’, came to the fore. Jones (2021, p.14) tells us that this is indicative of, “a move beyond looking at dominant categories as homogenous identities towards a more inclusive understanding of non-normative sexuality.” Interestingly, while Baker’s (2013) analyses has identified this shift in the usage of terms, there has still not been as much focus on the more minoritised identity groups withing the LGBTQI+ community.

What we have not seen in the past ten years, which we might have expected [...] is a marked increase in research specifically focused on more diverse identity categories. When specific categories are foregrounded and focused upon, they are still more often than not gay and lesbian – perhaps reflecting an ongoing dominance of these identities in queer culture.

(Jones 2021, p.15)

While this is certainly the case, there are a number of scholars who have been attempting to address this gap, for example, Coombs Fine (2019) investigated segmental and prosodic features of asexual individuals, and others have foregrounded trans identities and their representation (Webster 2018; Zottola 2018; Ryan 2019). In fact, since Jones' observation above, there has been an exciting upsurge in research into trans identities. This has been happening on two fronts. The first is in the domain of variation in gendered pronouns (see, for example, Conrod 2022) and also attitudes towards nonbinary pronouns in English (see, for example, Hekanaho 2022), while the second takes place on a more theoretical plain. Konnelly (2021) has expressed that the emergent field of trans linguistics may allow us to push our collective interrogation of normativities in queer linguistic research. While the current research does not focus on identity categories explicitly, but rather on the representation of an imagined Irish LGBTQI+ or queer community, and its future, it is my hope that this will nonetheless contribute to shedding light on the discursive environment in which all members of the Irish LGBTQI+ community construct their identity, including more marginalised members.

Jones (2021, p.14) describes recent work in this area as, "more concerned with exploring the mechanisms by which all sexual identities are realised and communicated through language", although it should be acknowledged that this discussion is centred largely on same-sex relationships and gay identities. As it does not, therefore, represent the full LGBTQI+ initialism, the acronym LGB is used in the subsequent paragraphs. See Chapter 1, section 1.5.2, for a full discussion of when each of these acronyms is used. In any case, this thesis aligns with a recent and noticeable trend in queer linguistic research which is the interrogation of mediated and online discourses of sexuality, and scholars have applied queer linguistic principles to a multitude of contexts in doing so. This has been taking place across a variety of platforms, and through a diversity of modes. For example, dating and hook-up sites have been targeted as a fruitful area to examine the construction of the

self, as well as of normativities (Baudinette 2017; Adams-Thies 2019; Thompson 2021). Social media has also become site whereby the representations of LGB (and other) communities have been investigated, and this has been especially enriching for the field, as online spaces allow researchers access to cultural contexts which might otherwise be difficult to investigate. For example, Baker and Jabarooty (2017) use Twitter to investigate representations of the LGB community in Iran, a state where homosexuality is illegal and punishable by execution. Relatedly, the investigation of mediated and online discourse domains has allowed for the expansion of research into the Global South. Campell and Haynes (2020) and Adegbola (2022) have applied a queer linguistic lens to online media and newspapers in Chile, Senegal, and Trinidad, and Nigeria respectively. Such work is crucially important, as it addresses the, “persistence of racial injustice [...] in the process of knowledge production” (Makoni 2021, p.48). Constructions of masculinity and femininity have also been studied via a queer linguistic approach to mediated discourse (Hassa 2017; Hiramoto and Lai 2017), while print media remains as relevant as ever to the investigation of a number of issues pertaining to LGB communities. For example, Sagredos (2019) investigated representations of sex workers in the Greek press, Jones and Collins (2020) examined arguments related to the provision of PrEP in the UK press, and Phillips (2021) examined media coverage of LGB communities in Singapore. The following section focuses explicitly on the implications of research into mediated discourses of sexuality and highlights the value in conducting such research.

2.4.1 Studies of Mediated Sexuality

As noted in the previous section, the field of queer linguistics has seen a growing interest in the study of mediated sexuality in all its forms, though particularly through the analysis of news discourse and media representations of gender and sexual minorities. Research within this domain involves an exploration of how intermediaries are used for, and impact, sexual communication and expression. The impact of these platforms on sexual attitudes

and behaviours, and the role of technology in shaping contemporary sexual cultures are all key considerations in this domain.

One significant trend is the examination of specific online subcultural communities, for example kink-based subcultures (see, for example, Wignall 2017), or even incel groups (see, for example, Heritage 2023). Wignall reveals how various elements of Twitter are used to form a unique subculture that emphasises changing attitudes and behaviours towards sex, including the normalisation of previously taboo sexual practices and the conceptualisation of sex as a leisure activity akin to other leisure pursuits. In this way, the intermediary of Twitter is used to negotiate new norms and shape new understandings of sexual desire and practice. Other studies investigate how digital platforms facilitate new forms of sexual expression and interaction, such as sexting among adolescents and young adults, and how these practices intersect with issues of consent, wellness, privacy, and online sexual victimisation (Gassó *et al.* 2020). Relatedly, research also focuses on the implications of digital sexual cultures for sexual health and education, suggesting the need for interventions that address the complexities of mediated sexuality, including promoting safe and healthy use of information and communication technologies and integrating discussions of sexting and online sexual behaviours into sex education programs (Sales *et al.* 2013; Ojeda and Del Rey 2021). Overall, the main trends in studies of mediated sexuality underscore the complex interplay between technology, sexual behaviour, and culture, pointing to the need for nuanced understandings of how digital platforms both reflect and shape contemporary sexualities.

Mediated discourses of sexuality that focus specifically on news discourse align with the above, but there is an additional focus placed on the representative aspect of the mediation and its impact on public perceptions and societal understandings of gender and sexual minorities. Studies have examined how media portrayals can both challenge and reinforce stereotypes and normative assumptions about gender and sexuality (Motschenbacher

2012). This includes an analysis of how language is used in media narratives to construct particular images of queer individuals and communities, often highlighting the role of media in either perpetuating or contesting heteronormative discourses (see, for example, Mowlabocus 2020). Further, the specific framing of LGB individuals and the potential effects of such representations on audience understanding and attitudes has also been subject to investigation (see, for example, Milani 2013). This includes investigating the visibility of individuals in news media and the extent to which their voices are included or marginalised in public discourse. There is also an interest in the degree of intersectionality of mediated representations, where studies consider how factors such as race, class, and gender intersect with sexuality in narratives about queer individuals (Shield 2018a), and further, how such online narratives can affect offline spaces (Shield 2018b). Moreover, the methodological approaches in these studies often involve corpus linguistics and discourse analysis approaches, utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine datasets of media texts (Mautner 2009). This allows for a detailed examination of the linguistic and semiotic features of media discourse and the identification of patterns and trends in the representation of queer communities.

Ultimately, there is a growing recognition of the role of news media and social networking sites in shaping contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality, and importantly, not solely non-normative expressions thereof. Studies have explored how sites of mediated discourse provide spaces for queer expression and community building, as well as how they contribute to the dissemination of both progressive and regressive narratives about gender and sexual minorities (Gray 2009). Through a focus on media representations, news discourse, and digital media, researchers are uncovering the complex ways in which language and media contribute to the construction of queer identities and experiences. This research project aligns with this line of research.

2.4.2 The ‘Homonormative Turn’

Another notable focal point for studies within the field of queer linguistics is the notion of “homonormativity” or the “new homonormativity” (Duggan 2002, p.179), a term used to describe new neoliberal sexual politics.

It is a politics that does not contest the dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.

(Duggan 2002, p.179)

Within ‘new’ homonormativity, gay men and lesbians are viewed as ‘regular’ or ‘normal’ citizens who desire the same things as their heterosexual counterparts. According to Duggan (2002, p.179), the rhetoric within this politics addresses an “imagined gay public” and “works to bring the desired public into political salience as a perceived mainstream.” This happens through a re-configuration of public and private life that seeks to, “shrink gay public spheres and redefine gay equality” as distinct from any civil rights or libertarian agenda, as well as through the granting of, “access to the institutions of domestic privacy, the ‘free’ market, and patriotism.” Debates challenging the assimilationist politics involved in the normalisation of LGBTQI+ lives are becoming increasingly prevalent as some versions of homosexuality are increasingly accepted at the expense of others, however this conflict between assimilationist and more radical goals has been ongoing since the early days of the homophile movement of the 1950s. Duggan (2002, p.180) tells us despite the difference in how best to pursue the goals of what she terms ‘gay equality’, the goals themselves have been relatively consistent. These include,

the expansion of a right to sexual privacy against the intrusive, investigatory labelling powers of the state, and the simultaneous expansion of gay public life through institution building and publicity.

(Duggan 2002, p.180)

Mowlabocus (2021, p.3) takes the view that, “all of these legal rights have been hard won and are the result of tireless work by activists and organisations” and believes that, “these

rights broadly represent a step in the right direction inasmuch as they seek to rectify long-standing inequalities within the current social order.” An important point raised by Mowlabocus (2021, p.4) is that none of these legal gains are in and of themselves ‘homonormative’, and posits that, “homonormativity doesn’t do activism, so much as frame, appropriate, hijack and re-interpret it, harnessing such energy and labour for its own ends.” In this sense, he suggests that a careful and constant critical perspective as regards the force of homonormativity is healthy and necessary. Neary (2016, p.774) adopts and applies such a critical perspective to her examination of the discourses surrounding civil partnership and marriage equality in the Irish context and considers whether a “new homonormativity” has developed as a result of advocates adopting a “politics of pragmatism and [...] assimilationist strategies in line with consensus politics” (Neary 2016, p.757). Of particular note and relevance to discussions of transformative change in this thesis is the connection Neary makes between these approaches and radical sexual politics or broader kinship discussions, which are foreclosed to the mobilisation of a politics of change based on normalisation and sameness. Neary (2016, p.757) contends that the result of this is that ideologies underpinning the ‘acceptable’ sexual citizen are reinscribed and ‘others’ are once again placed on the periphery, thus reinforcing the socio-cultural values of family and kinship on which the Irish state was founded (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.10.1). Queer linguistic work, too, has explicitly investigated discourses of homonormativity across contexts. For instance, through the case study of hijras, a traditional third-gender community in South Asia, Hall (2013) highlights how the linguistic practices of hijras disrupt the binary logic of male-female roles, and instead, perform identities that are complex and fluid. One of Hall’s central concerns is how homonormativity has overshadowed the importance of non-Western and non-normative identities. In addition, Hall critiques how homonormative frameworks often push for normalisation within the binary constructs of male-female and homosexual-heterosexual

identities, sidelining groups like hijras that do not fit into these categories. Such a critique highlights the need for alternative theoretical frameworks that consider identities beyond common structures, such as this thesis proposes. Elsewhere, through an examination of the Pink Dot Movement in Singapore, a campaign advocating for LGBTQI+ rights, Lazar (2017) highlights how homonormative ideologies can be assimilated into nationalistic discourse, thus embodying a type of homonationalism. In a similar way to the work of Neary (2016) cited above, Lazar (2017) shows how such a discourse frames its demands in non-radical terms, thereby foregrounding respectability at the expense of those on the margins. Finally, Motschenbacher (2020) explores the construction of a homonormative space wherein LGBTQI+ identities and lifestyles are made visible in ways that mirror mainstream, heteronormative values, such as monogamy, consumerism, and white, middle-class respectability. Motschenbacher's linguistic landscape analysis found linguistic and visual markers that once again reflect a narrow version of LGB identity rather than LGBTQI+ identity, which caters primarily to white, middle-class gay men, thus perpetuating a form of exclusionary homonormativity by marginalising other queer identities, particularly those related to racial, economic, or gender diversity.

As sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 in the subsequent chapter highlight, the tension between assimilationist and more radicalised perspectives is ongoing. This discussion is taken up in Chapter 6, sections 6.4 and 6.4.1, as it relates to this analysis where both assimilationist and radical representations of queerness exist side-by-side seemingly unproblematically. This recalls Mowlabocus's (2021, p.6) assertion that you can be, by turns, queer, homonormative, assimilationist, and radical, depending on the context.

2.5 Disidentification and Queer Futurity

In contrast to assimilationist and homonormative ideologies, discussed in the previous section, which might encourage LGBTQI+ people to 'identify' with the current social order (through engagement with same-sex marriage and the politics of 'sameness', for

example), this thesis seeks to explore the potential of ‘disidentifying’ with such social structures and articulating queerer visions of the future. In addition to outlining how this is done in this thesis, this section focuses on why doing so might be important for LGBTQI+ people and highlights other research that has applied such a queer utopian lens to mediated discourse contexts.

Muñoz (2009, p.1) begins his work by saying that, “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality.” He says that it is also, “a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present” (Muñoz 2009, p.1). Essentially, queer futurity is the utopian impulse embedded in queer collectivity: the hope that new ways of being, doing and relating exist just over the horizon. Muñoz offers two complementary but distinct theories towards negotiating these new ways of being and doing through challenging hegemonic norms: (i) ‘disidentification’ (Muñoz 1999) and ‘queer futurity’ (Muñoz 2009). These challenge and subvert cultural norms and offer a path for negotiating hegemonic ideologies, and while there is overlap between them, they share a focus on the relationship of marginalised groups to dominant culture. Where disidentification focuses on the critical engagement with and subversion of existing norms in the *present*, queer futurity looks towards the *future* and the possibilities of more radical transformation. Together, they offer a multi-dimensional approach to understanding and navigating the experiences of marginalised communities. In the first instance, disidentification explores the ways in which marginalised individuals negotiate and subvert dominant norms and identities with emphasis on critical engagement with existing social structures and the creation of alternative subjectivities within or adjacent to these paradigms. As mentioned above, it is concerned with the present moment, and offers space to resist assimilationist politics and reimagine identities within the constraints of the current social order. On the other hand, queer futurity, looks forward towards the future and envisions possibilities for radical change and transformation. It is a concept

that challenges the limitations of present structures by imagining alternative futures that are inclusive, liberatory, and affirming for marginalised communities. Queer futurity resists the notion that the present social order is fixed or inevitable and instead advocates for the creation of new worlds that are more just and equitable. Queer futurity goes beyond the act of resistance and seeks to articulate a vision of what could be. It rejects the idea of simply identifying with and assimilating into existing structures and instead aims to disrupt and transcend them. In the context of the LGBTQI+ community, disidentification seeks to reconcile queerness within or side-by-side current structures, while queer futurity encourages marginalised individuals and communities to imagine and strive for a future that goes beyond the confines of current systems which are viewed as oppressive. I argue that, while the concepts of disidentification and queer futurity do, by their nature as utopian visions have a strong rhetorical aspect, they may nonetheless provide us with a framework within which we can (re-)conceptualise the notions of queerness, in the first instance, and community, in the second. In fact, I would go so far as saying that it is a necessary perspective to adopt in times when queer communities are under threat across domains and contexts as they are at the time of writing, as these lenses offer the LGBTQI+ community a way to endure and sustain itself through the permission to think about progress transformatively.

The concepts of disidentification and queer futurity are primarily proposed and discussed by Muñoz on a theoretical level through an exploration of art, literature, and cultural expressions, as well as discussions on queer temporalities, spatialities and utopian visions. While the latter topics are discussed further in the subsequent section (2.5.1), we can interpret and expand upon Muñoz's discussions and identify a number of areas which may be fruitful to explore. As such, following Muñoz's lead, the below areas emerge as promising in that they may illustrate how these theoretical concepts might manifest in the

'real-world'. The findings of this thesis, outlined in Chapter 5, are interpreted in Chapter 6 under each of the below headings.

1. Mediated Representations as Normative and Disruptive Forces (Chapter 6, section 6.4)
2. Normative and Transformative Kinship (Chapter 6, section 6.4.1)
3. Spatial Creation: Safe Spaces and Community Building (Chapter 6, section 6.5)
4. Activism and Resistance: Deploying Disorder and Dystopia (Chapter 6, section 6.6)
5. Art and Cultural Engagement as Subversion (Chapter 6, section 6.7)
6. The Radical Potential of Re-operationalisation (Chapter 6, section 6.8)

I argue that where the above categories - representing the ideas of queer futurity - frame a nuanced discussion, it will be possible to understand whether or not, and to what extent, the LGBTQI+ community negotiates its identities, resists dominant norms, and envisions possibilities for a more inclusive and equitable future in community-led news media. While the discourses and examples of queer futurity being analysed are primarily drawn from the *GCN Magazine* data, an examination of mainstream media representations, notably authored by those who are not members of the LGBTQI+ community, is also useful as it shows the continued, constraining presence of heteronormative ideology. It is the author's hope that establishing a baseline of the types of discourses that are circulating in the public sphere via the mainstream analysis will render any instances of futurity and innovation more visible. Further, given that similar studies have also been conducted in mainstream media contexts, this also allows for comparisons to be drawn between this research and other contexts, further strengthening the arguments made in this thesis.

Others have usefully applied these theoretical lenses to a diverse range of contexts. For example, Neary (2023, p.350) engages with Muñoz’s queer utopian ideas and employs “educated hope” in the context of broaching LGBTQI+ themes in primary schools, a setting that is traditionally reticent to engage with such matters. According to Neary,

This version of hope is one that anticipates the inevitability of disappointment and failure but deems these to be worth the risk ‘for the sake of a vision of something better’.

(Neary 2023, p.350)

Similarly, by applying a queer utopian lens, Henry *et al.* (2023) reflect on the pedagogical value of encounters with LGBTQI+ themes and experiences in the comedic context. They show how the sitcom *Schitt’s Creek* carves out, “new ground in the representation of queerness in popular culture [...] because it shows audiences ‘what life could be’ without falling into trite moralistic sentiments” (Henry *et al.* 2023, p.82). They explicitly operationalise Muñoz’s concept of queer utopia to highlight the capacity of media narratives to counteract harmful discourses that conflate queerness with vulnerability and victimhood. Instead, the particular understanding of queerness they find goes, “beyond specific identity claims or political positions to include a more fundamental, affective desire for social change that surpasses the limits of our present world” (Henry *et al.* 2023, pp.82-83). This thesis emulates their study in that it attempts to explore the extent to which better worlds are articulated in news discourse. However, where Henry *et al.* (2023) focus on the pedagogical applications of such utopian representations, this thesis primarily highlights the journalistic applications (see, for example, Chapter 6, sections 6.4 to 6.8). Bayramoğlu’s (2021) study focused on a journalistic context and operationalised the notion of queer futurity in their examination of mediated news discourse in Türkiye during a period of authoritarianism and anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment. They showed how the notions of hope and visions for the future permeated mediated public discourse even in hostile environments and found that they can be used as a source of inspiration and a rallying-call in challenging times and within oppressive regimes. In

this way, it can be viewed as a political force and help, “map out possible future routes for queer lives” and “sustain queers’ determination” (Bayramoğlu 2021, p.173). Majkowski (2011) examined the ‘It Gets Better Campaign’ through this lens, and determined that, “This temporal rhetoric of ‘wait it out’ and ‘what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger’ is not the best we can do” Majkowski (2011, p.164). Majkowski highlights a key aspect of queer futurity, that the future-focused and potentially transformative perspective means little with a commitment to action in the present. While Muñoz (2009) insists on the need for hope towards a better future, this temporal rhetoric, without a commitment to activity, consigns LGBTQI+ people to a disempowered and passive present.

Conceptually, ‘progress’ implies present actions leading to a hypothetical and ‘better’ future, and as such, any discussion of how ‘progress’ is conceptualised in the data should be considered within the context of queer futurity as theorised in Muñoz’s (2009) work. In this, Muñoz takes a Blochian perspective to critically engage the present-focused pragmatic ‘LGBTQI+ agenda’ focusing on issues such as same-sex marriage, for example. Bernstein (2018) echoes this sentiment:

Reflecting academic debates over pursuing litigation strategies, researchers and LGBTQ activists alike have long debated the wisdom of pursuing marriage as a movement goal and the possible deleterious impact of same-sex marriage on the future of LGBTQ activism, politics, communities, and identities. Critics fear that LGBTQ people will mistake same-sex marriage for equality, thus leading to demobilization and a post-gay existence that ignores other issues that are vital to LGBTQ communities.

(Bernstein 2018, p.1942)

Here, Bernstein resuscitates the assimilationist argument of Duggan’s (2002) ‘new homonormativity’, suggesting that those envisioning a queer future should be wary of identifying with homonormativity’s normativising processes. Indeed, central to Muñoz’s (2009) vision of queer futurity is a critique of, what he terms, the “pragmatic presentism” of current LGBTQI+ politics. Matters such as legislative parity, civil partnerships, same-sex marriage, and reproductive rights are foregrounded in this agenda, but according to

Muñoz, we should be critical of this. Muñoz (2009, p.19) claims that our current political agenda is, “anaemic” when compared to the revolutionary and radical demands of the past, whereby complete societal reorganisation was sought. The ‘we’ and ‘our’ in this paradigm exist “beside” current conceptualisations of collectivity where distinct and discreet categories are central (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender, class). In other words, while the present LGBTQI+ agenda proliferates the existence of these categories and conceives of collectivity as belonging-despite-difference, queer futurity posits that there should be multiple forms of, “belonging-in-difference”, and Muñoz (2009, p.20) proceeds to point out that, “expansive critiques of social asymmetries are absent in the dominant LGBTQI+ leadership community and in many aspects of queer critique” (Muñoz 2009, p.20). Addressing this absence, Chapter 6, section 6.4, attempts to shed light on some of the social asymmetries that are present in the LGBTQI+ community within the scope of this thesis and data. The limitations of this theoretical lens are discussed in the subsequent section.

In terms of how this esoteric concept can be operationalised, Muñoz’s (2009, p.1) asserts that, “Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity”, which seems particularly relevant considering this thesis’ multimodal approach, where the aesthetic, comprising of multiple modes (language and visual for example), is central. With this dataset in mind, “Both the ornamental and the quotidian can contain a map of the utopia that is queerness.” By examining the illustrations of ‘progress’ presented by *GCN Magazine*, I hope to be able to determine to what extent the representations and subjects in the magazine embody the transformative potential of queer futurity, and by extension, to what extent assimilationist goals of ‘gay pragmatism’ (encouraging identification rather than disidentification) are portrayed. Chapter 6, section 6.9, summarises how disidentification

and queer futurity are operationalised in the data, and how this can be used as a model to understand nexuses of practice that regulate people's lives. There are three dimensions of queer futurity with the potential for this radical hope which can be glimpsed in the data. These are queer time, queer space, and queer hope itself. These are discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.5.1 Theorising Progress through Utopia: Queer Temporality, Spatiality, and

Hope

Halberstam (2005) highlighted that LGBTQI+ people and their lives often fall outside of 'heteronormative time'. In other words, LGBTQI+ temporality exists outside of a birth-marriage-reproduction-death sequence, which results in the trapping of LGBTQI+ lives in an extended adolescence from a heteronormative perspective (given that marriage and reproduction are often seen as important steps into adulthood). This drive towards a stable and normative future underpins the concepts of heteronormativity and homonormativity. Muñoz (2009) questions time as something inherently linear and encourages us to step outside of this 'straight' timeline (see Chapter 6, section 6.4.1, for an exploration of how temporalities manifest in the data). While queer futurity allows for the imagining of other temporalities, for example a non-linear path of self-actualisation with milestones that do not include marriage and property acquisition, it also contains an aspect of spatiality. Some scholars have shown how the spatialised facet of queer futurity (Puar 2002; Grant 2021) is, "part of the process of envisioning future selves, lives, and belonging in place" (Grant 2021, p.1136). Grant (2021) employs queer futurities to examine how narratives of place can affect the understanding of identity, home, and belonging in rural Australia and shows us how queer futurity can be a useful tool to coalesce intersectional aspects of identity. They also reveal that queer narratives of space are class specific, and the imagined utopias differ in urban and rural areas in various geographical areas. While 'leaving the nest' is considered a marker of the transition to adulthood in a general sense,

Weston (1995) tells us rural to urban migration is a particular milestone for LGBTQI+ youth. While the rural-urban divide is not something that appeared in this thesis in a major way, classed spaces are discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.7, in the context of the LGBTQI+ media's engagement with art and culture.

At the centre of queer futurity are the concepts of hope and utopia, where the critical mode of hope represents the, "concrete utopianism" (Muñoz 2009, p.4) of queer futurity. As mentioned, queer futurity is not solely hypothetical, and as such, Muñoz proceeds to describe hope as, "a critical methodology [that] can best be described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision." Bloch provides a poetic way of envisioning hope in this sense, invoking the idea of wish-landscapes (Bloch 1989) which, Muñoz (2009, p.7) tells us, "extend into the territory of futurity." In order to find hope, Muñoz implores us to look back and find it in art or texts from times of crisis, where one would least expect to find it. Berlant (2011) proposes a similar perspective, what she terms 'cruel optimism', whereby a desire for better politicking and imaginaries of a good life can become hurdles against learning how to cope with present reality. She points out that in this way, the present can be experienced as "a heavy weight" causing a dissonance in the subject with their quotidian reality.

The notions of 'disidentification' and 'queer futurity' are not without their shortcomings and critics, however. The first of these shortcomings relates to an overemphasis on the future. Muñoz's concept of 'queer futurity' places a heavy emphasis on the future as a site of potential liberation and transformation. It could be argued that this focus on the future can obscure the very real struggles and oppressions that queer individuals face in the present. It can also downplay the significance of historical and contemporary forms of oppression. In this way, the utopianism is viewed as excessive and therefore impractical and unproductive. Love (2007, p.127) maintains that to overfocus on the future is to overlook the negative, shameful, and difficult feelings that, "have been so central to queer

existence in the last century” (Love 2007, p.127). Ahmed (2010a, 2010b, 2023) claims that we should make room for narratives that ‘kill our joy’, as otherwise there is a risk of imagining a future where negativity does not exist, a future about which she is sceptical. Ahmed (2010a, p.89) recalls scholars such as Sedgwick (2003), Probyn (2005), and Munt (2007), who have, “offered us powerful defences of the potentialities of shame for queer politics.” Indeed, Daniel (2010, p.328) also notes that the “manic pace of *Cruising Utopia*’s [Muñoz 2009] attempts to achieve escape velocity from that very negativity risks looking like sublation or reaction rather than a real alternative.”

Muñoz's (1999) concept of ‘disidentification’ can also be criticised for its focus on individual acts of resistance and creativity which can obscure the structural and systemic forces that shape queer identities and experiences. Additionally, it may place too much burden on marginalised individuals to resist oppression on their own. Indeed, such a burden is evident in the findings and discussion of this thesis (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.2, and Chapter 6, section 6.6, respectively). While Muñoz's (2009) later work somewhat bridges this gap, the applicability of these concrete utopias to the wider LGBTQI+ community is contested. For instance, Daniel (2010) claims that, “Muñoz’s heart belongs to the odd-balls” and while Muñoz (2009) might bring a wildly heterogenous group of individuals into unforeseen alignment, his work is, “most arresting when he focuses in on particular artworks [...] and finds the impulse towards collective futurity crystallized in an isolated aesthetic gesture” (Daniel 2010, p.326). I argue that while this might be true within Muñoz's own discussions of art and literature, it is not necessarily the case for those who attempt to apply a lens of queer utopia to a data set such as this (see, for example, Bayramoğlu 2021; Henry *et al.* 2023). In fact, I argue that this critique highlights the usefulness of identifying analytical focal points distilled from the work of Muñoz (see Chapter 2, section 2.5), as such an undertaking grounds the analysis and makes it both more accessible and more easily applied to wider contexts.

A third shortcoming relates to the lack of attention given to intersectionality in the work of Muñoz. Edelman (2004), in particular, critiques Muñoz's theories of queer temporality that fail to account for the relational relevance of race or class. Edelman (2004) argues that such a limited conception of queerness neglects the lived experiences and intersectional identities of queer people of colour and other marginalised groups resulting in an inadequate understanding of the intersectional nature of oppression. By focusing primarily on queerness, Muñoz's framework may overlook the ways in which queer identities intersect with other forms of oppression, such as race, class, gender, and disability. The result of this is an exclusionary and essentialist assumption about queer identity. His focus on certain forms of queer cultural production may marginalise other, less visible forms of queer expression.

Nonetheless, scholars like Bayramoğlu (2021) and Miyazaki and Swedberg (2017) take the perspective that 'hope', rather than effacing narratives of shame, struggle, and violence, actually mitigates their ability to perpetuate. This version of 'hope' does not have to manifest itself to be useful, and is, as Bayramoğlu (2021, p.180) puts it, "always directed toward something such as a good life, or emancipation from a restrictive present, or toward specific political changes, desired objects, or persons" (see also, Muñoz 2009; Berlant 2011). Indeed, this example of queer hope as disruptive to negative narratives of queer subjectivity encapsulates why a discourse approach is useful in this thesis. This is the focus of the following section.

2.6 Discourse

Having outlined the primary theoretical approach of this thesis, it seems useful at this point to take stock and explain why a discourse studies approach is appropriate and useful in the examination of queer futurities, temporalities, and spatialities. As noted in Chapter 1, section 1.1, this thesis operates under the assumption that reality is discursively constructed, which implies that representations of LGBTQI+ people and communities are

not only reflective of queer lives but are actively involved in creating them. Given that much of the research cited in previous sections has highlighted limiting representations of LGBTQI+ people and their lives across a spectrum of contexts (see, for example, Hassa 2017; Jones and Collins 2020; Phillips 2021; Adegbola 2022), we come to realise the extent to which discourse enables the reproduction of problematic tropes and narratives. Waidzunas (2012) highlights how the conflation of queer lives with such tropes and narratives results in a “looping effect” that inevitably sustains them. In short, the creation and reproduction of a disempowered version of queer subjectivity, and by extension queer futures, is discursive in nature, and thus, by viewing this issue as discursive and taking a discourse studies approach, we become equipped to intervene and interrupt the looping effect. In light of this, this section explores the concept of discourse, and highlights the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology, as well as the historical nature of discourse, and comments on how this is important in the context of research on representations of gender- and sexual-minorities, especially in mediated news contexts.

According to Baker and McEnery (2015, p.4), the word ‘discourse’ has, “suffered something of an identity crisis.” Partington *et al.* (2013, p.2) note that a “seemingly bewildering array” of different definitions of discourse exist, but posit that they have, “more overlap than would appear at first sight.” This section outlines some of these and establishes the definition of discourse that underpins this thesis.

The first group of definitions of discourse can be categorised as structural. Martin and Rose (2003, p.1) define it as written or spoken language containing more than one sentence, or “meaning beyond the clause.” Studies of discourse in this sense relate to the analysis of the organisation of language, above the sentence. Another definition of discourse, although one that is now somewhat dated, is that which distinguishes speech from writing, where ‘text’ refers to written language and ‘discourse’ to speech (Carter 1995, p.39). The point of this distinction was to highlight the interactive nature of

discourse, where speech was considered as embodying this more than writing. Others take a more functional approach, defining discourse as “the analysis of language in use” (Brown and Yule 1983, p.1). This definition moves away from descriptive perspectives and does not permit the separation of linguistic forms from their purpose or function. While this definition moves closer to the understanding of discourse in this thesis, it is still somewhat untenable as virtually any utterance or piece of writing has a functional context, which leads to a paradox for the analyst who must remove the discourse from its context in order to analyse it. Partington *et al.* evoke this argument below.

This view of discourse as language-when-doing-something leads to the inescapable conclusion, paradox perhaps, that the discourse linguist never has real discourse in her hands since, by the time it gets to her dissecting table, it is no longer doing what it was intended for. It is, as it were, “once-was-discourse”.

(Partington *et al.* 2013, p.2)

The above notion highlights the importance of context for the discourse analyst in particular, something the methodological approach of this thesis (CADS) attempts to explicitly account for (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.3 for a full discussion of this).

This thesis focuses on the notion of discourse as social practice, and perceives it as, “constructive (and constraining) of social relations” (Partington et al 2013, p.3). In this way, analyses of discourse interrogate the set of norms that govern conduct using language. This happens at two levels; the first of these is the micro level (the social interactionist perspective) where interpersonal communication between individuals is under investigation, and the second is the macro level (the Foucauldian perspective). Gee (1999, p.4) describes how analyses in these domains show how language, “is used to enact activities, perspectives, and identities.” A further implication of this is that for each social settings and purpose, there is a different type of discourse, where these different ‘discourses’ each have their own set of norms. In this thesis, for example, we discuss news discourse, in particular (see section 2.6.4 below for a discussion of the set of norms associated with this type of discourse). Thus, I argue that within this perspective, there

are two primary expressions of this definition of discourse, or simply put, two ways of using the term appropriately in this thesis. The first relates to ‘discourse type’, as mentioned above using the example of ‘news discourse.’ This aligns with the CADS approach to discourse analysis because research conducted within this tradition places emphasis on discourse types, i.e. news discourse, and investigates the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* (Partington *et al.* 2013, p.10). Here, the communicative function of discourse relates to how language is used to, “influence the beliefs and behaviour of other people” (Partington *et al.* 2013, p.5) within a specific discourse type. The second relates more to the theoretical workings of the regulatory (constructing and constraining) nature of discourse at a macro level. In this way, it aligns with the Foucauldian perspective of discourse. The following sections explore the dimensions of power and historicity as they relate to the analysis of ideology and representation in discourse.

2.6.1 Analysing Ideology and Representation in Discourse

As alluded to in the preceding section, Foucault (1972) delineates discourse as more than solely linguistic constructs. In his view it encompasses a complex interplay of language, power, and institutional practices that shape and regulate human thought and behaviour. Central to Foucault’s conception is the idea that discourse operates as a system of rules and norms that govern the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society. In this way, discourse functions as a mechanism of power, constituting and perpetuating some (dominant) forms of knowledge while marginalising alternative perspectives and voices. As such, discourse contexts are sites wherein ‘futures’ are negotiated and (re)produced. Foucault contends that power is not solely repressive but operates through productive channels, wherein discursive practices serve to construct and reinforce particular truths, identities, and social norms. This understanding of the discursive functioning of power is relevant to this thesis as it is the representation of a

minoritised group that is under investigation. A discourse approach to the study of language and sexuality foregrounds the notion that the production of knowledge is inherently intertwined with processes of domination and subjugation, a perspective missing from research that more directly engages with communities. Indeed, Foucault (1981) explicitly highlights the role of discourse in the construction of subjectivities and identities in the context of sexuality. Foucault examines how discourses surrounding sexuality have historically produced and regulated various forms of subjectivity, through the normalisation of certain behaviours and marginalisation of others. Crucial to this thesis is the affordance of the Foucauldian perspective on discourse which explores how individuals can resist or subvert dominant discourses, and therefore power dynamics, through counter-discourses and alternative practices. This holds particular theoretical potential with the notions of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’ which encourage us to dissociate from current regulatory discourses and structures and articulate innovation and ‘newness’ in relation to what queer lives might look like in the future. Foucault makes a connection between controlling the site of production of discourse and controlling social relations, thereby maintaining social relations of power. The site under investigation here is that of news discourse (discussed in section 2.6.4 below).

Another central idea within the Foucauldian perspective of discourse is the discursive functioning of ideology and the links between language, discourse, and the operation of ideologies in society. Contesting definitions of ‘ideology’ exist (see, for example, Thompson 1990), however this thesis adopts the perspective of Van Dijk (2006, p.116) who defines ideology as, “belief systems [that are] socially shared by the members of a collectivity of social actors.” This definition is particularly pertinent in the context of this research project, as we are examining the shared belief systems of two distinct collectivities by examining how gender and sexual minorities are represented by both the mainstream and the LGBTQI+ media. Van Dijk (2006, p.116) also posits that ideologies,

“also specify what cultural values [...] are relevant for the group”, which, considering we are interested in the notion of ‘progress’ and want to know to what extent these groups (dis-)identify with assimilationist or radical values, is a useful conceptualisation of ideology. Ideologies have a significant impact on social power structures, and language and semiotics are an important means by which ideologies are (re-)produced, expressed, and legitimised in society, further lending clout to a discourse approach to the study of language and sexuality. However, the relationship between discourse and ideology should not be over-simplified, and it should not be assumed that one can merely take a cursory glance at discourse and easily infer ideological positionality. However, while discourse cannot be reduced to ideology, I hold with Van Dijk (2006, p.115) who claims that, “systematic discourse analysis offers powerful methods to study the structures and functions of underlying ideologies.” In other words, the methodical examination and interpretation of discourses within the data may lead to insights into ideologies that both construct and constrain the subjectivities of LGBTQI+ people in this research context. This is important because in attempting to understand abstract ideas like community and progress we must understand the hierarchies and power dynamics that emerge from particular ideological configurations. It can be useful to examine such ideological configurations for contradictions, especially across distinct data sets. For example, this thesis draws data from both mainstream and community-led media, and such contradictions may appear in how particular groups are represented and constructed. Van Dijk (2006) mentions the prevalence of ideological polarisation which distinguishes between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (see Chapter 4, sections 4.3.3.1 to 4.3.3.4, for an explanation of the analytical tools used to facilitate such an analysis). This type of contesting ideological discourse is,

generally organised by a general strategy of positive self-presentation (boasting) and negative other-presentation (derogation). This strategy may operate at all levels, generally in such a way that our good things are emphasised and our bad things de-emphasised, and

the opposite for Others – whose bad things will be enhanced, and whose good things will be mitigated, hidden or forgotten.

(Van Dijk 2006, p.126)

Crucially, these ideologies consist of representations that define the social identity of a group, including the group's collectively held beliefs about its fundamental existence (Van Dijk 2006, p.116), and results in representation recreating and reproducing these ideologies. This understanding of the discursive functioning of ideology is important in this thesis as the research has a vested interest in interrogating shared ideologies insofar as they relate to the normativising processes of gender and sexuality, especially when they become perceived as common sense or obvious assumptions. Such a discourse approach has been employed in queer linguistics across a variety of platforms and through a diversity of modes as alluded to in section 2.4 above. For example, dating and hook-up sites have been targeted as a fruitful area to examine the construction of the self, as well as of normativities (Baudinette 2017; Adams-Thies 2019; Thompson 2021). A discourse approach to social media content has also become site whereby the representations of LGB (and other) communities have been investigated, and this has been especially enriching for the field, as online spaces allow researchers access to cultural contexts which might otherwise be difficult to investigate. For example, Baker and Jabarooty (2017) use Twitter to investigate representations of the LGB community in Iran, a state where homosexuality is illegal and punishable by execution. Relatedly, the investigation of mediated and online discourse domains has allowed for the expansion of research into the Global South. Others have foregrounded trans identities and their discursive construction and representation (see, for example, Webster 2018; Zottola 2018; Ryan 2019). Partington (2015, p.220) notes that, "The term representation/s is widely used in discourse analysis [...] and especially in relation to studies of political and/or media discourses." A common justification for the use of this term over other options is the understanding that any effort by a media outlet to *present* a version of reality is necessary

partial in terms of its accuracy and is never ideologically neutral. This recalls the well-established distinction between Kant's (1787) 'noumena', which can be taken to mean 'the thing itself', and 'phenomena', our ability to perceive, experience, or express 'the thing'. In the context of representation performed by the media, even seemingly 'neutral' accounts of events in news media require selections on numerous levels, for example, what to include in an account of an event, who is interviewed, what actors are given voice, and are these actors representative of a wider collectivity (the LGBTQI+ community, Irish people, refugees), or do they stand alone as an individual? In this way, these are not so much accounts as 'recounts' of an event or newsworthy story, which raises a further important point – what becomes elevated to the designation of 'newsworthy'? Such questions necessitate an engagement with news discourse as a discourse type, which is done in section 2.6.4 below.

Baker *et al.* (2013) identify another, related, implication of the use of the term 'representation', which is that any effort by an analyst to describe or observe an event or entity necessarily involves an element of interaction and further, even interference. Beyond the analyst even, we must remember that there is one additional observer whose engagement with a given representation adds a further layer of meaning.

This is the reader of the analysis, its ultimate beneficiary. The reader has their own observational standpoint relative to the discourse analysis they are reading which enables, indeed obliges, them to make a separate mental representation of it. This new representation may align with parts of the discourse analysis and may disalign with or challenge other parts.

(Partington 2015, p.223)

Chapter 4, section 4.3.4, explores how the methodology of this thesis addresses these challenges.

Foucault emphasises the contingent and historically situated nature of discourse, rejecting essentialist notions of truth and rationality. In Foucault's (1972, p.98) terms, "there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualize others." In other words,

discourse, according to Foucault, is not a transparent reflection of reality but rather a contingent articulation of power and knowledge. He posits that different historical epochs and socio-political contexts give rise to distinct discursive formations, each serving to produce and regulate knowledge in specific ways. This viewpoint has been mirrored by others, for example, Wodak.

utterances are only meaningful if we consider their use in a specific situation, if we recognise their embedding in a certain culture and ideology, and most importantly, if we know what the discourse relates to in the past.

(Wodak 1996, p.19)

In a way, this can be viewed as discourse having an inter-textual nature, whereby texts (in the broad, multisemiotic sense of the term) are partial pieces of other texts which weave together in a variety of ways. These can be at once assimilatory or contradictory. Such a perspective on discourse further cements the CADS approach taken by this thesis which foregrounds context, intertextual knowledge, and researcher intuition in the study of language. In order to align with this theoretical perspective on discourse, Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of historical trends and sociocultural practices in the Irish context. This enriches this thesis as it gives significance to the matrix of discourses of sexuality that have been at play in the Irish media and that are consumed and (re-)produced by news media, both in LGBTQI+ community-led publications and in more mainstream news outlets.

2.6.2 Discourse as Multimodal

This thesis operates on the basis that discourse as defined above is not solely a language-based phenomenon, but rather that it manifests multimodally and multisemiotically. Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.7) distinguish between multisemiotic and multimodal below, noting that,

Strictly speaking, texts that are ‘multimodal’ combine two or more modalities (e.g. visual, aural), whereas ‘multi- semiotic’ texts combine two or more semiotic (meaning-making) systems such as image or language (O’Halloran 2008). However, the term multimodal has typically been employed to mean both.

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.7)

This thesis follows this trend to use ‘multimodal’ and ‘multimodality’ in the more general sense, with some instantiations of ‘semiotic’ used to illustrate particular points - these distinctions are clear from context.

The disciplinary background of this thesis lies both in linguistics, from the perspective that it is firmly situated in the field of language and sexuality and takes a discourse studies approach to the data in this context, but also in social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; 2005) to an extent. If this thesis is to remain aligned with its understanding of discourse as multimodal, then we must adhere to Van Leeuwen’s (2015, p.108) description of the purpose of multimodal discourse analysis which is to capture a, “coherent picture of multimodal communication and all its resources, and all of the ways in which these are integrated.” Given that it is Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001; 2005) strand of multimodal discourse analysis, ‘social semiotics’, that is most closely aligned with the approach to the analysis of the visual data in this thesis (CAMDA; described in Chapter 4, section 4.4.1), there is much room here for a contribution from that literature.

Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001; 2005) ‘social semiotics’ is a theory of meaning-making rooted in the notion that all modes have a role to play in the making of meaning. This perspective on multimodality aims to provide a theory of signification across all modes of communication to begin to explain how modes interrelate in contemporary communicative practices. It challenges the assumption that purely text-based linguistic approaches to analysis can provide a satisfactory and accurate account of representation in communicative discourse, and presents a perspective whereby gesture, speech, image, writing, three-dimensional objects, colour, music (indeed any mode) are all involved in meaning making. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) articulate four strata of meaning making, or “semiotic principles,” in any communicative practice which they name: discourse, design, production, and distribution. Essentially, within this framework, a discourse can

be articulated through “signing practices” which consist of designs aimed at particular audiences and are realised through specific forms of production and media of distribution.

This approach reflects the growing awareness in recent years that texts have a material reality (Kress and van Leeuwen 2005). It seems logical then that any approach to analysing discourse should incorporate an analysis of visual communication, inclusive of the semiotic aspects of texts as well as images, and that this should be an integral part of the analysis. This places images and visual data as, “entirely within the realm of the realizations and instantiation of ideology, as means – always – for the articulation of ideological positions” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2005, p.14). Bednarek and Caple (2017) consider how visual data interact with textual data in the context of news discourse and find that,

Images have long been thought of as visual verification of an event (Dondis 1973; Zelizer 1998; Barnhurst and Nerone 2001; Bignell 2002). They can also be used to attract readers to a particular story, encourage readers to engage more deeply with an issue or they can even be the story themselves (Bednarek and Caple 2012a).

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.107)

In other words, images are not just constituent of discourse, but direct attention to certain elements of the discourse. In this way, choices made about the inclusion of certain visual elements carry even more weight than individual linguistic choices, and can be thought of as coercive to an extent.

The broadening of the definition of discourse aligns with the growing understanding of the centrality of visuality in contemporary consumer culture, particularly in domains such as advertising and marketing. De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan (2010, p.188) speak of the, “intense engagement with visuality” in the context of marketing in particular. This has also been observed in the context of news media (see section 2.6.4 below for an expanded discussion of this topic).

Approaching the analysis of such varied data in such vast quantities has given rise to a number of approaches to analysis. Indeed, Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.8) tell us that, “The field of research that examines multimodality is vast (O’Halloran and Smith 2011), as are the approaches to multimodal discourse analysis.” Jewitt *et al.* (2016) highlight some common approaches which include; Systemic Functional Linguistics, Social Semiotics, Conversational Analysis, Geo-Semiotics, Multimodal (Inter)actional Analysis, Multimodal Ethnography, corpus-based approaches to multimodality, and Multimodal Reception Analysis. Machin *et al.* (2016) also note the field is fragmented in its approach to multimodality in research on gender, language, and discourse specifically. That said, Lazar (2021) synthesises a number of semiotic and multimodal approaches to the analysis of the representation of gendered power dynamics across public and private spheres, and indeed, scholars have been making great use of multimodal discourse analysis to unveil the linguistic and semiotic processes involved in the construction of such dynamics. For example, McLoughlin (2021) examines multimodal constructions of feminism in the popular magazine *Vogue*, Caldas-Coulthard (2021) explores semiotic representations of women criminals, and Hart (2020) explores how visual modes contribute to public perceptions of gender and sexuality, showing how even something as simple as the use of colour (e.g., pink as a gender marker) can carry deep semiotic meanings. The principles of multimodal discourse analysis have also been used to great effect in online contexts. For instance, Chałupnik and Brookes (2022) analyse the All-Poland Women's Strike’s social media presence, using multimodal discourse analysis to unpack how the movement communicates resistance to oppressive gender norms. They show how multimodal strategies, including images and slogans, are used to challenge traditional views on women’s rights and sexuality.

While it may be true that the aforementioned research is fragmented in its approach, a number of common challenges face analysts. The following section considers some of the

challenges that exist in approaching analysis of multimodal data while Chapter 4, sections 4.4 to 4.4.3.2, outlines the approach taken in this thesis, and addresses how the below challenges were addressed.

The first of these challenges relates to the quality and relevance of the visual material to be analysed. Visual data can include more than just photographic images, with cartoons, images with hyperlinks, graphics and posters all being common. Rose (2007, p.62) reminds us that the images must be appropriate to the research question being asked, and in the case of an analysis that examines the semiotics within texts but across modes, there needs to be a logical link between the data. For example, this thesis draws textual data from a magazine and the corresponding visual data from the covers of the same issues from which the textual data is drawn. In this way, they can be both be considered as constituent of the same discourse. Further, the sampled images must be representative and significant (Rose 2007, p.63). Krippendorf (1980) and Weber (1990) offer a number of possibilities here, including, random, stratified, systematic, and cluster sampling, but see Chapter 4, section 4.4.3, for a breakdown of these choices and a description of the analytical procedure followed to analyse the visual data in this thesis.

Previous paragraphs allude to the high number of ‘units’ that need to be analysed in rich multimodal data, and indeed, this poses a further challenge. That said, tools and software that can be used for such analyses have begun to emerge (see, for example, O’Halloran *et al.* 2021). Bateman (2014) addresses the urgent matter of the lack of appropriate tools for interacting with multimodal corpora in order to reveal patterns that may be inaccessible to simple observation and proposes we bring together approaches from the humanities, primarily linguistic and other communication studies based work, and computational techniques for the automatic processing of still images. Aside from software tools, there are a number of analytical focal points which can be useful in multimodal analysis. For example, Bednarek and Caple (2017) observe that comparisons

between the employment of linguistic resources and visual resources exist and argue that these can be useful. They encourage us to draw upon these parallels where they exist and provide the example below to illustrate how this might be done.

There are also certain similarities between language and image that we are able to draw on. The repetition of words in a sentence (e.g. car upon car) and the repetition of depicted elements in an image frame (e.g. cars piled on top of each other), for example, work in similar ways to construct the news value of Superlativeness.

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.107)

Chapter 4, section 4.4.3, discusses how this thesis addresses the above challenges.

2.6.3 Mediated Discourse as a Nexus of Practice

The concept of discourse has many layers, and previous sections have delineated which iterations of this polysemic term underscore this research. Within this thesis, discourse; is viewed as social practice; is both constructive and constraining and is used to enact perspectives, identities, and activities; and operates as a system of rules and norms that govern the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society. In this way, discourse functions as a mechanism of power and is enacted as social practice. This section extrapolates the final layer of discourse relevant to this research, which is that discourse is often mediated.

Mediated discourse (Scollon 1998; 2001) integrates the study of discourse and social action and considers the influence of intermediaries or mediated channels on the content or structure of communication. In this thesis these mediated channels take the form of the news publications *The Irish Times* and *GCN Magazine*, but intermediaries can also take the form of face-to-face interactions mediated by technology (such as video chat software) or interactions mediated by institutions or organisations (such as government press releases or corporate communications). Mediated discourse analysis examines how communication is shaped, structured, and influenced by the mediating factors involved, including technological, institutional, and socio-cultural contexts. The centrality of

context to the theoretical approach of this research is once again foregrounded here. In this case, not only is socio-cultural context important, but also the specificities of the communicative vehicle or intermediary. As previously mentioned, this also aligns with the values of the chosen methodological approaches of CADS and CAMDA, which are elucidated in Chapter 4, sections 4.3.3 and 4.4.1 respectively.

Another key aspect of mediated discourse is that it constitutes a “nexus of practice” (Scollon 2001) which focuses on the way that networks of linked practices form in and around the lives of individuals and groups. Simply put, mediated discourse as a "nexus of practice" refers to the interconnected web of activities, behaviours, and social interactions that shape how individuals engage in a particular practice or activity, for example in performing membership of a group or community. Within this network, different elements like specific people, tools, norms, and traditions converge and combine to influence how something is done. It is comparable to how particular discursive features may produce a community of practice, but it expands on this to consider a complex interplay of various factors beyond language. In this way, the idea of a nexus of practice holds great theoretical synergy with our view as discourse as multimodal and multisemiotic. Studies of mediated discourse, then, examine how individuals come to be identified or claim an identity for themselves within a nexus or multiple nexuses of practice. Such research is necessary because, as Johnson and Ensslin (2007, p.11) remind us in, “late- or post-modern Western society, our daily lives are increasingly both characterized and determined by the production and consumption of diversely mediated meanings.” As such, we are continually engaged in processes of encoding and decoding the linguistic and semiotic information that surrounds us. Chapter 6 will therefore explore how, in the LGBTQI+ community, the multisemiotic data, constituting mediated discourse, functions as a regulatory nexus of practice invoking key individuals, artefacts, political priorities, and subcultural influences to shape how community is performed and understood within the

context of this research. In doing so, I add to the established body of research in queer linguistics that examines news discourse, including; Campell and Haynes (2020) and Adegbola (2022) who have applied a queer linguistic lens to online media and newspapers in Chile, Senegal, and Trinidad, and Nigeria respectively; Sagredos (2019) who investigated representations of sex workers in the Greek press; Jones and Collins (2020) who examined arguments related to the provision of PrEP in the UK press; and Phillips (2021) who examined media coverage of LGB communities in Singapore. The next section focuses on the nature of news discourse as an intensely mediated discourse domain.

2.6.4 News Discourse as an Intensely Mediated Domain

As mentioned in section 2.6 above, for each social settings and purpose, there is a different type of discourse, where these different ‘discourses’ each have their own set of norms. The discourse type under investigation in this thesis is news discourse, an inherently and intensely mediated discourse type. News communication is mediated by various factors, including individuals, media organisations, technological platforms and their various affordances, institutional practices, audience reception, and in some cases, governmental regulation. According to Marchi (2021)

The definition of “news discourse” can be rather broad and accommodate various forms of journalistic output. Bednarek and Caple describe it as ‘the kind of discourse we encounter when we turn on the television, when we open the newspapers, when we go online or when we switch on the radio to get our dose of daily happenings’ (Bednarek and Caple 2012: 1). The qualities which make news discourse an ideal territory for corpus linguistics are inbuilt in the definition: its relevance and its abundance.

(Marchi 2021, p.576)

In this post-digital age, some news discourse that we might classify as journalism may not have ever been published in paper format. The data for this thesis, for example, was taken from online versions of the publications under investigation. While ‘news discourse’ might imply printed journalism, this thesis uses this term broadly to encompass newspaper texts that appear in online formats as well as printed formats. This can, at times,

cause issues for studies taking a corpus approach to analysis, as digital versions of news items may contain variations of their printed counterparts, including, for example, link to podcasts or other blogs. To the best of my knowledge, this is not the case in this thesis, however, it is important to highlight that no methodological accommodation was made to compare the online versions of articles to their printed counterparts, and so findings are more strictly representative of online news media. The alternative to this is to use news media in a more reductive way, to refer only to printed media, and in light of how news is consumed at the time of writing, this felt too reductive. Indeed, it has been observed that there has been a, “rapid evolution beyond the printed paper, the growing importance of multimodal texts and the overall impact of digital technologies on the news media industry” (Marchi 2021, p.585). Facchinetti (2012) too remarks upon the importance of a multimodal perspective when considering today’s news.

By now, newspaper discourse cannot be viewed and studied exclusively or mostly as a monolithic verbal text; on the contrary, it is the multi-faceted polyhedron whereby image, image-caption, headline, column, lay-out, and positioning in the (web-)page simultaneously contribute to the meaning-making process of the piece in a compositional way. Thus, the ‘news piece’ has turned into a ‘news package’ that calls for a holistic interpretation in order to be fully grasped.

(Facchinetti 2012, p.183)

In other words, our post-digital production and consumption of news is not monomodal or monosemiotic, and so any approach to analysis needs to consider this. The above quotation illustrates how studies of news discourse that take a multimodal approach are faced with a vast host of items to be analysed, both in terms of ‘content’ and ‘capture’ (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1, for a discussion of these components of visual data).

News media is a central and useful domain for this research, wherein ideologies underpinning representations are under interrogation, because of, “how the media are deeply imbricated in relations of power and ideology” (Milani and Johnson 2010, p.5). This inherent ideological facet is especially present in news discourse and has been widely

explored (see, for example, Van Dijk 1988; Fowler 1991; Richardson 2007). Richardson (2007) tells us that news discourse has,

some very specific textual characteristics, some very specific methods of text production and consumption, and is defined by a particular set of relationships between itself and other agencies of symbolic and material power.

(Richardson 2007, p.1)

In light of this, and given that news media are so pervasive, it becomes ever more important to be critical of the processes of information production and consumption. In the context of this research, in particular, this is useful site from which to draw data for a number of reasons. Firstly, it constitutes a rich source of readily available data which reflects, represents, and therefore influences the public's attitudes towards particular communities. Moreover, mediated news discourse can tell us a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes, as representations of such communities are constructed through the prisms of language and other semiotic modes. Careful and methodical analysis of such representations allow us to access this information, which is important as these mediated 'realities' reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and life. Several researchers, recognising the potential of this have homed in on this area (see, for example, Van Dijk 1991; Richardson 2004; Krzyżanowski 2009). While a 'common sense' assumption might be that outlets of mediated news discourse present a somewhat 'neutral' version of information or the 'reality' of particular events and communities, the aforementioned scholars have shown consistently that mediated news discourse, like any discourse, is inherently ideological. Fairclough maintains that texts,

Constitute versions of reality in ways which depend on the social positions and interests and objectives of those who produce them. They do so through choices which are made at various levels in the process of producing texts.

(Fairclough 1995, pp.103-104)

In other words, linking back to section 2.6.1 above there are always multiple ways of relaying information, and the choice to relay information in a particular way is meaningful and indicative of underlying ideological positions. Cumulatively, these choices constitute

reality, rather than reflect it. It should be noted, however, that these choices are not, for the most part, conscious, though some argue that journalists can be manipulative in what they choose to include and exclude from reportage (see, for example, Huckin 2002). When we realise the subtlety of this process of ideological diffusion, it becomes ever more important to be critical of this type of mediated discourse, which has such a profound ability to shape and influence public perception of social, cultural, and political realities. Given this ability to shape issue agendas and public discourse, it is apparent that news discourse can reinforce beliefs and influence opinions, if not shape them fully. It follows, therefore, that news outlets, the producers of this type of discourse, wield a great deal of power to influence public attitudes and opinions regarding any number of matters, events, people, or communities. Given that news discourse generally represents the ideological position of powerful people, organisations, and institutions (Van Dijk 1998), we can claim that existing structures of power can be perpetuated in this genre, and that these ideological positions are generally those of “the élite” (Van Dijk 1998, p.180). Many other scholars have recognised the privileged position of printed news media (Caldas-Coulthard 2007), and in light of the authority lent to news discourse by the everyday consumer, Richardson (2007) urges us to take this genre very seriously.

Through its power to shape issue agendas and public discourse, it can reinforce beliefs; it can shape people’s opinions not only of the world but also of their *place* and *role* in the world; or, at least influence what you have opinions on; in sum, it can help shape social reality by shaping our *views* of social reality.

(Richardson 2007, p.13)

In sum, this genre of mediated discourse has been chosen to carry out this thesis as journalists’ linguistic and semiotic choices are instrumental tools in the reproduction of social positions of power (Van Dijk 1996; 1998).

2.6.4.1 Broadsheet and Tabloid News Outlets

This thesis does not focus explicitly on highlighting the differences between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. However, as the data is taken from both broadsheet and tabloid

sources it is therefore important to recognise the specificity of each medium as this will affect how any findings are interpreted. Baker (2010, p.315) tells us that, “the distinction between tabloid and broadsheet news is not always easy to make and stems back to the development of new printing techniques in the early 1970s”. As a rule of thumb however, broadsheets are larger, and focus more on political news at both the national and international level. When compared to tabloids, they use a moderately sophisticated writing style. Tabloids tend to have large, flashy or short headlines, which make use of tools such as puns and they focus more on celebrity gossip. Vlčková (2003) maintains that the broadsheet-tabloid distinction is one of social class, where working-class people are more inclined to read tabloids and middle-classes broadsheets. In his examination of broadsheet versus tabloid representations of Islam in British broadsheet and tabloid newspapers Baker (2010, p.328) found that, “the broadsheets do not tend to make explicit value judgements.” It should be noted that separating newspaper discourse into a broadsheet-tabloid binary is just one way of conceptualising different types of newspaper discourse, and further studies may consider investigating news discourse in publications with varying political alignments, or by article type (opinion pieces, editorials, personal letters). The exact publications being examined in this thesis are *The Irish Times* and *GCN Magazine* (see Chapter 4 for a full presentation of the data sources and collection methods).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter showed how research in the field of language, gender and sexuality has moved from essentialist and pathologising roots towards a queerer perspective which is interested in the discursive construction of all sexual and gender identities. Often central to this type of research is a critical exploration of the underlying ideologies that (re-)produce certain narratives that are often problematic and harmful for LGBTQI+ lives. Ultimately, this chapter argues that a discourse approach to the study of language, gender,

and sexuality remains useful, and indeed, holds great affinity with the complementary theoretical lenses of disidentification and queer futurity. In particular, this chapter outlined that discourse is understood as mediated, where such mediated discourse is linguistically and semiotically constituted, and multimodally conveyed, and can be interpreted as either a normative or an anti-normative nexus of practice. By perceiving discourse as such, the analytical foci derived from the work of Muñoz above can each be considered in terms of how they construct, constrain, and enact perspectives and activities, thereby operating as a system of rules and norms (or a nexus of practice) that facilitate the production, dissemination, and circulation of new knowledge within society in relation to the LGBTQI+ community. Viewed through the complementary lenses of disidentification and queer futurity, this new knowledge has emancipatory potential.

Chapter 3: Sexuality, the Irish State, and Discourses of Sexuality in

Ireland

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the social, cultural, and historical context of the Republic of Ireland, and on the place of sexuality within this context. I argue that in order to understand the discourses being produced by the media outlets under investigation it is imperative to examine the historical and social contexts which have given rise to current understandings of gender and sexuality. By doing so, we understand how subjects create meaning in interacting with the texts (linguistic and semiotic) that make up the data in this thesis. In other words,

A fully critical account of discourse would [...] require a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes, within which individuals or groups as social-historical subjects create meaning in their interaction with texts.

(Wodak 2001, p.3)

As such, this chapter will focus on historical trends and sociocultural practices in the Irish context to give significance to the matrix of discourses of sexuality that have been at play in the Irish media and that are consumed and (re-)produced by both LGB communities and the general population. This emphasis on context is also central to the methodological approaches used in this thesis which outlined in the next chapter. This chapter is divided into two distinct sections; the first traces the trajectory of the understanding of sexuality in the Irish context by looking at key influential factors and events throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries – Catholic influences and values, the Irish Gay Civil Rights Movement, the AIDS Crisis, globalisation, economic periods such as the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’, as well as legislative and social movements leading to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993 and marriage equality in 2015; the second part of the focuses on the media in Ireland, and how it has intersected and interacted with the LGB community in recent decades. As mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.5.2, due to the focus on gay men,

and to a lesser extent lesbians, in the social and historical context of Ireland, the initialism LGBTQI+ is not appropriate in this chapter as a blanket term. As previously highlighted, the term LGB is used instead of the full initialism to render the discussion more accurate, as the more marginalised identities were not, historically, part of the discussion surrounding, sex, sexuality, and gender in Ireland.

3.2 Understanding Sexuality in the Irish Context

Ferriter (2009) provides an insight into the mindset of Irish people regarding sex and sexuality through a quotation from *The Bell*, an Irish monthly literary magazine containing left-wing social commentary.

the average Irish mind has not, and perhaps never had, a properly balanced outlook on sex. Either it runs away from sex or it runs after it; it never seems to be able to stand and look at it objectively. Will it ever learn?

(Ferriter 2009, p.5)

Certainly, as the subsequent sections will show, it was more external factors than any particular inherent Irish trait that fuelled Irish society's reputation for repression and chastity. However, the continuous resistance to sexual deviation seems somewhat at odds with this impression, as how could a society be at once restrained and deviant, unless it was, as suggested by the above quote, either restrained *or* deviant. It could be argued that this repression fuelled the deviance, which then begot secrecy and a desire to hide those who had deviated. While the interplay between the Church and State, as well as a well-documented history of crime is central to our understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality in Ireland, we must also look at other notable influences and events to gain a more holistic view. The following sections explore these facets and give an overview of the climate within which LGB subjects were navigating and negotiating their gender and sexual identities.

3.2.1 The Catholic Church, the Irish State, and Sexual Morality

The Irish State and the Catholic Church have always been, and remain today, interconnected, though in recent years this dynamic has become more contested and fraught. Insofar as this relates to sex, sexuality, and the institutional management thereof, the power wielded by the Catholic Church caused a staunch puritanism to become institutionalised in the Irish State (McDonagh 2021, p.7), not least because, as Ferriter (2009) tells us, politicians often saw themselves as Catholics first, and legislators second. From the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, the Catholic Church was frequently consulted on matters relating to the protection of Irish society from perceived ‘sexual immorality’. In fact, McDonagh (2021, p.7) tells us that, while the Free State was keen to distance itself from its colonial oppressor England, it nevertheless was content to “retain many of the same laws that Westminster had introduced.” Such an observation underscores how sexual and gender relations have been influenced by colonialism, however, given Ireland’s history of being both the colonised and the coloniser (Nic Dháibhéid *et al.* 2022), it is not appropriate to efface the complicity of the Irish people in the inscription of gender and sexual norms in the formation of their national identity. For example, not only were many of the laws from Westminster retained, but the Free State enforced these laws with a much greater vigour post-independence, and even introduced further laws and restrictions relating to the censorship and prohibition of certain research and reading materials. Earner-Byrne and Urquhart (2019, p.11) describe why this preoccupation with ‘sexual immorality’ was so potent in Ireland compared to its European counterparts, and posit that, “a self-conscious narrative of moral superiority emerged to differentiate the fledgling state from its erstwhile coloniser”. However, “the portrayal of the state as demonstrating a cowering deference is a simplification of the complex distribution of power in Ireland” (Ferriter 2009, p.7). While there was a pattern of consistent consultation between the Church officials and State officials relating to matters

of sexual morality, it must be noted that the idea of ‘*the Church*’ as a monolithic entity is misleading. Ferriter (2009, p.7) notes that “Politicians frequently consulted members of *all* churches when legislating for so-called moral issues.” Other times, it was, in fact, lay groups and lobbyists – the “active laity” (Earner-Byrne and Urquhart 2019, p.11) – who initiated opposition to legislative changes and subsequently sought to involve the Church.

One arena in which the Catholic Church was able to strongly exert their influence was in the educational sector. As most schools were, and still are today, under the patronage of the Catholic Church, the possibilities to censor and influence Irish citizens’ education about sex and sexuality were staggering. It is no surprise, then, that there was limited sex education in Ireland until the mid-1990s, and what sex education did exist was linked to Catholic doctrine. At the time of writing, there is still no sex education in schools that covers non-heteronormative sex. Neary (2023, p.346) highlights that, “Conversations about LGBTQI+ lives in primary schools are very often silenced or delayed” and cites childhood ‘innocence’ and age-appropriateness as key regulatory forces upholding this silence.

The sale and importation of contraception, divorce, and abortion were all also outlawed until 1979, 1995, and 2018 respectively, due in large part to the Catholic Church’s profound ideological impact on *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (the Constitution of Ireland). The Constitution also says that the Irish State would “endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home”, thus explicitly engendering a domestic role for women. A referendum to amend this was defeated in March 2024, and the wording remains the same at the time of writing. Though other factors influenced the result of this referendum, it could be argued that this stands as a testament to the legacy of the Church.

However, to say that there was only eagerness to ‘defend’ Irish society from sexual immorality is inaccurate. There was, from time to time, a reluctance from the State to get involved with such matters. Indeed, there was a desire to not be perceived as either under the control of, or actively opposing the Church. While politicians, legislators and the Church all played central roles in the creation of a ‘climate’ surrounding sex and sexuality, much of the lived reality of this part of Irish life took place behind closed doors. The story of sex, gender and sexuality is therefore, unfortunately, one of abuse and violence, where social and sexual experiences were gendered. Ferriter (2009, p.7) notes that, “When these crimes were publicised, it was invariably girls and women rather than boys and men who were seen as sexual deviants.” It was women and girls who were constructed as the threat to society, as well as gay men. In the latter case, “gay men were targeted not just for sexual assaults on minors, but also for consensual adult sex” (Ferriter 2009, p.8). This climate did nothing to inspire an already lacking will to address these issues, and so the story of sex and sexuality remained, primarily, behind closed doors.

3.2.2 Secrecy, Sexuality, and Lifting the Veil

As the previous section has suggested, sexuality has traditionally been a secretive area within Irish society (Inglis 2005) and given that all sexuality was framed within moralistic domains, it is necessary to chart this history as well as that of changing attitudes towards ‘deviant’ sexuality. Although this secrecy neither fully nor satisfactorily explains why decriminalisation came so late, in 1993, nor why the desire to oppose legislation regarding LGB equality was so consistent, it is reflective of the Catholic Church’s monopoly on morality and its strategy of not referring directly to sex and sexuality throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in Ireland (Ryan 2010). Ferriter (2009, p.5) tells us that,

by the middle of the twentieth century, just over 94 per cent of the population was Catholic. In a state that became quite confessional, public condemnation seemed to be more pronounced than elsewhere, and sexual suspicion and class resentment made for a potent mix.

(Ferriter 2009, p.5)

Such a legacy may form the basis for such strong opposition to LGB rights and avoidance of sex-, gender-, and sexuality-related issues. Moreover, Inglis (2005, p.10) tells us that since then, “the lack of research into the history of Irish sexuality is puzzling”, and something he describes as, “peculiar, given that anthropologists, ethnographers, and other commentators on Ireland have long pointed out how the Irish were so repressed sexually.” That said, progress has been made in recent years. For instance, Dawson (2019) explores the ongoing impact of shame and silence in regulating sex and sexuality in Ireland in the context of Irish sexual education. Vallières *et al.* (2022) delve into the psychosocial effects of sexual violence. Fischer (2019) and Side (2020) explore the struggle for abortion rights and reproductive justice, and of particular relevance to this thesis is Sharma *et al.*'s (2017) analysis of mediated ideological discourse of the abortion debate which reveals how the hegemonic nature of the rhetoric that has historically shaped the abortion debate in society can be reconceptualised via mediated online discourses, further highlighting the potential of such a research approach. Chapter 6, section 6.8, discusses how the mediated discourses of sexuality and community presented by *GCN Magazine* also reframe and reconceptualise certain aspects of sexuality. Kerrigan and Pramaggiore (2022) also show how mediated discourse can facilitate visibility for non-normative sexual identities, in this case gay and lesbian members of clergy. The potential of mediated discourse to reframe traditional narratives is quite stark here, given that the relationship between the Irish media and Catholic clergy has often been characterised in terms of scandal (McAteer 2011).

Inglis (2005) explains how the sexuality that came to be embodied in Ireland in the 19th century was reminiscent of that of Victorian Britain but differed in how long this sexual regime lasted and how deeply it penetrated the Irish psyche. Indeed, while restrictions and repression existed in other countries, they too remained in place longer in Ireland than elsewhere. Furthermore, a distinct lack of resistance to the sexual status-quo may

explain the opposition to decriminalisation and subsequent legislative equality. What resistances did manifest were, “mostly irregular, spontaneous, and solitary” (Inglis 2005, p.12). According to Kerrigan (2020), some of the obstacles to earlier progress being made were,

oppressive institutions, a climate of criminality, shame and stigma, unsympathetic public opinion and retribution for putting a public face to being gay, lesbian and queer in Ireland [...]

(Kerrigan 2020, p.x)

These factors, combined with the outbreak of the global AIDS Crisis, combined to create a climate of silence and fear regarding sexuality. However, as Inglis (1998) points out, although silence and secrecy have come to define much of the history of Irish sexuality, that does not mean it was not present. In fact, its absence was resounding:

as Michel Foucault pointed out, the silencing of sex in the family and public life did not make it go away. Rather it brought a whole new attention to sex and made it much more complicated than it ever had been. Sex became a major problem. It had to be guarded against, particularly in women and younger children. It became the subject of intense study. Foucault went so far as to argue that instead of sex being silenced or eliminated, it was in fact – through its control – brought into every area of public and private life.

(Inglis 1998, p.15)

While sex may appear to have been denied and hidden in Ireland, it permeated every, “strategy of separation and supervision of girls from boys”, and, “every shy, awkward look, speech and touch of Irish men and women” (Inglis 1998, p.16). This silence around issues of sex, gender and, in particular, sexuality was resoundingly broken by a tragic event in September 1982, when a young man called Declan Flynn was beaten to death in Fairview Park in Dublin in a case of ‘queer bashing’. Kerrigan (2020, p.1) states that, “The outcome of this case ignited public outrage within Ireland’s queer community”, and it was within this context that Ireland began to undergo a major paradigm shift regarding sexuality. Ryan (2010, p.317) sheds light on this shift, noting that at this time, “the manner in which Irish people spoke about sexuality changed dramatically” due to profound social and economic liberalisation that challenged the dominant narrative of Irish society as,

“Catholic, rural, and conservative.” That there has been a paradigm shift is clear, but though many scholars have begun to lift the veil on Irish LGB history, Ireland remains slow to explore its own history comparative to international counterparts.

The subsequent sections will each focus on a significant event, or influential aspect of recent Irish history that has shaped our current understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality and discourses thereof.

3.2.3 The Irish Gay Civil Rights Movement

It can be argued that the pursuit of sexual liberation in Ireland intersected with a range of different social movements including feminism, anti-imperialism, and worker’s rights (Connolly 2003; Connolly and O’Toole 2005; Casey 2018; McDonagh 2021). However, as we will see (and still see today), progress was not linear and can always be impeded by groups whose interests do not align with sexual and gender minorities.

Much of the narrative around gay rights activism in Ireland lies within the framework of crime and the law, what Muñoz (2009) might call the ‘gay pragmatism’, and Duggan (2002) the traces of assimilationist goals. It focuses on the battle to decriminalise homosexuality in Ireland, the subsequent efforts to introduce legislative changes for same-sex couples, and eventually the campaign for marriage equality. This narrative is one of the late 20th and early 21st century, however, as McDonagh (2021, p.2) highlights,

in reality, the history of gay rights activism in the Republic of Ireland dates back to the early 1970s, [and] included much more than a campaign to decriminalise sexual activity between men and involved more individuals than just David Norris.

(McDonagh 2021, p.2)

The intention here is not to undermine the important role played by Senator Norris at that important time, rather, it is to avoid the fixation with ‘pragmatic presentism’ associated with legislative goals – as mandated within our framework of queer futurity – and situate this dominant narrative within a broader, more collective effort which involves more stakeholders and factors. The years between 1973 and 1993 represent the, “first phase of

gay rights activism in the Republic of Ireland” (McDonagh 2021, p.3), and the Irish Gay Rights Movement (IGRM) were the pioneers of organised action at this time. This organisation was founded in 1974 and disbanded in 1978 due, according to McDonagh (2021, p.48), to “infighting”. This would not be the first time a schism would appear within the LGB community. Such divisions highlight the non-monolithic nature of the LGB community as well as the utility of exploring the notion of progress. For example, at this time, as noted by Casey (2018), distinct groups developed within the emergent Irish LGB movement, with a “rights sector” advocating for legislative change on one side and a “liberation sector” focused on radical social change on the other. The beneficiaries of each set of goals were different, and indeed, as it happened, the rights sector became much more prominent and shaped the landscape of LGB politics in Ireland today. Divisions also existed between specific identity groups (see section 3.2.6 below for a discussion of the divisions between gay men and lesbian women), and between organisations. For example, when the National Gay Federation (NGF) based out of Hirschfeld Centre was set up in 1979, so too was the Irish Civil Gay Rights Movement, having revived the name for their own use. McDonagh (2021, p.42) observes that, “the leaders of both organisations did not welcome the other’s existence.” The organisations set up similar services but were continuously at loggerheads until the IGCRM disbanded.

3.2.4 The 1970s: A New Space

In the mid to late 19th century in Ireland, to be ‘sexually deviant’, a ‘homophile’, or a ‘homosexual’, was to be necessarily un-Irish, a sinful criminal who was often mentally unwell, and likely to engage in paedophilia. In the run up to 1970, Ireland was not partaking in the wave of liberal-humanitarian reforms that had been taking place in other nations across Europe to the same extent. The reasons for this have already been explored above, namely a climate of secrecy, and a strict, faith-based morality, that became central to the formation of the Irish citizen. However, by the time the 1970s arrived, Ireland

seemed ready to lift the veil, so to speak, and address the oppression that had been afflicting Ireland's LGB communities.

One of the, as of yet, untold stories central to the burgeoning resistance in Ireland in the 1970s is that of migration. It is easy to understand how many of Ireland's LGB people may have felt isolated and ostracised by society, and thus, decided to leave for more welcoming shores. Communities in the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom seemed to be able to carve out spaces for themselves that were, relative to Ireland, safe and tolerant. This thesis does not presume to give an account of Irish LGB migration, and indeed, much historical work needs to be done on this important topic, however, what is clear is that some of those who emigrated returned to Ireland with ideas, new rhetoric, and fresh ways of organising that helped the Irish Gay Civil Rights Movement emerge. At the same time, domestic and international events seemed to contrive to set Ireland on the same path the rest of Europe had been on in the 1960s. A renewed determination came from Ireland's women in particular, who began organising to campaign for their rights (Irish Women's Liberation Movement), and whose efforts laid the groundwork for Ireland's LGB communities to live more publicly, while internationally, the Stonewall Riots, Anti-Apartheid Movement, and Ireland's joining of the European Economic Community were priming Irish society for change.

3.2.5 The 1980s: Urban and Provincial Life

The AIDS Crisis characterised much of the 1980s for the LGB community in Ireland, however it is so paramount to the understanding of sexuality in Ireland that it is dealt with separately in section 3.2.7 below. Otherwise, the late 1970s and 1980s were characterised by increased visibility of LGB communities, due in part to the increase in the use of spaces such as the Hirschfield Centre (and its associated activities), but also due to a rising mercantile awareness of a potentially lucrative demographic, in other words, the emergence of a pink economy.

Beyond the challenges and hardships associated with the outbreak of the AIDS virus, the 1980s was a challenging time for LGB people in Ireland due to attitudes and the unwelcoming society in which they found themselves. Considering this, it would seem even more impressive that, for many, social life thrived during the 1980s. One hub of activity in this respect was the Hirschfeld Centre in Dublin, which opened in 1979. The centre held discos, housed a cinema, theatre group and café, organised outdoor pursuits, and also offered welfare, befriending and parent services. To say that the centre was solely social, however, is to undermine the radical potential and symbolic importance of walking through the threshold of such a place in this temporal and social context. Muñoz (2009) might call this a glimpse of queer hope that transcended temporal and spatial, and indeed societal, constraints. The people lucky enough to be able to attend and participate certainly wielded disruptive power in this sense. While I do not intend to diminish the challenges faced by many LGB people who were not in the proximity of such a centre, or were unable to participate for other reasons, it could certainly be argued that urban life, at least, in the 1980s was one marked by this sense of sending a clear message to society through unashamed participation in society. Many, it seemed, were ready to embrace their sexuality as their identity publicly for the first time. Despite claiming to be national organisations, the reach of the NGF and the IGCRM beyond Dublin was limited, and LGB people in other parts of the country lived a very different reality compared to their capital-dwelling counterparts (Rose 1994). McDonagh (2021) muses that,

Historically, provincial regions have been characterised as ‘backward’ and reliant on urban areas to guide them towards gay liberation. The majority of international queer history remains overwhelmingly focused on major urban areas. One is left with the distinct impression that it is only these urban regions that important events occur, movements emerge, and ideas and strategies devised and diffused to non-metropole areas.

(McDonagh 2021, p.63)

While it is certainly true that LGB communities in Dublin achieved much, both through direct action and social resistance, theirs is but one part of the story. Provincial LGB people were certainly not passive agents, and in many instances, their actions and

manifestos were even more radical. I do not contest that a great deal of development took place within urban centres, but that is not to say that resistance did not take place in rural or provincial areas, but rather contend that provincial resistance looks different, especially considering provincial and rural life in the Republic of Ireland in the late 1970s and 1980s came with additional challenges. Loneliness for LGB people outside Dublin was acute and endemic. Though now metropolitan centres in their own right, the populations of Galway, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford came nowhere near that of Dublin in the 1980s, and settlements were much more dispersed throughout the counties. Future research might consider focusing on this area.

3.2.6 Irish Lesbian and Women's Movements

As mentioned throughout the preceding sections, Irish women, and lesbian woman in particular, drove much of the social change that occurred in Ireland in the late 20th century. However, the proportion of women in the larger organisations advocating for social and legislative change was starkly disproportionate to their contribution and to their male counterparts.

Since the foundation of the IGRM in 1974, the gay rights movement had been dominated by gay men, with the membership of the IGRM and NGF overwhelmingly male.

(McDonagh 2021, p.48)

Further, outside Dublin there were sometimes no female members of organisations at all. Issues arose relating to space in community centres (see Chapter 6, section 6.5, for a discussion of space), a lack of prioritisation of events relevant to these women (which were frequently cancelled without consultation), and challenges relating to operating within the patriarchal structures of these organisations. Ireland's lesbian community were disappointed with the sexism that existed within the LGB community as well as the lack of motivation of gay men to reflect upon their own role within patriarchal structures (Connolly and O'Toole 2005; McDonagh 2021). Although Irish woman played a huge role in paving the way for gains for gay men, this solidarity was not always reciprocal

(Connolly and O'Toole 2005) which led to contention between the groups. For example, the NGF refused to support the campaign to block the 8th constitutional amendment which would prohibit and criminalise abortion (Connolly and O'Toole 2005). Contemporary criticisms of this refusal to support the anti-amendment campaign suggest it was a strategic choice to ensure political appeasement (Ferriter 2009, p.493). This suggests that the NGF were interested in curating a particular Irish gay identity that was respectable and in alignment with traditional Irish values.

Furthermore, this created a climate where these groups saw fit to splinter and form their own collectives where issues that affected them would be prioritised. With this in mind, intra-group dynamics are explored in this thesis, for example, Chapter 5, section 5.3.3, notes how the linguistic and semiotic construction of 'lesbian' differs from that of 'gay', while Chapter 6, section 6.6, discusses inter-group solidarity between the LGB community and others.

3.2.7 The AIDS Crisis

As was the case globally, the Republic of Ireland was not prepared for the AIDS Crisis. However, the history of the AIDS Crisis in Ireland is one comprised of two parallel narratives with almost directly contesting agendas. These can be characterised, on one hand, by no small degree of apathy and a moralistic stance on the part of the Irish government, and by resourcefulness and tenacity on the part of organisations and individuals who recognised the threat posed by the AIDS virus and acted effectively – against the odds, as I hope to show in this section. Insofar as this relates to this thesis, the AIDS Crisis brought to the fore harmful and discriminatory representations of gay men in particular, but the actions of the LGB community at this time were also a catalyst for the creation and diffusion of counter-discourses, which went a long way in changing public opinion in Ireland about its LGB citizens. That said, traces of medical discourses

and tropes of hypersexualisation that were common at this time remain to this day. These are discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.4.

We have already noted the climate of secrecy surrounding matters of sexuality, as well as the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Irish society, and in particular, on the policies and approaches taken by the Irish government in relation to sexual or ‘moral’ matters. It is no surprise then, that Ireland was unwilling to deal with the AIDS Crisis (O’Brien 2016). The approach of the Irish government for much of the 1980s, when the AIDS Crisis was at its worst in Ireland, was one that prioritised moral concerns over practical and effective help, reflective of the moralistic discourses of sexuality that had such strong roots. McDonagh (2021) tells us that the answer of the Roman Catholic Church’s, and by extension the Irish government, to the AIDS Crisis was ‘virtue’, ‘chastity’, and ‘monogamy’.

As was the case in many parts of the world, the LGB community led the efforts to combat AIDS in the Republic of Ireland. A primary actor in this context was Gay Health Action (GHA), a group set up in 1985 in response to the threat from the AIDS virus. Their efforts throughout the 1980s can be split into a number of distinct effort areas: (i) establishing pioneering education campaigns, (ii) creating services for those affected by HIV and AIDS (including those not in the LGB community), (iii) promoting safe sex (despite legislation working against them), and finally, (iv) countering harmful media representations of AIDS as a ‘gay disease’. These aims are startlingly similar to what the LGBTQI+ publication *GCN Magazine* achieves today (see Chapter 6 for a comprehensive discussion of these links).

Finally, the limited sexual health education in schools fuelled a sense of shame, reinscribed stigma (O’Brien 2016), and contributed to the reticence to tackle the virus. Contraceptives were not readily available, having only been legalised in 1979, and were

themselves a contentious topic. It is no surprise that sexual health facilities were described as, “lamentable” (McDonagh 2021, p.113) and the system in place to report such infections and diseases was poor. The Irish government failed to amend the laws that were constraining any effective response to the AIDS virus and, “appeared more like observers rather than those responsible for addressing the matter of AIDS” (McDonagh 2021, p.114). A disillusionment with the establishment lingers to this day and is evident in the data of this thesis (see Chapter 6, section 6.6, for an expanded discussion of this).

3.2.7.1 The AIDS Crisis and the Media

Chapter 2, section 2.6.4, identified the power of news discourse in shaping public perceptions of individuals and groups. At this time, the mainstream media embodied this power, and was peddling harmful and inaccurate representations of both the virus itself as well as LGB people. As mentioned in the preceding section, one of the primary missions of GHA was to counter such misrepresentations. In his analysis of gay and lesbian activism in Ireland, McDonagh (2021) unearths some headlines that give insight into the socio-cultural and reporting climate of the time:

Articles appeared with headlines such as ‘Gay disease hits children’, ‘Killer disease is here’, ‘AIDS may be widespread’ and ‘Death lurks in blood bank’. Within these articles journalists often referred to AIDS as the ‘gay disease’, ‘gay cancer’ or ‘gay plague’.

(McDonagh 2021, p. 114)

In keeping with the moralistic stance that only monogamous marital sexual intercourse or abstinence could address the threat of AIDS, many articles did not provide information about the virus itself, how it could be transmitted, and where to seek help. As a counter to this strategy of ‘gayifying’ the disease, GHA sought to provide information on the symptoms of AIDS, while also explicitly highlighting unfair condemnation of LGB people by the mainstream media. A cornerstone of the approach taken by GHA was to introduce the concept of ‘safer sex’ to Ireland’s LGB communities, which, unlike the ‘approach’ of the Irish government, did not have to mean abstinence. Once more, we see

the potential contained within mediated discourses to challenge and change hegemonic understandings of LGB people by introducing counter discourses into the public consciousness. However, this was not a straightforward endeavour. The Censorship of Publications Act made it illegal to print ‘material advertising or referring to any disease affecting the generative organs of either sex, or to any complaint or information arising from or relating to sexual intercourse’. This, in effect, made it illegal to print anything aimed at informing the public about sexually transmitted infections, and severely impeded the efforts of GHA to advocate for safer sex practices and the use of condoms. Despite these and other challenges relating to funding, the GHA were unapologetically dismissive of the Irish Government and Roman Catholic Church’s moral concerns in their published leaflets. McDonagh (2021) contends the,

GHA not only provided the wider Irish public with vital information on AIDS, at a time when few other sources were readily available, but they also shielded the gay community from being scapegoated for AIDS. While AIDS was certainly linked to homosexuality in the Irish media, the early and effective response of GHA led many to pay tribute and acknowledge their efforts.

(McDonagh 2021, p.112)

While the government’s apathy did nothing to help this cause, the leaflets (surprisingly) were not banned or censored. However, they did receive mixed reactions. Those who protested against the material did so because they did not condemn homosexuality, which was perceived as the vector of the disease, while those who supported it praised its practical and positively framed advice. In any case, the demand for these materials continued to rise and subsequent versions were produced and refined during the last 1980s. In fact, the demand became so high that a sub-group of the GHA announced that it would not only cater to members of the LGB community, but to anyone who was affected by the virus. This extra pressure had a number of consequences. Firstly, the focus shifted somewhat from gay men. Secondly, further alliances were formed, as GHA had to reach out to other sectors of society, such as those who worked with people who used intravenous drugs and the Irish Haemophiliac Society, to coordinate their efforts. As more

demographics turned to the GHA for information and assistance, the GHA responded by modifying their materials to include information that was relevant to other groups. This expanded focus now included women, heterosexual people, intravenous drug users and haemophiliacs. An important legacy of the efforts undertaken by LGB activists at this time was the forging of alliances, both domestic and international, through the shared struggle against AIDS. The pattern of inter-group solidarity remains visible today (see Chapter 6, section 6.6, for a discussion of this topic).

The efforts of the GHA and related parties, and indeed the AIDS Crisis in general, are crucially important to the context of this thesis as we can see how central battling misinformation and misrepresentation were while LGB communities were in the throes of a deadly endemic. The GHA's AIDS Information Booklet, for example, included information for politicians and journalists and specifically included guidelines on the reporting of AIDS. These efforts were not just incidental, but central to the GHA's strategy, further giving weight to the necessity of this research project where representations are critically considered and, where necessary, problematised. Fortunately, there was some headway made in this regard, and we can see that by 1986, mainstream media was finally reporting the GHA's criticism of the Irish government's response to the endemic, and praise for GHA began to appear. At last, counter-discourses were more available for public consumption, and the lack of action by the government was made all the more stark for the successes of GHA.

Not only did this the above actions – largely due to the efforts of the GHA – force Ireland to take steps to come to terms with its embargo on the discussion of sexual matters (from contraception to sexually transmitted infections to AIDS), but it also ushered in a quantum leap with regard to the (sex) education of the Irish public in general, which had been hitherto lacking. Ultimately, this success was a double-edged sword, as the government, “was content to leave the responsibility of educating the gay community on HIV and

AIDS solely to GHA” (McDonagh 2021, p.132). This led to burnout and insurmountable financial obstacles for those working within the GHA, which disbanded in 1990 for these reasons. It is clear that in its efforts to combat the virus, discourses anathema to the vilification of LGB people began to enter the public consciousness, and visibility of the community began to rise. What’s more, the success of such campaigns was a catalyst in altering mainstream society’s perceptions of LGB people who now could put a face to the ‘homosexual’ who, contrary to common belief, acted responsibly and generously.

3.2.8 Decriminalisation

The advances in public perception during the 1980s, and more specifically, the AIDS Crisis, went a long way in priming Irish society for even more change, most notably for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Accounts of the campaign to decriminalise homosexuality in the Republic of Ireland invariably mention David Norris, who fought a legal battle with the Irish courts, and subsequently won his case at the European Court of Human Rights in 1988 (Hug 1999). It was not until 1993 that the Republic of Ireland officially amended its laws to decriminalise sexual activity between two men, much later than its European counterparts, with England and Wales decriminalising (partially) in 1967, and Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1981 and 1982 respectively. In the wake of decriminalisation, sexual rights improved in Ireland generally, including for LGBTQI+ individuals. For example, sexual orientation was added as grounds for unfair dismissal under the Unfair Dismissals Act (1977-2021), and the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015) and the Equal Status Acts (2000-2015) were introduced as a way to increase equality within the domains of employment, housing, education, and the provision of services.

3.2.9 Globalisation and the Celtic Tiger (1999-2007)

The aftermath of the court case relating to the murder of Declan Flynn marked a notable shift in Ireland, whereby LGB visibility increased, and the repressive sexual regime of

self-abnegation and denial of pleasure gave way to a culture of increased visibility and consumption in which the fulfilment of pleasure was emphasised. Globalisation and Ireland's economic growth during this period and facilitated change in social, political, and cultural domains (Inglis 2008). The period, known as the 'Celtic Tiger' marked a significant shift in the quality of life in Ireland. High employment, a surge in economic growth and a decline in the influence of the Catholic Church resulted in increasing liberalised attitudes towards LGB sexual identities (Inglis 1998; Cronin 2004).

3.2.10 Civil Partnership, Marriage Equality, and Traditional Values

As has been highlighted in the preceding sections, sexuality has traditionally been a secretive area within Irish society. Although this does not satisfactorily explain why decriminalisation came so late, in 1993, nor why the impetus to oppose legislation regarding LGB equality was so consistent, it is reflective of the Catholic Church's monopoly on morality and its strategy of not referring directly to sex and sexuality throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in Ireland. Nonetheless, on the 22nd of May 2015, the Republic of Ireland held a referendum to include a provision for same-sex marriage in its constitution. The referendum passed with 62% of the vote, and a voter turnout of 61%. This signified a major cultural shift in a traditionally conservative, Catholic country (Madden 2021), and was a milestone for LGB rights, as it was the first time same-sex marriage had been legalised by popular vote anywhere in the world.

In the wake of decriminalisation, the political goals of the Irish LGB community began to shift towards marriage equality as there was still no civic parity between them and their heterosexual counterparts. The recognition of unmarried partnerships between two cohabiting people of the same or of different sex became legal in 2004 in conjunction with their right to receive certain benefits and protections. The Civil Partnership Bill was passed and subsequently, limited unions were introduced for same-sex couples through a number of Bills proposed by the opposition Irish Labour Party in 2006 and 2007.

Campaigns for LGB rights re-ignited in 2008, and on 8th of July 2010, the Civil Partnership Bill was passed. This Bill was supported by the likes of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), who perceived civil partnership as a stepping stone towards marriage (Sheehan and Rose 2017). GLEN maintained that civil partnership would prime the public to support same-sex marriage at a later date, as issues such as taxation would be dealt with within civil partnership, thus clearing the way for the referendum on same-sex marriage to be “purely about equality” (Sheehan and Rose 2017, p.284). The Irish LGBTQI+ community members were divided on the issue of civil partnership, seeing it as representing partial equality and therefore unacceptable (Griffith 2017, p.46). Indeed, in terms of legislative parity, there were numerous and significant differences between civil partnerships and marriage (Ryan 2010; Fagan 2011; Pillinger and Fagan 2013). Healy (2017, p.41) claims there were 169 differences between the rights of heterosexual married couples and same-sex couples in civil partnerships.

Then in 2011, while same-sex marriage was officially included in the upcoming referenda, the topics of adoption by same-sex couples and surrogacy still caused a lot of disagreement. The Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) 2015 aimed to alter the Constitution of Ireland to permit marriage to be contracted by two persons without distinction as to their sex. Prior to this, the wording of the Constitution implicitly prohibited same-sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland. The Bill was signed into law by the President of Ireland on 29th of August 2015 and the first same-sex marriage ceremony was held on 17th of November 2015. Indeed, the passing of the thirty-fourth amendment would appear at first glance to be an indicator of this increase of a positive perception of the LGB community. However, the campaign to achieve marriage equality has been criticised for its role in the reification of problematic normativities (see, for example, Neary 2016; MacCarthy 2017; Quilty 2019). This considered curation of LGB identities and relationships obviated the more marginalised and vulnerable members

of the LGBTQI+ community by focusing almost exclusively on white, middle-class gay men and lesbian women. Neary (2016) argues that advocates of same-sex marriage in Ireland,

demonstrated a concentrated effort to actively forefront a particular ‘normal’ image of LGBT-Q people, displaying a portrait of monogamy, fidelity and love. Reductionist and stereotypical ideas about LGBT-Q sexualities as deviant and illegitimate sat in the background as these decisions were made.

(Neary 2016, p.771)

Further, Elkins *et al.* (2017, p.361) concluded that, “the referendum [...] was unusually vigorous and active” due in part to the traditional concepts of ‘family’ and ‘marriage’, which were hitherto uncontested terms reinforcing ‘common sense’ and heteronormative assumptions in Irish society becoming contested through the move towards same-sex marriage. It may also be prudent to mention at this point that a popular vote on an issue such as this is arguably dangerous, as it is also possible for these rights to be subsequently taken away by popular vote. Moreover, perhaps this helps to explain why activism in Ireland has been more focused on appeasing the socio-political establishment than challenging it. Regardless, through the lens of Muñoz’s notions of disidentification and futurity (discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.5), we can see how trends of assimilation and appeasement lead to limited transformation, at least socially, as despite legislative gains (pragmatic presentism), many queer people who are judged as not fitting the homonormative ideal remain sidelined. It can be argued that such queer(er) identities and practices threatened the Yes Equality campaign which was based on appealing to traditional Irish values of traditional kinship and monogamous love. Chapter 6 explores how such queer(ing) identities can exist alongside more traditional assimilatory ones, as well as how community-led media and alternative media ecologies can promote visibility and create space for these groups. The subsequent section further explores how historical discourses of sexuality, deployed in the pursuit of controlling alliances and capital, gave rise to present traditional values of monogamy, kinship, and sexual morality.

3.2.10.1 Discourses of Sexuality in Ireland: The Deployment of Alliance and the Deployment of Sexuality

In the 18th century, the discourse of sexuality was defined by its ‘scarcity’ (Inglis 1997). While naturally there were cultural mores surrounding sexual practices, Inglis (1997, p.9) tells us that it was not the subject of public discussion, nor was it particularly subject to supervision in its own right, but rather, it was embedded in the ‘deployment of alliance’ (Foucault 1981). In other words, in terms of how sexuality was operationalised, it was linked to the movement of wealth and goods, and the forging of kinship ties, which took place through marriage. Sexual morality was not yet a preoccupation. According to Inglis (1997, p.10) it, “operated within a system of rules which defined partners and rights and what was permitted and forbidden.” By contrast, in the 19th century, Inglis (1997, p.10) tells us that, “a new distinct and dominant layer had emerged in which sexuality became private, problematic and repressed.” While this is best exemplified by prudish Victorian bourgeoisie and was occurring in other areas of the West, the Irish case was distinct for one primary reason. Whereas in the United States and Britain, sexuality was being intensely interrogated by the domains of psychiatry and medicine resulting in a diffusion of discourses from these domains, this was notably absent in Ireland, where sexuality remained primarily tied to religious (Catholic) discourse. Inglis (1997, p.10) says that, “sexuality was publicly silenced and hidden, especially from children”, and the primary vehicle for this was the practice of confession. Through it, sexuality became constituted as a personal problem to be monitored by priests, where transgressions should be punished. Where before there was a hesitance to deal with ‘sins’, there was now a rigorous examination of sexuality practices, virtue, and morality. In other well studied contexts, e.g., Protestant Britain, self-regulation and -control were vectors in the embedding of this discourse into the public sphere, where texts about such matters were distributed and consumed. However, in the Irish case, a high level of illiteracy existed in the majority

Catholic population, and so this regulation had a more top-down structure. In the first instance, this discourse was controlled and in practice by priests in confessionals, but the institutional control of churches, schools, and homes in the latter half of the century gave way to a newly (discursively) constituted sexual Irish citizen. The primary difference between these subjects and their contemporaries was that this was much more situated within a religious framework.

Foucault (1981) argues that sex becomes an issue between the State and the individual in the context of a concern with population and the control thereof. Foucault further posits that this operated in two distinct ways. Inglis (1997, p.11) describes these as, the “systematic classification of the population”, and “the systematic separation, ordering and disciplining of bodies in schools.” In the Irish context, this preoccupation with policing the population, through the sex lives of citizens, was not as much of a concern as it was elsewhere due to the devastating effect on the population of the Great Famine in the mid-19th century. Where there was a state or bourgeoisie-led shift towards the deployment of sexuality elsewhere, it was the Catholic Church in Ireland who operationalised this, exerting pressure on Catholic tenant farmers who then later became the vectors of the deployment. As Inglis (1997, p.13) states, “The key to the deployment of this sexuality was a continuous, rigorous examination of the self using the rules, regulations, principles and practices of the Catholic Church.” In this sense it became a self-deployment of sexuality. Later in the 19th and into the 20th century, there was what has been described as a ‘proliferation of codifications’ (Foucault 1987, p.32) regarding places, partners and acts, in terms of what is permitted and what is not. The regimes of morality at play situated sex in the domain of the heterosexual, monogamous, married couple, and made them fearful of pleasure, which was relegated to the domain of evil. One can be forgiven in thinking that Ireland was therefore ‘behind’ its western counterparts vis-à-vis sex and sexuality, but it is perhaps more accurate to say that the factors discussed in this section resulted in

a context in which there were much fewer discourses concerned with sex, and therefore fewer resistant discourses, which therefore amplified the discourses that did exist. Ireland was not behind; its citizens were just differently sexually constituted. Evidently this constitution has changed over the centuries, and continues to do so. In accounting for this change, Inglis (1997, p.17) observes that Foucault specifically does not consider the individual as, “an actor who actively embodies, manipulates and changes discourses and makes them his or her own [...]”. Chapter 6 explores how such discourses are being articulated in the current context of mediated Irish news discourse. The next section lays the foundation for this by sketching an overview of the contemporary relationship between the Irish LGB community and the Irish media.

3.3 LGBTQI+ Communities and the Irish Media

Institutional control and influence over the Irish media have historically been problematic for the LGB community. During the Marriage Equality Referendum, for example, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), which is the regulating body for both public and commercial broadcasting sectors, outlined that its guidelines for hosting political debates should be observed and that ‘fairness, objectivity and impartiality’ should be maintained.

Kerrigan (2020, p.162) claims that a consequence of this was that,

during the referendum campaign, both the yes and no sides of the debate had to be fairly and equally represented, maintaining ‘balance’ at all times [...] Discussions about gay and lesbian lives could no longer be broadcast without being directly challenged on the same programme at the same time, rendering every discussion of gay and lesbian lives an argument, even the innocuous.

(Kerrigan 2020, p.162)

More recently, the Irish media landscape, in line with other contexts, has been affected by the change in how people interact with media, and there has been a marked increase in engagement with online media, and social media in particular. Many newspapers, magazines, and indeed more established media outlets, have social media pages and online versions of their news which can be directly accessed via applications, the advent

of which has given rise to new ways of articulating LGBTQI+ experiences and lives and is worthy of study. The following sections focus on the queer press in Ireland and discuss queer visibility in media.

3.3.1 The Queer Press in Ireland: From Pamphlets to Publications

Pettit (1998, p.19) examines ‘alternative media’ in Ireland and attempts to understand a number of publications, including *GCN Magazine*, in relation to, “the wider cultural dynamic of contemporary Ireland and its mainstream press.” Using the definition of ‘alternative media’ proposed by O’Sullivan *et al.* (1992), Pettit explores what an ‘alternative media’ could signify.

[Alternative media are those that] avowedly reject or challenge established institutionalised politics, in the sense that they all advocate change in society, or at least a critical assessment of traditional values [...] Often founded to campaign on one particular issue alternative media face considerable problems of survival, given their tendency to be under-financed, and unattractive to advertisers and the mass commercial market.

(O’Sullivan 1992, p.10)

Pettit (1998, p.21) found that, in its early days, *GCN Magazine* articulated and contested, “various forms of political and social marginalization”, and indeed was, “significant to the lives of their workers and many of their readers in material and social terms in ways that differ from mainstream press.” The reason for this, it would seem, is that these publications, ‘written from the margins’ were important sources of information and identity for their readership in that they were the products of subcultural activity and, indeed, existence. Pettit (1998, p.21) encourages us to think of the designation ‘alternative’ as a relational concept with dynamic boundaries.

However, *GCN Magazine* was not the first iteration of a queer press in Ireland. A precursor to any publication proper emerged in the form of newsletters and pamphlets produced by the IGRM. The first was called the *IGRM Newsletter* and was created in 1976 and this was followed by a more regular monthly newsletter, *In Touch*, which was also produced by the IGRM. Once the NGF was founded, this monthly newsletter was

maintained and later restructured into *Identity Magazine*, which was published from 1981 to 1984 and was an attempt to circulate a commercial magazine. Unfortunately, retailers refused to stock the publication due to the nature of the magazine, a stance that was symbolic of the climate surrounding non-normative sexualities as well as the laws in the 1970s and 1980s which prohibited both homosexuality itself, as well as material relating to sexual health. In any case, the mainstream newspaper industry placed a great deal of importance on the curation of a distinct national identity (Pettit 1998, p.21), and to be a member of the LGB community was inherently un-Irish. Pettit (1998, p.22) highlights just how low a priority the LGB press was in comparison to other niche publications, stating that, “Small, independent newspapers representing important minority views and cultural perspectives seem to be less significant to the official ‘national life’ than press coverage of Gaelic and greyhounds.”

The first commercial LGB magazine to enter into the public sphere was entitled *OUT*, and it covered national, international as well as local news, and was stocked by Eason and Sons newsagents, a longstanding Irish business, signifying a shift in the acceptability of and demand for such material. *OUT* appeared in the context of the AIDS Crisis, when combating harmful media representations pushing pathologising narratives of homosexuality and inaccurate information about the virus became paramount. As mentioned, early efforts by the GHA resulted in the production of pamphlets aimed at educating readers about the virus, however, activists and community organisations wanted not only to disseminate information but also to create a space to represent people and their experiences of the virus. *OUT* magazine can be considered a forerunner of *GCN Magazine*, one of the data sources for this thesis, and it became one of the first forums for LGB expression. Kerrigan comments on the role of *OUT* and lauds it as a

crucial site that generated vital public-health information for the gay community and served as a form of media activism, as its journalists engaged with public bodies to hold them accountable for their response, or lack thereof, to the epidemic. The case of *OUT*

magazine is an important example of how alternative media are critical, particularly when mainstream society ignores a minority group's public-health needs.

(Kerrigan 2020, p.93)

Beyond being a forum for information about (sexual) health, the story of *OUT* highlights the importance of the LGB press in the context of the construction of a coherent community consciousness. *OUT* ceased operations in 1988, but it left a legacy that persists to this day, and crucially, paved the way for the foundation of *GCN Magazine*, which was founded the very same year by prominent activists Tonie Walsh and Catherine Glendon. While early publications and newsletters emerged in the context of the AIDS Crisis, their continuous existence was a testament to the appetite for LGB community consciousness. *GCN Magazine* was established by the NGF and first appeared as an 8-page tabloid newspaper. Interestingly, distribution was primarily achieved through sympathetic pubs and clubs as well as other friendly spaces including student unions. Interestingly, and further proof of a changing climate, *GCN Magazine* was originally funded by the Irish State, and indeed it still carries funding banners from the National Development Plan and Pobal, a state-sponsored organisation in the Republic of Ireland which is responsible for administering and managing government and European funding aimed at addressing issues of social inequality and inclusion. Pettit (1998, p.24) reported that *GCN Magazine* did not feel that, "its editorial independence was in any way infringed by its links with government agencies or its commercial advertisers", and indeed *GCN Magazine* continued to articulate, "the growing confidence of a subculture, which formed itself into a workable community" (Pettit 1998, p.22). Throughout the years, *GCN Magazine* faced economic challenges that threatened its survival – a common difficulty faced by the 'alternative press' (O'Sullivan 1992) – however, the receipt of funding from Atlantic Philanthropies and fundraising campaigns led to a number of relaunches, first in 2003 and later in 2017, which have ultimately been successful. Other challenges faced related to intra-community tensions, with one editor reporting that,

[...] there were tensions within the gay community about the role of the paper in running investigative news stories about politically sensitive areas concerned with representatives of gay health organizations and government departments.

(Pettit 1998, p.24)

This raises an interesting implication that after a long period of time in which developments and actions were planned and executed behind closed doors, there was a sudden insecurity at being held to scrutiny a wider community consciousness. According to Pettit (1998, p.25), there was a growing sense that certain issues needed to be addressed by the magazine, despite the fact that they may have been “awkward for the gay community”. He cites the questions of the unconscious sexism of gay men, previously highlighted by the lesbian community, and the morality of ‘outing’. It could be argued that ‘alternative media’ outlets have more potential than mainstream media to challenge hegemonic attitudes, national institutions, and tradition, though we should not assume that they do so, or at least are immune to the discursive influence wielded by mainstream journalists and media outlets. In any case, “*GCN* embraced its existence and provided a visible presence of homosexuality in Irish society” (Pettit 1998, p.22) and still does today.

3.3.2 Post-Marriage Equality and Neoliberalism: Politics of Respectability and Mainstreaming Representational Strategies

Kerrigan (2021, p.47) describes the trends, variances, and understandings of Irish LGB identities that have emerged in the media since the Marriage Equality Referendum and tells us that, “At the crux of this post-marriage equality queer visibility lies a friction between the assimilation of queerness to an acceptable homonormative alternative to monogamous heteronormativity versus broader representations of indeterminate variety and fluidity.” He explores the dynamic between assimilation and representation and argues that, on one hand, increased visibility of this ‘ideal assimilated gay’ in the media performs a “regulatory function” in that it contains the queerer subject. He says that this mainstreaming strategy configures queer visibility, “through a homonormative paradigm”.

On the other hand, Kerrigan argues that this visibility, while sanitised, enables, “cultural scripts to emerge pertaining to the challenges still remaining” for the community. See Chapter 6 for an exploration of this dynamic as it exists in the data of this thesis.

Fischer and Mahon (2019) have identified that queer tropes have been deployed by the Irish media in the period post-marriage equality to emblematised the social change that has taken place in Ireland in past decades. While problematic, Kerrigan (2021, p.49) argues that since marriage equality, “Irish television, although mainstream and assimilatory, has also brought more intersectional and diverse LGBTQ identities into its landscape.” He points out that whereas previously, “LGBTQ visibility was predominantly confined to current affairs programming”, there has been a shift towards mainstreaming LGBTQI+ subjects into a, “construction of the nation as family” (Kerrigan 2021, p.49). This happens through the strategic deployment of visibility, and, according to Kerrigan, LGB visibility is likely to occur in family settings in soap operas, or on home improvement shows, “thus fitting the typical Irish depiction of the nation as an amalgam of nuclear families.” This effort to mainstream and homogenise LGB people’s lives and experiences is familiar, as it was this tactic that was employed during the marriage equality campaign (see section 3.2.10 above), whose pragmatic presentism and, as Muñoz (2009) would say ‘anaemic’ agenda, has been subjected to criticism.

Notwithstanding the unequal gains of marriage equality on the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland post-marriage equality, it is clear that a new sexual landscape is emerging and taking shape through mediated discourse in the public sphere. Those who do not fit the ‘ideal’ of the new sexual politics of neo-liberalism (Duggan 2002), where the ‘ideal’ has means, is middle-class, white and cisnormative (Cronin 2022a; 2022b), still face a multitude of societal challenges.

3.3.3 The ‘tug-of-war’ of Queer Visibility in Irish Media

Kerrigan (2020, p.163) claims that, “queer visibility in the Irish media is a continuous site of production, representation and contestation” that is formed around what he calls the structuring dynamic of the tug-of-war. Tracing queer visibility from the 1970s to present day, Kerrigan (2020, p.163) posits that, although visibility has taken different forms throughout recent decades, “the dynamics, challenges and modalities of queer visibility remain very similar.” These dynamics, challenges, and modalities configure visibility as contested between LGB organising and activism on one side, and the state, media bodies, and institutions on the other. As discussed in the context of the 1970s, for example, increased visibility was sought within the context of the Irish Gay Rights Movement, where it was viewed as a means of social recognition towards liberatory, and mostly legislative, goals. This visibility was negotiated between RTÉ (Irish state public broadcasting service) and the IGRM and led to the mainstreaming representational strategies and the insertion of a ‘palatable gay’ into the public sphere. Later, when access to televised media increased, the dynamics of live television caused LGB visibility to become,

inexorably caught up in the industrial and economic dynamics of television, where queer identities were utilised for the purpose of boosting television ratings, increasing advertising revenue and keeping number-one rated shows competitive.

(Kerrigan 2020, p.163)

The visibility and perception of LGB lives became irrevocably altered at the onset of the AIDS Crisis (see section 3.2.7 above for a full discussion of this period). As pathological discourses of homosexuality resurfaced, focus was diverted to the establishment of “alternative media economies through print media and the development of production cultures within documentary [...]” Post-decriminalisation, once attitudes towards homosexuality began to once again shift, fictionalised representations of LGB people increased in entertainment media. According to Kerrigan,

This incorporation into the sitcom and soap opera forms demonstrates the ways in which the production cultures of RTÉ were anxious around writing and producing queer characters and storylines, particularly around the topic of intimacy.

(Kerrigan 2020, p.164)

This discomfort had a regulatory effect on LGB visibility and lives as it sanitised the type of representation that was permitted in the public sphere. Again, we can see the tension between institutional regulatory bodies and the LGB camp, and a pallid ‘happy medium’ emerged that once again functioned to contain the queerer subject. This continued and was exacerbated by processes of globalisation which also, “configured queer visibility in terms of neoliberal consumerism and cosmopolitanism, offering competing arrangements of queer visibility.” Insofar as this tug-of-war of LGB visibility is relevant to this thesis, we can see that, on one hand, the intense institutional regulation of debates surrounding political issues relating to LGB peoples’ lives has caused queer visibility to remain, “a volatile site and plane of representation, subject to a tug-of-war between actors” (Kerrigan 2020, p.162). On the other hand, a recurring theme of this contested visibility has been the usefulness of alternative media ecologies, less subject to institutional regulation and scrutiny. As this thesis examines representations of LGBTQI+ people in both mainstream and community media contexts, it will be possible to ascertain to what extent this tug-of-war has influence on the discourse produced when it exists outside of these limiting regulatory structures.

Although familiar means of control and regulation within traditional media shaped the modalities of queer visibility, new media engendered a multitude of ways in which visibility could be contested and mainstreamed in other media ecologies [...]

(Kerrigan 2020, p.162)

Key to this examination, however, is to not view alternative media ecologies as impervious to the tug-of-war, but to acknowledge that these influences might permeate these alternative contexts. We must interrogate how mainstreaming representational strategies and contesting representations might function and affect LGBTQI+ communities and wider public perception.

3.4 Conclusion

By tracing key events from the 19th to the 21st century, it is possible to map out the trajectory of the understanding of sexuality in the Irish context and reveal that Ireland has gradually seceded from the influence of the Catholic Church, primarily through incremental gains facilitated by both political activism and other social and economic factors. It also highlighted that despite these developments, the centrality of legislative goals to current agendas and the foregrounding of mainstreamed LGB identities has had an obviating effect on the more radical queerness that exists in Ireland today. Notably, this tension is visible in media contexts and reflects the historical ideological divides within the LGBTQI+ community.

Chapter 4: Methods and Data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods used in this research as well as the data drawn upon in its analysis and is split into four distinct sections. Firstly, it presents a guiding methodological ethos which reconciles the disruptive motivations of queer inquiry with the rigidity and positivity of established methods. Then there is a section dedicated to the textual data and its treatment (CADS) and another to the visual data and its treatment (CAMDA). The affordances and limitations of each approach are explored, particularly in relation to conducting research on ideology and representation in contexts that focus on mediated news discourse. Additionally, within each of these sections, the data is presented and the analytical procedure for each data type is outlined. The final section presents reflections on the methodological issues that arose during the course of the research, and engages with issues of ethics, reliability, and validity.

4.2 Queering Methodologies: A Guiding Methodological Ethos and Framework

As outlined in Chapter 2, section 2.3, the core tenet of queer inquiry is rooted in the disruption of normativity. While Chapter 2 discussed how this form of inquiry is useful and can be applied from a theoretical perspective, applying this principle to a methodological context results in an approach, or approaches, that contribute to the ongoing, “interdisciplinary rebellion against the disciplines” (Ferguson 2004, p.88). Like Bayramoğlu (2021), I align myself with the growing number of scholars who draw upon queer methodologies in their research. According to Browne and Nash (2016), these queer methodologies can be particularly useful when the research interrogates conventions of theories and methodologies and promotes understandings that both constitute and disrupt research considerations. Queer methodologies are distinct in their disloyalty to any one research method, and as such, this thesis does not adhere to any single approach, but rather implements mixed methods. In particular, for the textual element of the analysis, a corpus-

assisted approach (CADS) is used (outlined in sections 4.3.3 below), while the examination of the visual data takes the form of a content analysis within a corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (CAMDA) framework (outlined in section 4.4.1 below). Leap (2021) highlights the affinity of queer inquiry with what Plummer (2005, p.366) calls, “scavenger methodology”. According to Leap, this affinity is because,

the focus of queer inquiry is not neatly ordered or self-evident, such an inquiry itself proceeds with “a certain disloyalty to disciplinary methods” (Plummer 2005: 366)

(Leap 2021, p.6)

This scavenger methodology grants the researcher the freedom to draw data, methods of analysis, as well as theoretical insights from multiple sources, “as appropriate to the particular research needs” (Leap 2021, p.6). It is my view that the various data types in this thesis, their interaction with each other, and the various research questions necessitate, and indeed benefit from, a triangulation of methods. Employing a more traditional and rigid methodological approach feels disloyal to the queer foundations of this project. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, pp.713-718) describe this approach as a form of “pragmatism” in the sense that it allows the researcher to be flexible and encourages a circumvention of the qualitative-quantitative binary in favour of “what works”. More generally, Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, pp.14-15) tell us the goal of mixed-methods research, “is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both [...]”. In addition, there is a need for flexibility with regards to the approach and tools used, as the representation of LGBTQI+ identities in the data may not be realised in clear-cut discourses, but rather in a more intertwined and complex way. As such, it is necessary to access the invisible as well as the visible and unearth both similarities and differences in representation relative to other examples of language. To this end, corpus-assisted approaches were followed as they can be applied to both textual and visual data, and boast a flexibility that can be found in the variety of ways the data can be accessed, the range of different perspectives onto the

corpora themselves, as well as the diversity of corpus tools available. These approaches are discussed throughout this chapter.

Finally, while it is important to the underlying queer motivations of this research to outline the ways in which it is disruptive to rigid methodological paradigms, it is also useful and necessary at this point to clearly outline the concrete framework to discourse analysis undertaken in this thesis. Usually, in research such as this, the corpus analysis element tends to be initially quantitative, relying on frequency-based techniques like keywords and collocates in order to give the research a focus. This frames the initial stages of this analysis. Then, as a research project progresses, the analysis gradually becomes more qualitative and context-led, relying more on close readings of collocates, concordances, and examining the semantic prosody of what was found to be significant in the quantitative phase of analysis. While this broadly frames the later stages of the analysis, it should be noted that, relative to other studies taking the CADS approach, there is less attention given to the examination of select extracts. The qualitative component is primarily comprised of close readings of concordances, which accompany each finding in Chapter 5, as well as the initial open-ended reading of the corpora. As discussed in section 4.3.2, the possibility for exploring discursive patterns based on both the researcher's intuition as well as the empirical evidence in the corpus is foregrounded in the CADS approach, although a more granular discourse analysis would certainly be useful, and indeed future research should consider expanding on what has been done here. In this thesis, it was deemed sufficient to get a general sense of the treatment of the main themes in the data so that the primary aim of the thesis – the experimentation with and application of Munoz's queer utopian ideas – could be actioned. The specific steps to analysis are described in much more detail in sections 4.3.8 and 4.4.3 below.

4.3 Textual Data and Treatment

This section is dedicated to describing the data and methods used to analyse the textual data in this thesis. The data for this part of the analysis constitute articles taken from two news outlets. The first of these is *The Irish Times* broadsheet newspaper, where text data are taken from articles published during the month of the referendum to legalise same-sex marriage in Ireland, May 2015 (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.10, for a full discussion of same-sex marriage). This month was chosen as the timeframe within which data would be collected as it constitutes a ‘critical discourse moment’ (Carvalho 2008). Carvalho (2008, p.166) describes these periods as, “determining in the construction of an issue and therefore call for an integral analysis.” She adds that, “critical discourse moments are periods that involve specific happenings, which may challenge ‘established’ discursive positions” and that they are often marked by political activity or socially relevant events. The notion of a critical discourse moment is of particular relevance to this research as it has been mainly conceived of, “for journalistic texts where written language is dominant (if not exclusive), such as newspaper or magazine articles” (Carvalho 2008, p.167). The database contains 218,540 words, 250,326 tokens, and is comprised of 342 articles. The second source of textual data is *Gay Community News (GCN) Magazine*, which was chosen a data source as it is the longest continuous queer periodical in Ireland as well as the oldest surviving free LGBTQI+ magazine in Europe. Interestingly, *GCN Magazine* claims to have, “a really important part to play in mentoring [the LGBT Youth]” according to its former editor Brian Finnegan. The implications of such a claim positions *GCN Magazine* as potentially formative in the construction of a queer Irish identity, and influential in terms of the direction LGBTQI+ progress, both political and ideological. This portion of the textual data comprises articles published by *GCN Magazine* from July 2017 to July 2021 inclusive. The database contains 666,606 words, 773,294 tokens, and is comprised of 816 articles. Both corpora as well as reference corpora are further

discussed in section 4.3.7, while further reflections regarding the selection of this data source are found in section 4.5 below.

4.3.1 Corpus Linguistics: A Note on Corpora

Corpus linguistics, as its etymology would suggest, uses a body, or bodies, of language carefully sampled to be representative of a particular genre or topic in conjunction with specifically designed software to generate insights into the given language sample (Baker and McEnery 2015, p.1). Such a definition would seem straightforward on the surface, however, various definitions of what constitutes a corpus exist. Tognini-Bonelli remarks that,

every few months [...] there is a query about whether or not a certain collection of language, or a means of collecting it, would constitute a corpus, and there is a wide spectrum of views elicited by these stimuli.

(Tognini-Bonelli 2001, p.52)

Additionally, myriad approaches to the use of corpora in discourse studies also exist and are distinct in the extent to which the corpus drives the study. As such, this section briefly outlines the parameters of what a corpus ‘is’ in this thesis, before providing a nuanced explanation of why this thesis uses a corpus-assisted approach, rather than a corpus-driven or corpus-based approach.

In the early 1990s, scholars such as Sinclair (1991) and Aarts (1991) agreed that a corpus is a collection of language text, although there was less unanimity on what counted as a text, with full texts, samples of texts, and proverbs, to name a few, eliciting different opinions in relation to validity. Tognini-Bonelli (2001, p.52) note that the, “growing popularity of corpus linguistics has generated pressure to relax criteria” and while there remain a number of contested issues, “there is a reasonable consensus that a corpus will not just yield insights into itself, i.e. its contents, but also that the results of these investigations will be claimed or assumed to be typical of the language from which the corpus was selected.” In other words, findings are representative of the corpus itself, as

well as representative of the domain from which the corpus derives its specificity – the sampled language variety, genre, or context. The corpus, however, cannot simply be any collection of texts, but rather have a specified function and needs to be justified in linguistic terms. As such, this thesis adopts the definition proposed by Tognini-Bonelli (2001, p.55): “a corpus is taken to be a computerised collection of authentic texts, amenable to automatic or semiautomatic processing or analysis. The texts are selected according to explicit criteria in order to capture the regularities of a language, a language variety or a sub-language.” In the above definition, ‘authentic’ texts denote those which are taken from genuine communications, in other words, language in use (Aarts 1991). In this way, they can function as representative “reservoirs of evidence” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, p.55). Ensuring representativeness, however, is challenging, with Leech (1991, p.27) pointing out that it, “must be regarded largely as an act of faith.” Tognini-Bonelli (2001) urge transparency in sampling and analytical procedures to ensure robustness, something which this chapter endeavour to achieve.

4.3.2 Corpus Research Traditions and Positioning of this Thesis

As regards the positioning of this research within corpus research traditions, there were a number of schools of thought to consider, each with a distinct underpinning theory of language. It was Tognini-Bonelli (2001) who first distinguished between corpus-based and corpus-driven language study.

The claim of being based on a corpus can be used of all types of work that relate to and draw from a corpus; it confers some authority on the work, but since 'based' is a vague and general relationship, such claims are difficult to validate, and the relationship can be very informal and/or partial. But for the purpose of making a methodological distinction, the term corpus-based is used to refer to a methodology that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or exemplify theories and descriptions that were formulated before large corpora became available to inform language study.

(Tognini-Bonelli 2001, p.65)

In other words, corpus-based studies typically use corpus data to explore a specific theory or hypothesis. In such cases, the aim is to validate, refute, or refine it. Within this

definition of corpus linguistics, corpus linguistics as a method is the foundation of the approach. In contrast, in corpus-driven linguistics the characterisation of corpus linguistics as a method is rejected, and the corpus itself is instead viewed as the sole source of hypotheses about the language contained therein. In this way, it is claimed that the corpus itself embodies a theory of language and in such cases,

the commitment of the linguist is to the integrity of the data as a whole, and descriptions aim to be comprehensive with respect to corpus evidence. The corpus, therefore, is seen as more than a repository of examples [...]

(Tognini-Bonelli 2001, p.84)

These can be considered the more traditional approaches in corpus linguistics, and both tend to privilege the quantitative approach. This thesis, however, takes a *corpus-assisted* approach which removes itself from the corpus-based versus corpus-driven binary discussed above. Within this tradition, known more commonly as CADS (Partington 2004), flexibility is prioritised, with theorists acknowledging the possibility for exploring discursive patterns based on both the researcher's intuition as well as the empirical evidence in the corpus. Typically, CADS is used to interrogate a specific discourse type via a variety of corpus tools (discussed in sections 4.3.3.1 to 4.3.3.4 below). Such an aim also influences what type of corpora are normally investigated within this research tradition. This is discussed in the subsequent section along with the other specificities of CADS and why it is a useful and suitable methodology for this thesis.

4.3.3 Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS)

In section 4.3.1 above, this thesis' definition of what constitutes a corpus was outlined (based on Tognini-Bonelli 2001). It is worth adding that studies within the CADS tradition are often characterised by,

the compilation of ad hoc specialised corpora, since very frequently there exists no previously available collection of the discourse type in question. Often, other corpora are utilized in the course of a study for purposes of comparison. These may include pre-existing corpora or may themselves need to be compiled by the researcher.

(Partington 2010, p.90)

Both ad hoc compilation of specialised corpora as well as the use of existing corpora as reference corpora were utilised in this thesis. Koester (2021, p.48) discusses the place of smaller specialised corpora and concedes that they are, “not suitable for certain types of analysis, particularly lexis and phraseology [...]” One of the advantages of a small corpus is that, “*all* occurrences, and not just a random sample of high frequency items, can be examined.” Furthermore, in very large corpora, the samples of text under investigation all come from radically different sources, thus limiting the examination of the link between context and language as well as any influence this context may have upon the language produced. Smaller corpora, built by taking language from one or two sources, lend themselves to research such as this where the socio-historical context of the language used as well as the communicative medium are seen as equally important as the language itself. This high degree of familiarity with the context of texts within a corpus is a strength of this approach relative to others that use larger mega-corpora. Indeed, Koester (2021, p.55) specifically highlights that, “The linguistic patterns identified through corpus analysis can tell us something about the social and cultural context from which the data were taken”, something which is central to the questions being asked in this thesis. While there are drawbacks to smaller corpora, for example in the generalisability of findings, Koester highlights how the deeper insight into context can mitigate this shortcoming.

Many of the limitations of a small corpus can be counterbalanced by reference to the context. Indeed, for specialised corpora, gathering contextual data about the setting from which the texts or discourses were collected can be essential, as it is often not possible to make sense of such specialised discourse without some background knowledge.

(Koester 2021, p.53)

In terms of how the corpora in this thesis qualify as specialised, we looked to Flowerdew’s (2004) parameters of specialisation. Within their framework, we argue that the corpora used in this thesis are specialised on the basis of the; i) type of discourse (mediated news discourse), ii) subject matter (LGBTQI+ related themes), and iii) contextualisation (data sources share a socio-historical context as well as a communicative purpose). Ultimately,

what is important in this research is not any particular lexical, or grammatical pattern in itself, but rather the potential cumulative effects of particular language use by media publications for the LGBTQI+ community in terms of its understanding of itself and its place within Irish society. As such, smaller, more specialised corpora were most suitable as they allowed for the primacy of a close focus on context. Additionally, the selection of CADS, and of corpus linguistics as an analytical tool generally, is what Motschenbacher (2018, p.146) calls the “important counterweight” to work that is “primarily qualitatively oriented.” While there is a focus on context and qualitative engagement within CADS, there are a number of quantitative corpus tools that are nonetheless used. Frequency analysis and statistical salience are central to any work conducted within this tradition, and according to Motschenbacher (2018, p.146) this results in replicable results, and a higher level of objectivity compared to studies that are wholly qualitative. This safeguards the research, at least to some extent, from accusations of ‘cherry picking’ at the analytical stage, as texts and examples selected for close readings emerge from quantitative checks. Explanations of these tools themselves and their uses are provided in sections 4.3.3.1 to 4.3.3.4 below, but ultimately the advantage of corpus techniques is that they can, “reassure readers that our analysts are actually presenting a systematic analysis, rather than writing a covert polemic” (Baker and McEnery 2015, p.5).

Situating this research within a pre-defined corpus research tradition posed a challenge in this thesis. A number of the established traditions could have been followed. For example, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed primarily by Wodak and Reisigl at the University of Vienna seems suitable, as this thesis does attempt to integrate knowledge about the social, political, and historical background in its analysis. However, in this thesis, the aim of investigating the representation of LGBTQI+ people is not the end goal in and of itself, but rather it is to facilitate a wider interrogation of mediated queer futurities through the abstract concepts of progress, community, and collectivity. Thus,

the CADS approach, which has been most commonly used in the analysis of, “seemingly innocuous abstract concepts like science (Taylor 2010) and moral (Marchi 2010)” (Baker and McEnergy 2015, p.7) may be more suitable. Additionally, this research is less overtly critical in that the researcher is not assuming a problem exists within representations of LGBTQI+ people in the press. Rather, taking what Baker and McEnergy (2015, p.5) call a, “prospecting approach”, it seeks to understand how such representations coalesce to form particular versions of progress, community, and collectivity. It is only at this point, after the corpus tools have been used, that the ‘critical’ in this research arrives, and the particular articulations of progress, community, and collectivity are viewed through a critical lens. This less overt criticality further lends itself to a CADS approach, which is less concerned with applying a rigorous critical discourse analytical framework (see, for example, Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Finally, the CADS approach was chosen as it focuses on both political and press registers, the latter of which is the discourse context under investigation due to its inherently ideological nature and influence on popular opinion (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.4, for a further discussion of this discourse type).

The following subsections highlight a number of tools within CADS, and their utility in research of this nature is explained. While corpus tools across corpus software share the same fundamental premises, they can vary slightly from software to software. This thesis uses Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2004; 2014), and so the below description of the various tools used should be thought of as specific to Sketch Engine.

4.3.3.1 Corpus Tools: Wordlists

The wordlist tool generates frequency lists of which can be based on a number of different criteria, including parts of speech, words containing certain characters (including beginning and ending with certain characters), lemmas (a basic form of a word, e.g., the lemma *tran** would produce results including *trans*, *transgender* etc.), specific tags built-in to the corpus by the creator, among others. Frequency measures can then be displayed

in the wordlist by frequency, or usefully when comparing multiple corpora of different sizes, frequency per million, whereby frequency is normalised and therefore allowing comparison between different corpora. Baker (2012, p.38) highlights that, “the word frequency list is a good entry point to the corpus, highlighting collocational patterns which will probably be worth following up with a qualitative analysis of concordance lines”, which are discussed in section 4.3.3.3 below.

4.3.3.2 Corpus Tools: Collocations and Word Sketches

Collocations are co-occurring words that appear together more often than would be statistically expected. A collocation such as *LGBTQI+ community* consists of the search node *LGBTQI+* and the collocate *community*, and each collocation can have different strengths, which is signified by a logDice score (Rychlý 2008). A weak collocation can combine with lots of other words, whereas a strong collocation has more specific combinations. In *Sketch Engine*, the corpus software used in this thesis, the tool to use for collocations is the Word Sketch tool (see Kilgarriff *et al.* 2010), which is a statistic measure for identifying co-occurrence. While word sketches are executed slightly differently depending on the software used for analysis, they share an interest in the convergence of collocation analysis with grammatical analysis. This analysis produces collocates for a node and grouping these collocates according to their grammatical relations (e.g. object of, subject of, modifier). In other words, Sketch Engine automatically identifies collocates as well as their likely grammatical relationship with the node. This is particularly useful in this thesis as a collocations logDice score is not affected by the size of the corpus and so it is possible to compare scores between different corpora. The word sketch reveals the word’s grammatical and collocational behaviour and facilitates visual representations of results. These can be subsequently separated into categories and these grammatical relations can be revealing. Collocations are particularly useful as they make similarity visible as well as difference and allow for a comprehensive

view on the representation of identities, which are often complex and intertwined, rather than being solely realised in clearcut or distinct discourses (Marchi 2021, p.583). Furthermore, collocates are useful when analysing ideology, as they allow us to examine repeated associations between terms, thus facilitating the interrogation of concepts that may otherwise be unquestioned and reified (Stubbs 1996, p.195). As the subsequent chapters will show, such conflation can be harmful or innovative.

4.3.3.3 Corpus Tools: Concordances

As alluded to in the previous section, the concordance generator is a tool which displays all occurrences for a particular search term, together with its surrounding co-text. Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.15) note that concordancing is, “particularly useful for qualitative analysis, as the co-text can be expanded, and because concordances can automatically be sorted in different ways.” It facilitates a variety of search options, including words, phrases, tags, documents, text types or corpus structures. Motschenbacher (2018, p.151) describes concordance analysis as, “the central (maybe even only) instrument in corpus linguistics that can complement quantitative findings with qualitatively gained insights.” Concordance generators, along with N-gram searches, discussed in the following section, have been among the most reliable processes for exploring collocations since the 1960s (Cheng, Greaves, and Warren 2006, p.412).

4.3.3.4 Corpus Tools: Keyword and N-gram Searches

Keywords, in particular, were useful in this analysis, as they identify single- and multi-word terms which occur frequently in one corpus when compared to another corpus. The calculation takes into account the different sizes of the corpora and applies statistical tests (log likelihood). Discussing the utility of keyword analyses, Motschenbacher (2019) tells us that,

Even though a wide range of topics and linguistic tools is potentially relevant for the discursive construction of a social actor, certain aspects may receive unusually high or low attention and can therefore be interpreted as motivated choices.

(Motschenbacher 2019, p.288)

In other words, though a term may not appear ranked highly in frequency lists, it may still be statistically significant. These ‘motivated choices’ can be identified through statistical comparisons which consider both word frequency and the overall sizes of both corpora (Baker 2006). Statistical significance serves as a viable point of entry into the data and subsequent analysis.

Further, N-gram searches were also used, and were beneficial as they facilitate the identification of clusters of words that co-occur frequently in a database, thereby offering the researcher insight into how particular tokens, and by extension discourses, are constructed through empirical lexico-grammatical analysis. Motschenbacher (2018, p.151) describes N-grams as “contiguous words that constitute a phrase, or a pattern of use, and that recur in a corpus.” Corpus analyses that capitalise on these tools can reveal insights into contexts of use. Patterns identified can be linked to specific contexts, which is important in research such as this that relies on smaller, specialised corpora such as this.

4.3.4 Using CADS to Investigate Ideology and Representation

Multiple sections of this thesis have discussed hidden, and sometimes contradictory, meanings within discourse, particularly within mediated and journalistic contexts (Chapter 2, sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.4). CADS is particularly useful in investigations of these hidden meanings which often carry important ideological information. Stubbs highlights corpus linguistics might facilitate such an endeavour.

by searching for frequent collocations, we can glimpse the recurrent wordings which circulate in the social world, and glimpse how linguistic categories become social categories.

(Stubbs 1996, p.194)

Such ideological information is crucial to addressing the aims of this thesis, outlined in Chapter 1. In a similar way to how Stubbs speaks about recurrent wordings above, Tognini-Bonelli (2001, p.123) argues that this uncovering of hidden meanings is often done, “by exposing evidence of cumulative usage”, notably through the use of concordancing, but also through statistical keyness of certain lexical items and lexicogrammatical structures via a range of corpus tools (discussed in sections 4.3.3.1 to 4.3.3.4 above). CADS, but also discourse studies more generally, are frequently preoccupied with issues of ideology. Commenting specifically on the *how* within the field of CADS engages with questions of ideology. Marchi (2021, p.583) highlights studies on stereotyping, representations, and the shaping of perceptions and attitudes through language (see, for example, Jaworska and Krishnamurty 2012; Bevitori 2014), all of which, like this thesis, draw their data from news media. The intersection between CADS and news media is more fully discussed in section 4.3.5 below. Tognini-Bonelli (2001, p.127) argues that observations gleaned from the use of corpus tools can help us to unpack the, “ideological load” and underlying assumptions of wordforms in context, and highlights the potential of prosody through collocation in particular.

Recalling the aims of this thesis as outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.4, it is clear that the idea of representation is central in this thesis. In the first instance, this is evident in the goal to examine the representation of gender and sexual identities in mediated discourse contexts, and in the second, in how these portrayals combine to represent more abstract concepts such as ‘community’. In the context of investigating representation and ideology through discourse, Chapter 2, section 2.6.1, highlights the difference between Kant’s (1787) ‘noumena’ and ‘phenomena’. Insofar as this relates to corpus linguistics, Partington (2015) clarifies that,

corpora and corpus interrogation tools are phenomena, they are not and should not be confused with the noumena, the language or discourses in themselves which we use these tools to try to represent.

(Partington 2015, p.220)

Chapter 2, section 2.6.1, also evokes the issue of the observer, the analyst, and the reader, and their interaction with a represented entity, and the potential impact of this on an analysis. Partington (2015) addresses this question within the field of CADS, saying that, “there has been considerable debate on the question of the degree to which using corpus techniques in discourse analysis can obviate the observer effect”, and concluded that,

such techniques remove parts at least of the process of observation out of the hands of the human observer and into those of the machine and are therefore replicable, if sufficient information on procedures are given.

(Partington 2015, p.223)

Nonetheless, he warns that key item lists, lexical or semantic sketches (or Word Sketches), are ultimately abstractions and representations of lived linguistic experience. Even so, and while this may sound like a criticism, Partington (2015, p.223) highlights that,

since noumena are only knowable and expressible through abstractions, the greater number of reliable abstractions we have at our disposal to know and express them, the better.

(Partington 2015, p.223)

4.3.5 CADS in Studies of News Media: Advantages and Limitations

Chapter 2, section 2.6.4, introduced us to the specificities of news discourse. This section will focus on the qualities of news discourse that render it fruitful territory for a corpus linguistic approach to analysis. Marchi (2021, p.576) states that such qualities are, “inbuilt in the definition: its relevance and its abundance.” Indeed, the study that launched CADS as a corpus approach was one that investigated newspaper editorials (Hardt-Mautner 1995). Politics, and in particular, European politics and socio-political issues, are often-studied topics by researchers using the CADS approach to examine news media (see, for example, Lutzky and Kehoe 2019). Further, Marchi (2021, p.584) highlights that within these frequently studied topics, “Mutation over time is a fundamental aspect of research on newspaper discourse.” Such mutation can be examined by looking at the stability or

change in particular discourses or discursive features over time. This thesis exemplifies this by examining data taken from a mainstream publication in 2015 as well as from a community-led publication between 2017 and 2021. The stability and change of certain elements of discourses surrounding LGBTQI+ people across contexts is touched upon Chapter 6, sections 6.4 and 6.4.1 in relation to notions of kinship and persistent tropes that are produced and reproduced regardless of context.

Beyond being a powerful manifestation of symbolic control (discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.6.4) and therefore worthy of examination, there are a number of features of news of journalistic discourse that afford a natural synergy with CADS. Firstly, the sheer volume of news texts produced makes this discourse domain accessible for corpus linguists. Obstacles relating to the collection of representative texts are suddenly mitigated, if not eliminated, and with tools such as *LexisNexis* and other publication-specific archives, the retrieval of texts via keywords becomes a boon for swift corpus compilation.

Corpus studies of news media generally fall into one of two categories: studies of news form, including news structure and discourse function, or studies of news content, including media representation and construction of specific topics (Marchi 2021, p.577), with this thesis falling into the latter category. Marchi (2021, p.584) hails the intersection between journalistic practice and journalistic products as the, “new frontier of CADS research”, and argues that, “CADS should foster an holistic approach that takes into account the complex interaction between production, message and reception.” Such a mission would even further align this research with the CADS approach, as, at its core, it explores the potential effect of the produced messaging on the LGBTQI+ community, albeit on a theoretical level. No data is gathered directly from individuals within the community.

While there are numerous examples of why CADS is a suitable and useful approach in this thesis, it is nonetheless necessary to acknowledge that, like any approach, there are also a number of limitations to the use of corpora in discourse studies.

There are things we may miss when studying journalistic discourse using corpora (or, rather, using just corpora), and greater awareness about these limitations will help in overcoming them.

(Marchi 2021, p.585)

One of the primary criticisms of corpus linguistics relates to the focus on language data at the expense of contextual information, paralinguistic features, and other semiotic modes of meaning-making that may not be captured in the text corpus. Some of these challenges are easily overcome, and it could be argued that relative to other corpus linguistics approaches CADS suffers these drawbacks less intensely. As highlighted above, studies that take a CADS approach tend to favour smaller, more specialised corpora, which renders the data more accessible to the researcher. As Marchi (2021, p.585) notes, “corpus-assisted approaches encourage a constant shunting between the “big picture” and close reading.” By contrast, studies that employ larger or mega-corpora lose contextual information as the texts contained within them come from a variety of sources and there is simply too much data for a researcher to conduct thorough close readings manually, for example. Less easily remedied is the separation of traditional corpus approaches and our multi-modal and post-digital reality. Studies that employ traditional corpus linguistic techniques tend to use text-only corpora and ignore the semiotic frame within which the language is embedded, although this is changing with advancements in software.

Because of the rapid evolution beyond the printed paper, the growing importance of multimodal texts and the overall impact of digital technologies on the news media industry, a monosemiotic and mono-source analysis is reductive (i.e. limited) and forcedly reductionist (i.e. unduly oversimplified). We need a more comprehensive approach, one that takes into account multiple signs, but also one that goes beyond the message and takes into account aspects of production and reception.

(Marchi 2021, p.585)

While the research design of this thesis primarily relies on textual data, a supplementary visual element was incorporated as a way of addressing this limitation of CADS. While there is huge value in technological and software advancements that facilitate the creation and analysis of multi-modal corpora, this thesis shows that there is still value in relevant, separate visual analysis using more traditional approaches. Multi-modal analysis does not necessarily require grappling with complex software, and a number of scholars have discussed how these types of multimodal analyses might be approached (see, for example Rose 2007; Bednarek and Caple 2017). The treatment of the visual data in this thesis is discussed in section 4.4 below.

A final limitation of CADS, and of corpus approaches to the study of language more generally, is that the data requires some degree of interpretation on the part of the reader, potentially creating space for biased findings. It is this author's belief that there is often an element of interpretation in research such as this. In this way, I agree with Stubbs (2001, p.120) who reminds us that the potential for biased interpretation exists across many empirical disciplines and that by acknowledging that bias remains a challenge, corpus linguistics, "is trying to develop observational, empirical methods of studying meaning, which are open to the same tests as are applied in other disciplines." Ultimately, on this issue I hold with Partington (2015, p.223) who reminds us that, "since noumena are only knowable and expressible through abstractions, the greater number of reliable abstractions we have at our disposal to know and express them, the better."

4.3.6 CADS in Studies of Language, Gender, and Sexuality

In the context of gender and sexuality, the synergistic approaches of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis have a tradition that dates back almost to the beginning of the field itself, with Caldas-Coulthard (1995) examining the gender representation in news stories, indicating a gender bias that was heavily skewed in favour of men. Recent work has also profited from this combination of methodological foci. Baker (2006) and Mautner (2016)

tell us that corpus linguistics has been playing an increasingly prominent role in discourse analysis while Motschenbacher (2018, p.145) highlights that, “corpus-assisted studies have recently started to enjoy a greater visibility in language and sexuality research, especially among European scholars.” Reflective of this trend, this thesis employs corpus techniques to enhance the qualitative discourse analysis of the data. The combination of analytical foci described in the preceding sections enables a more thorough analysis of both terminology expected to be of relevance, as well as terms that may not have otherwise been considered important (Love and Baker 2015), something that is key in studies of language, gender, and sexuality, whereby processes of exclusion are often taking place.

The essence of this section has been to show that corpus linguistics approaches can be, and indeed are, used to enable discourse analytical research. The next sections present the textual data and outline the analytical procedure followed in the textual element of the analysis.

4.3.7 Presentation of Textual Data and Corpora Building Procedures

The articles used to build *The Irish Times Corpus* were taken from the *Irish Times* online archive, and were retrieved via the keyword, ‘Marriage Referendum.’ They were then transferred to Microsoft Word documents where they were cleaned and inspected to filter out any duplicate texts. This process also included correcting typos and formatting issues and removing references to images embedded in the articles as well as dates, so that Sketch Engine would be able to process the data. At this point, personal letters from readers were excluded so as to amplify the voice of journalists. This particular newspaper represents the style of broadsheet newspaper discourse which is under investigation due to its powerful ability to shape agendas and public discourse, to reinforce beliefs, and to influence opinions.

As the thesis is structured around two snapshots of discursive environments and representational patterns, it was deemed important to select a paper or papers that were not necessarily predisposed to misrepresent. A number of factors were considered in light of this, including broadsheet versus tabloid publications, political alignment, ownership, and circulation. It was deemed more useful for this thesis to select a broadsheet publication, on one hand to avoid sensational language, and on the other to access the broader scope of broadsheets which typically cover national, international, and political news as opposed to sensational stories and celebrity gossip. Recalling the argument made by Baker (2010, p.328) in Chapter 2, section 2.6.4.1, “broadsheets do not tend to make explicit value judgements”, which would appear to align more neatly with our research aims and methodological choices whereby decoding seemingly innocuous language to access hegemonic ideological positions is foregrounded. A number of established newspapers exist in the Irish context, however, of the 8 national daily papers in Ireland, *The Irish Sun*, *Irish Daily Star*, *Irish Daily Mail*, *Irish Daily Mirror*, *Irish Examiner*, *Irish Independent*, *The Herald (Ireland)*, and *The Irish Times*, only 2 can be classified as broadsheets: *Irish Examiner* and *The Irish Times*. Additionally, these are the only two daily papers that are Irish owned, with the rest being under British or Belgian propriety. *The Irish Times* was chosen over the *Irish Examiner* as the latter is primarily in circulation in the southwestern province of Munster, while the former is more national. Additionally, the *Irish Examiner* is published by *The Irish Times*, which is a highly read and influential paper, and indeed, one which presents itself as, “liberal and progressive” (Brown 2015, p.448) and the newspaper of record for political and intellectual elites (O’Brien 2008). *Table 1* below presents the metadata of the *Irish Times* corpus.

Table 1: Metadata of Irish Times corpus

Newspaper	Type of texts	Period	No. of documents	No. of tokens
<i>The Irish Times</i>	National daily broadsheet articles	May 1 st – 31 st 2015	342	250,326

Table 2: Reference corpus metadata

Corpus	Type of Texts	Period	No. of documents	No. of tokens
<i>English Web 2013 (enTenTen13)</i>	Online language	Jan 1 st – Dec 31 st 2013	37,061,719	22,728,686,012

Similarly, the articles that constitute the *GCN Magazine* corpus were taken from the online archive of *GCN Magazine* and were then transferred to Microsoft Word documents where they were cleaned. This cleaning process included correcting typos and formatting issues and removing references to images embedded in the articles as well as dates, so that *Sketch Engine* would be able to process the data. It was found that certain Irish language words were appearing as key, and so Irish language names were excluded from the keyword searches unless they referred to a specific individual that was referenced across texts. For example ‘Ailbhe’ predominantly refers to Ailbhe Smyth, a prominent activist who chaired the NXF, and so was included, whereas ‘Aoife’ appeared as a keyword as there were 13 Aoifes mentioned in the data, and so was excluded. In this way, there was a more accurate representation of actors within the dataset.

In much the same way as *the Irish Times* is considered the “paper of record” in the mainstream context, *GCN Magazine* has also been referred to as the “paper of record” for the Irish LGBTQI+ community (Moore 2010). While the physical circulation of *GCN Magazine* is only 5,000 per month, their website containing the digital version of the

magazine attracts 100,000 unique users per month (GCN Magazine 2023). Unfortunately, the exact readership is not available, but given the fact that it is the longest continuous LGBTQI+ periodical in Ireland as well as the oldest surviving free LGBTQI+ magazine in Europe, it is not unreasonable to give Moore’s (2010) claim that it is the “paper of record” for the LGBTQI+ community. In any case, it is the only native LGBTQI+ publication that has consistent publication and circulation over the past number of decades. The lack of choice in LGBTQI+ publications and alignment of these two ‘papers of record’ solidified the researcher’s decision to focus on one paper from each context.

Table 3: Metadata of the GCN Magazine Corpus

Corpus	Type of Texts	Period	No. of documents	No. of tokens
<i>GCN Magazine Corpus</i>	Magazine articles	Jul 2017 – Jul 2021	816	773,294

This element of the analysis used two reference corpora to facilitate the generation of statistically salient keywords. The first, is *The Irish Times* corpus presented in *Table 1* above, and the second is the English Web corpus, which is tagged to indicate the part of speech and grammatical category of its contents. The corpus texts are also lemmatised, meaning each word form is also assigned to its base form. This corpus is particularly useful as it covers a wide variety of genres that align with the topics frequently covered by the magazine, including the arts, beauty and fashion, culture and entertainment, economy and business, games, health, history, family and children, politics and government, and sex, among others. The researcher deemed this useful as salience within the *GCN Magazine Corpus* is made starker when compared to such a general sample of English language use. See *Table 4* below for an overview of the reference corpus.

Table 4: Reference corpus metadata

Corpus	Type of Texts	Period	No. of documents	No. of tokens
<i>English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)</i>	Online language	Oct 2021 – Jan 2022	120,252,162	61,585,997,113

Finally, it is useful at this point to comment on the inclusion of both a mainstream and community-led publication and comment on why and how the two quite distinct datasets are used. I argue that the different datasets grant more of an insight into the discursive environment in which LGBTQI+ people are navigating their identities in the Irish context. This thesis is not only combining these sources and arguing that they represent a single discourse, but the use of distinct datasets also makes it possible to see where these discourses diverge. Given that this thesis is problematising the idea of progress as linear and linked to legislative progress, as highlighted in Chapter 1, section 1.2, it is also useful that the data from one source (*The Irish Times*) is situated at the critical discourse moment of the marriage equality referendum, whereas the data from the other (*GCN Magazine*) was collected in the years after this legislative milestone. The common linear conceptualisation of progress as tied to these legislative gains would suggest that we should see a decrease in heteronormative influences in public discourse after this legislative milestone and given *GCN Magazine's* target audience (the LGBTQI+ community), we would especially expect that to be so. This research design allows us to ascertain whether this is indeed the case. It should also be noted that the choice to focus on a critical discourse moment for the mainstream data had additional practical benefits. Mentions of LGBTQI+ people in mainstream media can be disparate and difficult to collect. Given that the scope of this research is already ambitious, introducing further publications with disconnected data collection contexts seemed infeasible. As such, collecting data from a concentrated public discussion about a topic pertaining to

LGBTQI+ people seemed to be a useful alternative providing the implications and limitations of this choice are also considered (see Chapter 7, section 7.5). In any case, these distinct corpora will be used both comparatively and in combination with one another. While certain priorities and aspects of community, collectivity, and progress might be similar and coalesce across these distinct datasets, there are also a number of significant differences. Moreover, these differences are tied to the important differences between the sources, the data collection context, and their intended readership. By analysing both the outsider's perspective (via *The Irish Times*) as well as an insider's perspective (via *GCN Magazine*) we become equipped to draw comparisons between the representations of the LGBTQI+ community at each site. Ultimately, each of these perspectives provides a snapshot of the attitudes and ideologies underpinning representational strategies that are being produced by those who wield discursive influence in the Republic of Ireland. The nuances of such similarities and differences are then discussed through the lens of the theoretical framework of this thesis and grant insight into both the discursive environment in which LGBTQI+ people are navigating their identities in the Irish context, as well as any new or transformative representational practices. Admittedly, the discourses and examples of queer futurity being analysed are primarily drawn from the *GCN Magazine* data, however, an examination of mainstream media representations, notably authored by those who are not members of the LGBTQI+ community, is also useful as it shows the continued, constraining presence of heteronormative ideology in both familiar and unfamiliar forms. It is the author's hope that establishing a baseline of the types of discourses that are circulating in the public sphere via the mainstream analysis will render any instances of futurity and innovation more visible. Further, given that similar studies have also been conducted in mainstream media contexts, this also allows for comparisons to be drawn between this research and other contexts, further strengthening the arguments made in this thesis.

4.3.8 Analytical Procedure

Before outlining the analytical procedure for this thesis, it is important to note that the analytical procedures for interrogating the external (mainstream) and internal (community-led) representations of LGBTQI+ people were not identical. Though many steps of the analytical procedure, as well as the corpus tools, remain the same across all levels of analysis, the iterative nature of corpus linguistics, leading the research to look in certain places for the presence or absences of discourses, naturally resulted in slightly different paths being followed. In addition, as outlined in the previous section, the data collection method was, and needed to be, slightly different as mainstream representations of LGBTQI+ people are, naturally, not as accessible as those in community-led media. This compounded the need to examine each dataset in a tailored way. The following paragraphs outline the analytical procedure for this thesis and highlight where the researcher diverged in analysing external and internal representations of LGBTQI+ people.

Carvalho's (2008, p.166) suggestion to start, "with an open-ended reading of texts without very specific questions or hypotheses constraining the analysis" was followed which allowed for the identification of some significant characteristics in the data, without the "filter-effect" of a rigid research programme. All articles in the corpora were first analysed at a descriptive level, primarily through close readings. This facilitated the researcher in becoming acquainted with the data, and at this point initial observatory notes were taken. The database was then uploaded to the corpus analysis tool *Sketch Engine* for subsequent and more rigorous quantitative and qualitative checks. As mentioned in the previous sections, this software facilitates the use of a number of tools, including a wordlist and concordance generator, collocation and keywords searches, as well as the Word Sketch feature. Please refer to the previous sections for explanations of, and justifications for the use of such tools. Once the close reading was conducted, wordlists and keywords were

generated using *Sketch Engine* in order to provide insights on the ‘aboutness’ of the texts in the corpora.

For the dataset containing community-led representations of LGBTQI+ people, the procedure of Heritage (2022) was followed, in that multiple reference corpora were used to distil the list of keywords. This was done to compensate for the starkly different data contexts to ensure salience of keywords. Conducting keyword searches against two reference corpora ensured that any keywords that appeared in both were, in fact, statistically salient, and not as a result of other factors i.e., data collection context, nature of corpus, or variety of English. In this way, a distilled list of common keywords became visible. These results were grouped into different semantic categories in an inductive process that required careful reading and broad tagging of the collocates. Following Motschenbacher (2018), semantic domains were established based on semantic similarities among keywords. These included semantic relations based on both denotational semantic meanings as well on looser semantic connections such as between items belonging to the same conceptual field or sharing connotational meanings. In instances where the meaning of a keyword was ambiguous or context-dependant, concordance lines were inspected closely so that accurate classification could be facilitated. Motschenbacher (2018, p.288) highlights the importance of the retrieval of the meanings of the forms in the analytical procedure in situations where, “An automated keyword analysis of untagged corpora has to rely on the retrieval of linguistic forms exclusively”, as is the case in this thesis. Once this was completed, similar categories were further grouped together, and labelled with a broad or overarching title, and in much the same way as Heritage (2022),

I also created a ‘miscellaneous’ category for collocates which did not fit with any others. While this grouping is somewhat interpretive from the onset, it is used as a starting point for further analysis.

(Heritage 2022, p.5)

Considering the prominence of identity labels in the keyword searches as well as the overarching aim of this thesis, which, if we recall is to examine the representation of the LGBTQI+ community, the next step in the analytical procedure was to elucidate the grammatical behaviour of some of these labels by examining their collocates using the Word Sketch feature. As such, Word Sketches of ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’, ‘trans’, ‘intersex’, and ‘non-binary’ were generated, and their lexico-grammatical patterning analysed (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.3 for this analysis). ‘Queer’, ‘LGBT’ were excluded as these keywords are used much more adjectivally and are not used to represent distinct group per se. That said, ‘queer’ is analysed in other contexts (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.5).

For the dataset containing mainstream representations of LGBTQI+ people, an additional step was followed due to the specific context of the Marriage Equality Referendum. Indeed, this was a crucial step, as representations of the LGBTQI+ community here were taking place within the context of the same-sex marriage debate, and thus, it was necessary to examine the framing and discussion of marriage itself. To this end, the Word Sketch feature was used to understand the collocational and grammatical behaviour of the term ‘marriage’. It was important at this point to identify whether this high frequency score of ‘marriage’ was a result of incidental references to the marriage equality referendum taking place, or whether, indeed, there was a discussion taking place about the institution of marriage and the perceived effect of same-sex marriage on this. In this case, close readings support the conclusion that the latter appeared to be the case, and debates relating to the effects of the extension of marriage to include same-sex couples were, in fact, taking place across the dataset. In order to further investigate how this took place, close readings of the multiword keyterm ‘of marriage’, which appeared 201 times in the corpus, with ‘institution of marriage’, ‘definition of marriage’, ‘understanding of marriage’, ‘view of marriage’, ‘meaning of marriage’, ‘status of marriage’, and ‘redefinition of marriage’ accounting for 99 occurrences, were conducted.

Finally, these insights were then analysed through close readings of concordance lines and within individual documents in the corpus that contained a high relative frequency of these features, as identified by *Sketch Engine*.

4.4 Visual Data and Treatment

Recalling Marchi's observation about the multimodal and multisemiotic nature of news media in today's society from Chapter 2, section 2.6.4, and also from section 4.3.5 above, we can see how taking a traditional CADS approach might only provide a partial insight into the representation of the LGBTQI+ community news media. The insights drawn from the triangulation of CADS tools are necessarily drawn from textual data, and as mentioned above, while the research design of this thesis primarily relies on textual data, an attempt was made to incorporate a supplementary visual element as a way of addressing this limitation of CADS. This thesis attempts to move beyond the norm in CADS, monosemiotic analyses, and account for our multimodal and multisemiotic reality. In this way, this thesis aligns with Jewitt (2013, p.3) who argues that, "a key aspect of multimodality is indeed the analysis of language, but language as it is nestled and embedded within a wider semiotic frame." The wider semiotic frame in this thesis takes the form the cover images of *GCN Magazine*, and specifically the cover images of the same issues from which the textual data was drawn. This data is comprehensively presented in section 4.4.2 below.

While corpus tools can be applied in a straightforward manner to text-only corpora, additional modal artefacts confuse matters (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.2, for a discussion around the analysis of multimodal data). As such, the following sections explore the field of multimodal analysis, and corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (CAMDA) more specifically, and outline the analytical procedure undertaken in this thesis to collect, process, and analyse visual data as a complement to the above more traditional textual analysis.

4.4.1 Corpus-assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CAMDA)

The previous section has established the importance of multimodal research, both in the context of mitigating the limitations of a purely textual CADS approach, as well as to account for the reality of how we consume news media – as multisemiotic informational input via multiple modes. The challenge then, lies in how we might integrate corpus-assisted approaches with visual analytical methods. Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.8) offer us a new topology in which to situate research of this nature. This topology brings together multimodality, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics, and they have termed this combination of approaches, “corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (CAMDA)” (Bednarek and Caple 2014, p.151). While Bednarek and Caple use terminology that is closely associated with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2005) social semiotic approach, as noted in Chapter 2, section 2.6.3, they do not apply its metafunctional approach, and nor does this thesis.

Baker and McEnery (2015) tell us that discourse analysis and corpus linguistics have developed a fruitful relationship over the last twenty-five years, but Bednarek and Caple highlight that despite this,

only a few studies bring multimodality into the mix (e.g. Adolphs and Carter 2013; Bednarek 2015). As yet, studies that combine all three— multimodality, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics— are rare. This is not surprising because such a combination of approaches is a highly complex undertaking.

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.9)

It is no surprise then, that there are a number of challenges that must be overcome in CAMDA. For example, the multimodal richness of news media makes it difficult to break data down into units of analysis. How can one examine the, “complex verbal-visual display of images, graphics, typography, words, and navigational elements that guide the reader both within and away from the story page”? Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.9) consider these challenges within the context of corpus linguistics.

How can corpus linguistics, which focuses on patterns across texts, be combined with multimodal discourse analysis, which focuses on patterns and relations between semiotic modes, often within texts?

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.9)

They posit that empirical analyses can take place both, ‘within-mode’ and ‘between-mode’, as well as ‘between-text’ and ‘within-text’ and argue through illustrative exemplars how it’s possible to analyse each semiotic mode separately, before bringing them together. This is the procedure that this thesis most aligns with. As the focus lies on the development of meaning between or across texts, rather than within specific texts, they call this type of analysis “intertextual CAMDA” (Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.11). For the textual element of CAMDA, they suggest the use of a variety of established corpus tools, which align with those described in sections 4.3.3.1 to 4.3.3.4 above, while for the visual component, they split visual analyses into examinations of “content” and “capture” (Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.17).

Within CAMDA, ‘content’ refers to what is being depicted in a given image whereas ‘capture’ refers more to the photographic technique of an image. In this thesis, we focus solely on ‘content’, as ‘capture’ is more concerned with the technical affordances of an image, which are not of relevance in this thesis, though future studies might consider how they could be. Further, an examination of the content of an image gives us insight into who is directly represented, and how, through a focus on the attributes that are attached to the subject who is present, the setting of the image, as well as any activity therein. By systematically observing and describing the choices made for this content, it is possible to interpret the values being foregrounded in the image, and by extension, the publication, when patterns in values emerge. In much the same way that we are interested in the cumulative effect of certain language patterns in the text data, we take note of patterns in the content of the cover images. Of particular import to this thesis is how the people,

places, and things within an image can include “abstract ‘things’” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2005, p.48).

Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.21) suggest the software Microsoft Office Access to analyse images (based on Caple 2009), however, in their example, over 1,000 images needed processing. Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.21) present a caveat to this choice, noting that, “the initial design, construction, and manual population of database fields are time-consuming,” and justify their selection as, “it is a very efficient way of collating the analysis of a large data set.” In this thesis, we are focusing solely on the 38 cover images of the issues from which the text corpus was compiled, and so, considering the relatively low number of images it was deemed inefficient to use this Microsoft Office Access. The software and observational categories used are both outlined in the analytical procedure in section 4.4.3 below.

4.4.2 Presentation of Visual Data

The visual database is comprised of the cover images of *GCN Magazine* from July 2017 to July 2021. These are the same issues from which the textual data was drawn. The approach of intertextual CAMDA requires a logical link between the text and visual data, and so it was decided that these cover images could fulfil this brief. It should be noted that the July 2019 issue had two covers, and there are a total of 38 cover images included in this analysis as a result. It should also be noted that the magazine suffered interruptions in publication due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result it has been unable to produce a monthly issue since March 2020. Each image also contains a textual caption. However, since the key aim in this section is to introduce the visual resources that contribute to particular constructions of the LGBTQI+ community, the decision was taken to restrict the analysis to examining the images only, without relying on any accompanying text to clarify the meaning of an image. See *Table 5* below for an overview of issues published from July 2017 to July 2021 that are included in this thesis.

Table 5: Overview of GCN Magazine issues published from July 2017 – July 2021

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2017												
2018												
2019												
2020												
2021												

4.4.3 Analytical Procedure

This section outlines the step-by-step procedure followed to analyse the visual data in this thesis. Inspiration is drawn from Bednarek and Caple’s (2017) CAMDA approach to visual data, discussed above, and also from Rose’s (2007) overview of visual methodologies, notably her advocacy for the combination of discourse analysis and content analysis. Firstly, the focus is on how the images were found, selected, and sampled. Then, the categories of observation and steps of analysis are outlined. In much the same way the textual data was treated above, emergent patterns in data are interpreted through the theoretical lens of the thesis, outlined in Chapter 2.

4.4.3.1 Selecting and Organising Images

Chapter 2, section 2.6.2, discussed the necessity of having quality and relevant material, and provided an overview of sampling techniques. As our interest lies in the representation of the LGBTQI+ community by the LGBTQI+ press, and specifically how this is presented linguistically and semiotically, the covers of *GCN Magazine* would appear to be an appropriate selection. An expanded justification for the selection of *GCN Magazine* as a data source more generally can be found in section 4.5. As there are a limited number of images in the dataset, this analysis will apply the analytical procedure to all images collected and will not employ a specific sampling strategy. In this way, this analysis differs from the typical content analysis procedure, which usually employs some

forms of sampling procedure owing to the typically large number of images being analysed. It is this researcher's belief that, by virtue of the relatively small dataset and by using the complete set of images from the timeframe in which the textual data was collected, the robustness and representativeness any findings is strengthened. Were we to only examine a selection of these magazine covers, then any insights gleaned would be limited in terms of how they potentially interact with other findings from the textual portion of the analysis. This inter-modal interaction is a key, and indeed, novel aspect of this thesis.

Once the images were collected, they were assigned a label based on the month and year of publication, for example, *2017 July*. This also aligns with how the textual data corpus files were labelled and organised in *Sketch Engine* and facilitates a situation whereby findings from the textual analysis can be cross checked with the visual data, and supplementary insights may be drawn regarding the materiality of a salient discursive features. For example, if 'marriage' is salient in the textual analysis, we might ask how this is represented visually in the dataset? Does it draw on traditional materiality or is there a new innovation? And if so, what is it and what could it mean? As mentioned, this research focuses on the 38 cover images of the issues from which the text corpus was compiled, and so, considering the relatively low number of images it was deemed inefficient to use this Microsoft Office Access, as suggested by Bednarek and Caple (2017). Instead, observations were recorded in Microsoft Office Excel according to the observational categories listed in the subsequent section.

4.4.3.2 Analysing the Content

The observational categories used in this analysis include; the represented participant, attributes, activity sequences, and setting of each cover image. According to Bednarek and Caple (2017), the first step is to identify,

who, where, or what is the subject matter of the image, be it a widely known famous politician, sports person, landmark or landscape, or an ordinary member of the public, or a victim of a negative happening.

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.17)

Once this is done and recorded in Microsoft Office Excel, our attention can be turned to the constituent parts, or attributes, of the represented participant/s. Within this category, clothing, uniform, jewellery or lack thereof may be significant, but also equipment or props in use by those present in the image. A focus on these elements brings us from the ‘what’ of the represented participant to the ‘how’ they are represented. The next stage is to consider any activity sequences within the image. Aside from clearly definable actions, such as singing, running, archery, or painting,

A person, for example, may be photographed being, thinking, or feeling (e.g. posing for the camera as in a portrait shot with neutral, positive, or negative facial expression and direct or indirect eye contact).

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.18)

Within this, we can further note the level of agency of such actions that is attributed to the people in the image. For example, are the represented participants being acted upon, or are they the ‘doers’ of the actions? This distinction is picked up on elsewhere in studies of visual data, for example, Van Leeuwen (2008, p.142) terms these “agents” and “patients” in similar contexts. A degree of interpretation is required here, but features such as eye contact, gesture, and body language can be good indicators of whether a represented participant is speaking or listening (Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.18). This facet of the image can be illuminating, for example, are represented participants getting married, protesting, or being arrested. Taken together, a more refined image emerges. Finally, the environment or context of the image should be examined. The setting in which represented participants are situated can grant insights into where particular news events are taking place, and may assist us in further refining our description of the people within the image. Once again, here we must employ a level of deduction, but we must be sure to keep any assumptions about setting within the realm of reasonability. By considering the

represented participant, attributes, activity sequences, and setting of each cover image, we can comfortably make reasonable assumptions. Bednarek and Caple (2017) give an example of the kind of observation that is reasonable to make.

a person who is represented in a laboratory as filling a test tube with a syringe is most likely interpreted as a scientist engaged in some experiment.

(Bednarek and Caple 2017, p.18)

It would not be appropriate, however, to go beyond this and ascribe meaning to the image that is not observable.

These observational categories allow the researcher to make qualitative notes about possible meanings of certain visual elements within the data and given the opposition between binary categorisation (often used in rigid coding schemes in visual analyses) and the queer underpinning of this project, this would appear to be particularly useful. For example, while it might be necessary to ‘count’ gender in one sense in an investigation of how inclusive the magazine covers are, in another sense this somewhat misaligns with the queer foundations of this projects, which seek to problematise gender in the first place. Thus, being able to capture whether a subject’s gender was ambiguous and comment on certain visual and material elements mitigates reductive nature of coding frameworks.

Once the observations were made, they were recorded in a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet which allowed for a number of useful comparisons and visualisations through tools such as Pivot Tables and Pivot Charts (see Aitken 2007). These tools were used to summarise, sort, reorganise, group, count, total and find the averages of the data stored in the spreadsheet, and facilitated comparisons between various codes. This made it possible, for example, to investigate how many images containing male subjects used a direct gaze, or how many images containing non-white subjects were also conflated with political activism. These types of multi-factorial comparisons made for more sophisticated insights

being generated. These findings are discussed throughout Chapter 5 and interpreted in Chapter 6.

4.5 Reflections on Methodological Issues

An important reflection from a methodological point of view relates to my own skills, competencies, and knowledge as a researcher which grew over the course of my doctoral studies. While this may seem obvious and inconsequential on the surface, I argue that it has a bearing on the thesis in a number of ways. The first relates to the fact that the data collection and analysis was conducted in two phases, reflective of the distinct data contexts, as described in Chapter 1, section 1.6. It is worth highlighting that learnings from the first data collection and analysis phase, consisting of the mainstream representations of the LGBTQI+ community, were carried forward to the second phase, focusing on community-led media. The effect of this is that different analytical tools took precedence at different points in this journey, with the earlier phases of the thesis putting more stock in frequency lists, and later phase, keywords for example. Additionally, this manifested in the framing of the analysis as belonging to the CADS tradition. Normally, in research that examines multimodal data, Bednarek and Caple's (2017) CAMDA approach would be the overarching framework, consisting of a corpus-assisted analysis of text, as well as a visual analysis of images. In this case, the multimodal aspect emerged as supplementary as it became clear that a shortcoming of the CADS approach was its monomodal and monosemiotic focus, which does not reflect the reality of news media. As such, CADS became the primary methodological framework, with CAMDA taking a secondary (though not less important) position. While it may seem pedantic to point this out, as both textual and visual analyses were conducted, it does also speak to the reality of learning to conduct research. As doctoral students, we may not learn in the most efficient or linear way. I include these reflections not to be critical of my own research, but to highlight, what I would argue is, a common and infrequently addressed aspect of

doctoral research. We grow as researchers during this process, and in showing an awareness of this growth, I aim to increase transparency and thus, the credibility of the research.

4.6 Ethics, Integrity, Reliability, and Validity

Although the data in this research were sourced from public archives and newspaper repositories, and there were no participants directly involved in the research, ethical issues still arose and my integrity as a researcher was nonetheless challenged.

The first of these issues relates to bias, objectivity, and the emotional distance of the researcher from the data. As a member of the LGBTQI+ community, and as someone who has experienced instances of sexuality-based discrimination, this research is necessarily personal and political. These factors combine with my academic knowledge in the field of language, gender and sexuality gleaned over a number of years of research, to shape my views on language, gender and sexuality accordingly. On one hand, the perspective of the ‘insider’ can provide valuable insights about the data and allow me access to the processes by which discourse is performing a regulatory function through the establishment of culture norms and social practices. Such processes might be extremely difficult for an ‘outsider’ to recognise. However, this insight must be accompanied by the ability to be reflexive and critical about my own positionality and subjectivity relative to the emergent issues in the research. In an attempt to address this issue, I wish to acknowledge my privileged position as a white, cisgender man. Relative to many members of the LGBTQI+ community, my life has been rich in opportunity and privilege, despite some experiences of exclusion and verbal violence. My attempt at examining representations of the LGBTQI+ community does not constitute an attempt at homogenising the community as a monolithic entity that can be studied as a whole, nor do I wish to imply that each member of the community experiences this representation in the same ways to the same intensity. In fact, my intention is to do the opposite, to highlight

the processes by which representation is taking place, and to show how the ideological underpinning of mediated discourses in the chosen contexts serves to further minoritise the already marginalised. I acknowledge that certain narratives are not mine to appropriate, but nonetheless, I feel it is important to highlight the plight of these groups, and transgender people in particular, who are under renewed attack from media across contexts. Relatedly, there is a danger of misrepresentation and a re-inscription of the harmful stereotypes that I am purporting to problematise. As such, I aim to be as methodologically transparent as possible so that findings are robust and may be traced and challenged where necessary. Further, I have included a variety of data sources and a triangulation of methods to increase reliability.

Another issue relates to privacy and confidentiality. While the data is publicly available, it nonetheless contains narratives and experiences that are deeply personal to contributors. At times, these contributions carry information about traumatic events in the lives of LGBTQI+ people both in Ireland and further afield. As such, I do not wish to undermine the vulnerability of these contributors, and while I am, at times, critical of the way the media (both mainstream and community-led) represent LGBTQI+ lives and issues, this criticality takes place at a discursive level. This in no way diminishes the courage of these interviewees, contributors, authors, and staff at *The Irish Times* and *GCN Magazine*, and nor does it question the intent of the content as they are ultimately creating space for and facilitating visibility for the LGBTQI+ community. I believe the LGBTQI+ press, in particular, has the potential to be a positive counter-cultural and disruptive anti-normative force, and in stating my stance on this, I aim to reveal my intent, which is to help foster a more inclusive and equitable community. As such, I aim to maintain a sensitivity in my critical account of the representational strategies that relay such narratives and traumatic experiences.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted how the application of queer inquiry to a methodological context results in a combination of methodologies are distinct in that they're disloyal to any one research method. Instead, they draw from various established traditions to achieve their ends. This chapter outlines this thesis' corpus-*assisted* approach which removes itself from the corpus-based versus corpus-driven binary and prioritises flexibility with the possibility for exploring discursive patterns based on both the researcher's intuition as well as the empirical evidence in the corpus. A variety of corpus tools were highlighted in the context of their usefulness in analysing textual data. Meanwhile, for the visual element of the analysis, a corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (CAMDA) approach is used. This visual analysis focuses on an examination of the "content" of the visual data by systematically observing and describing the choices made for this content. In this way it is possible to interpret the values being foregrounded in the image, and by extension, the publication, when patterns in values emerge. The final section of this chapter presented reflections on the methodological issues that arose during the course of the research and showed how the researcher engaged with issues of ethics, reliability, and validity.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

Having outlined the data and methods of the thesis in the previous chapter, as well as the specific analytical procedures for both textual and visual data, this chapter presents the findings of this thesis. This chapter is situated at the descriptive level of the emergent findings so that they may be considered and interpreted through the lens of the complementary theoretical frameworks of ‘disidentification’ and queer futurity in the subsequent discussion in Chapter 6. As mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.6, data from two sites is being analysed - one external to the community, and one internal. To that end, section 5.2 elucidates the findings derived from mainstream representations of the LGBTQI+ community (*The Irish Times*), allowing the researcher to access constructions of the community by the external ‘other’. Section 5.3, then, focuses on findings related to ingroup representations of the LGBTQI+ community (*GCN Magazine*), facilitating the analysis of constructions of the community by the ‘self’.

5.2 Constructions by the ‘Other’ – Mainstream Representation of the LGBTQI+ Community

This section outlines the findings derived from the application of the analytical procedure (outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.3.8) to the textual data taken from *the Irish Times* in the lead up to the Marriage Equality Referendum in Ireland. It identifies and describes the discursive strategies drawn upon in the debate and considers the underlying ideologies framing arguments both for and against same-sex marriage with the goal of understanding how the LGBTQI+ community are perceived by wider society. Differentiation emerges as a primary discursive strategy and occurs through (i) a ‘diminishment-enhancement binary’; (ii) the recontextualisation of discourse domains; (iii) exclusionary definitions of marriage and a strategy of non-phobic stance taking. These strategies manifest in three primary ways that position LGBTQI+ people as (i) ‘changemakers’; (ii) ‘threats’ to the

welfare of children, and; (iii) ‘inappropriate’ parents. I argue that, in order to make their argument, even pro-marriage equality publications have to rely on heteronormative discourses that reproduce the subordination of LGBTQI+ lives and experience, and that more transformative approaches to queer politics are required.

5.2.1 Diminishment-Enhancement Binary

An examination of the top 15 most frequent content words in the data reveals ‘marriage’ as the most frequent result. See *Table 6* below.

Table 6: Raw frequency of top 15 nouns in the Irish Times Corpus

Rank	Word	Raw Frequency
1	marriage	1,724
2	people	1,419
3	referendum	1,326
4	Ireland	887
5	vote	879
6	campaign	587
7	right	576
8	child	547
9	equality	493
10	same-sex	462
11	family	420
12	couple	419
13	issue	375
14	year	370
15	time	340

While this is unsurprisingly the top result given the context of the data collection, it merits attention nonetheless as the discussion of marriage is one of the primary vehicles through which attitudes are expressed in relation to LGBTQI+ people. As discussed in the previous chapter, frequency alone does not necessarily expose the ‘aboutness’ of certain terms, however, through a combination of concordancing and the Word Sketch feature, it was possible to do so. A close reading of the concordance lines of ‘institution of marriage’, ‘definition of marriage’ and ‘understanding of marriage’ (20, 20, and 19 concordance lines

respectively) revealed that only two examples claim that extending marriage as an institution to same-sex couples will have no effect on the institution of marriage itself, while the vast majority of examples suggest that LGBTQI+ people being allowed to marry will change marriage in some way on a fundamental level, thereby constructing LGBTQI+ people as the actor of that change.

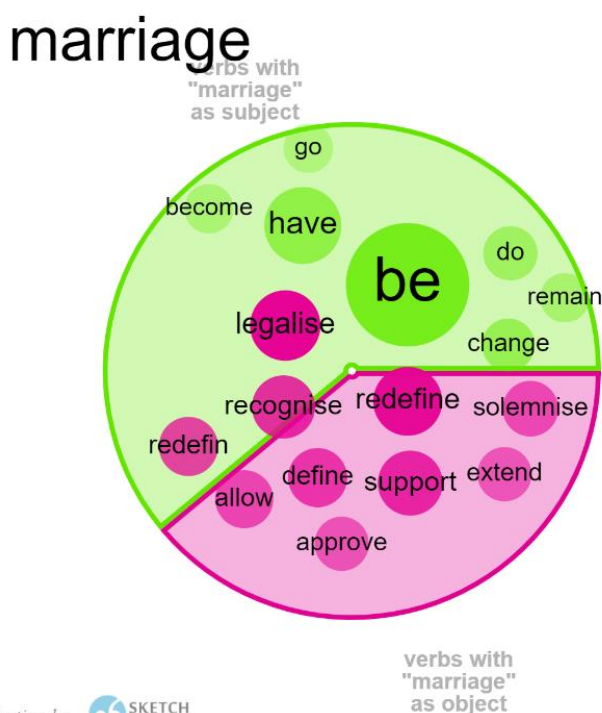
See examples (1) and (2) below.

(1) [...] we seek to embrace marriage and strengthen the idea of the family and our involvement in it. We seek to enhance the institution of marriage. We want to make the same vows as others do, for the same reasons.[...]

(2) For example, more undecideds believe same-sex marriage will diminish the institution of marriage than think it will enhance it.

Additionally, the Word Sketch feature reveals a semantic domain linked to this idea of change through verbs such as, ‘become’, ‘redefine’, ‘define’, ‘extend’, ‘change’. See *Figure 1* below, where the green segment represents verbs with ‘marriage’ as a subject and the pink segment represents verbs with ‘marriage’ as an object.

Figure 1: Word Sketch of verbs used with ‘marriage’ in the Irish Times Corpus



It is important to note that LGBTQI+ people are not represented as consciously enacting a change, rather it happens incidentally because of their apparent ‘different’ nature. This manifests along what I call the structuring dynamic of a ‘diminishment-enhancement binary’ in the debate. Within this structuring dynamic, the Yes side argues that extending marriage to same-sex couples will enhance or strengthen the institution, and the No side maintains that we are ‘breaking’ with human history which will lead to a ‘diminution’ of a ‘natural’ an institution ‘worth protecting’, especially for the sake of children. See examples (3) and (4) below.

(3) [...] it is, rather, a very definite break with human history and with the natural institution of marriage. We end up using the term "marriage" for something that it is not.

(4) Strongly contrasting opinions exist on the impact of a "Yes" vote: those in favour believe it will enhance the institution of marriage while a majority of those opposed regard it as potentially damaging and are concerned about the impact on children.

In other words, the discussion centres around the nature of the change to the ‘natural’ institution of marriage. The change itself is never questioned, only the extent and nature of the change, which is always situated along this diminishment-enhancement binary.

This finding that arguments against same-sex marriage are somehow tied to their perceived damage on the institution itself is reflected in research conducted by other scholars. Paterson and Coffey-Glover (2018), for example, investigate how the UK press represented same-sex marriage debates between 2011 and 2014. They highlight binary social categories that reinforce traditional social structures, especially through heteronormative lenses and reveal how the press used language to position same-sex marriage as either an acceptable inclusion within traditional marriage or a controversial departure from it. In a similar way to the results of this thesis, they also note how some groups were marginalised in the debate and draw attention to the absence of certain voices or agencies in public discourse. Similarly, Turner *et al.* (2018) highlight how opponents of same-sex marriage framed their stance not only as a defence of traditional values but

as a necessary reaction to what they perceived as an overreaching government imposition. By framing themselves as morally and culturally aggrieved, opponents could express implicit homophobia while cloaking it in the language of victimhood.

5.2.2 Recontextualisation of Discourse Domains

Arguments regarding marriage equality are often framed within biologicistic or ‘natural’ frameworks, which position heterosexual marriage as the norm, and which therefore implicitly class same-sex relationships as abnormal (van der Bom *et al.* 2015). Drawing on the concept of nature when discussing the rights of LGBTQI+ people is not exclusive to this thesis. Edwards (2007, p.249) explicates on the links between marriage and biology in same-sex marriage debates and highlights the argument often made that nature does not include same-sex relationships in its design and no biological imperative therefore exists for sex between women or between men. Van der Bom *et al.* (2015, p.117) tell us that biologically attributed differences are, “explicitly stated as a cause of inequality between gay and straight couples, thus rejecting arguments about sexuality-based discrimination by positioning it as scientifically prescribed.” This recontextualisation of scientific discourse to construct LGBTQI+ people as ‘different’ is apparent in example (5) below.

(5) [...] redefines marriage and effectively places the union of two men, or two women, on a par with the marriage relationship between a husband and wife, open to the procreation of children.

Overwhelmingly, the most popular link between science, marriage and same-sex couples is the argument about procreation. In addition to ‘child’ appearing in the top 10 results in the overall frequency list (see *Table 6* above), a keyword search also reveals the salience of the topic of procreation. ‘Surrogacy’ appears more frequently in the focus corpus than in the reference corpus with high keyness score of 478.44, and in fact, it is second only to ‘referendum’, which is unsurprisingly the top hit. ‘Human reproduction’ appears as a

multi-word key term with a keyness score of 64.9. The next section will examine this preoccupation with the welfare children.

5.2.3 Polarisation of the Welfare of Children and Queer Progress

A discourse regarding the welfare and rights of a child is also evident in the data. In some ways, it is linked to the issues of procreation and surrogacy discussed in the previous section, but a particular concern for the welfare of children, separate to scientific discourse regarding procreation, also emerges. See *Table 7* and *Table 8* below.

Table 7: Keywords in The Irish Times Corpus relative to English Web 2013 Corpus

Rank	Keyword	Raw Frequency		Relative Frequency		Score
		Focus corpus	Reference corpus	Focus corpus	Reference corpus	
1	referendum	1,326	106,250	5,297.093	4.675	933.63
2	surrogacy	182	11,858	727.052	0.522	478.44
3	Fáil	101	1,293	403.474	0.057	382.7
4	Fianna	113	4,964	451.411	0.218	371.32
5	Taoiseach	79	3,102	315.588	0.136	278.57
6	Yes	762	250,210	3,044.031	11.009	253.57
7	Gael	92	13,178	367.521	0.58	233.27
8	Oireachtas	61	1,326	243.682	0.058	231.19
9	Tusla	54	39	215.719	0.002	216.35
10	Enda	68	6,134	271.646	0.27	214.7

Table 8: N-gram results for 'child' in The Irish Times corpus

Rank	Multi-word cluster	Frequency
1	of the child	20
2	child who be	12
3	welfare of child	10
4	the right of the child	10
5	the child of	10
6	right of child	10
7	of child be	9
8	to do with child	8
9	for a child	8
10	do with child	8
11	the welfare of child	7
12	nothing to do with child	7

13	child will be	7
14	child do not	7
15	<i>interest of child</i>	6

The first notable result in the above tables is that ‘Tusla’, Ireland’s dedicated State child and family agency, rank in the top 10 keywords in *The Irish Times Corpus*. Additionally, close readings of the concordance lines of ‘welfare of child’ and ‘the rights of child’ were undertaken in order to establish the link between children, same-sex marriage, and LGBTQI+ people. Such a link is not necessarily self-evident in a corpus such as this, compared to, for example, a discussion of human rights. The findings from the close readings and N-grams results (‘welfare of children’ and ‘the rights of children’) suggest that similar arguments which privilege a mother-father parenting unit ‘whenever humanly possible’ are drawn upon in the debate. See example (6) below.

(6) [...] all other matters being equal, the welfare of children is best advanced by being reared in a home with a mother and father married to each other.

Married men and women are represented as different from two married people of the same sex in matters concerning the raising and welfare of children, contributing to the process of differentiation. Another dimension appears in this specific discussion concerning the welfare of children which extends to ‘future children’. When the discussion is not calling for the restriction and even banning of surrogacy, it requests the ‘freedom to deal with the new and troubling issues of surrogacy’. See examples (7) and (8) below.

(7) Government back to the drawing board. To insist on a better balance between legal recognition for same-sex couples and the rights of children to have a father and mother in their lives whenever humanly possible.

(8) [...] he said during a public meeting in Downpatrick that a child brought up in a homosexual relationship was far more likely to be abused and neglected.

Imaginarities, that is to say, discursive structures that represent hypothetical situations or possible worlds unrealised at the level of discourse (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012), are used to other and vilify LGBTQI+ people in the context of parenting. In other words, imaginaries are used to construct troubled hypothetical futures where same-sex marriage is legal and children are under threat. This finding is supported by van der Bom *et al.* (2015, p.125) in their analysis of implicit homophobic argument structure. Their data reveal that imaginaries are used to construct hypothetical future realities which, “conceptualise the consequences of the break between marriage and procreation by stating that there ‘could be unpredictable’ and ‘possibly risky results.’” Krzyżanowski (2020, p.506) tells us that, “more often than not, imaginaries are strongly ideological constructs and visions/conceptions of society enacted in line with pre-defined political goals aiming to reproduce and sustain power”, and so we must be critical of this feature in the data to prevent “moral panic” (Thompson 1998) and the “scapegoating” (Wodak 2015) of this vulnerable social group. In fact, children raised by LGBTQI+ parents have consistently been found across a large number of tests to be generally similar to children raised by heterosexual parents in relation to psychological well-being, peer relations, and social and behavioural adjustment (Dunne 2000; Patterson 2000; Patterson *et al.* 2004). But of course, such findings are unsettling for those opposed to same-sex marriage as it makes the othering of LGBTQI+ people much more challenging since they can be married and can be ‘good’ parents, i.e. ‘they’ are really the same as ‘us’. Thus, the category of ‘LGBTQI+ person’ (abnormal) as different to ‘me’ (normal) is under threat. It would be much easier for opponents of the marriage equality referendum and for the status quo if findings showed that children of same-sex couples were different.

5.2.4 Exclusionary Definitions of Marriage, ‘the Family’, and Non-Phobic Stance

Taking

The previous sections reveal a pattern which consistently calls for both a mother and a father in a family unit. Not only is this exclusionary towards same-sex parents, but it also reveals a hierarchy of ‘families’, where the conjugal, reproductive husband-and-wife duo are constructed as hegemonic, positioning alternative family units as lesser. Similar discursive strategies as highlighted in previous sections are used, such as the recontextualisation of scientific and religious discourses, and are relied upon to other LGBTQI+ people in this context, however the focus shifts to gender complementarity and ‘natural’ behaviours of men and women, as men and women, and also as parents. See examples (9), (10), and (11) below.

(9) There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.

(10) There are those who firmly believe that marriage is only for a man and a woman, and that families are units populated by mothers and fathers and the fruit of their loins

(11) [...] father has the primary responsibility to provide a home and its essentials, while the mother is the domestic centre of home and family life. The implication is that men and women "naturally" behave differently from one another in marriage and as parents [...]

The focus in the above examples is to define marriage as fundamentally about gender complementarity and this has the effect of building an argument against same-sex marriage through highlighting the biological advantages of a female-male (and more accurately, a reproductive) relationship. The effect of such a stance allows for the construction of ‘logical’ and therefore non-phobic opposition, which indexes rationality and reasonability. Such views are concerning as they are homophobic but allow the author and or reader to avoid taking an explicit stance regarding homosexuality directly. Further, the religious and scientific framing of the above examples mitigate any face-loss normally associated with openly explicitly homophobic statements. As a result, proponents of same-sex marriage are, “put in a reactive position, constantly having to argue against

seemingly objective assertions” (van der Bom *et al.* 2015, p.133). This must be challenged as this strategy rationalises discriminatory positions and ideologies masquerading as legitimate elements of public discourse. Krzyżanowski (2020) has explored this in the context of wider public discourse and race through his multi-step normalisation model, and posits that normalisation includes the creation and sustainment of what he terms, “borderline discourses” (Krzyżanowski 2020, p.503), and that these contain elements of radicality which are paired innocuously with seemingly politically correct language use and argumentation to become, “acceptable elements of public discourse.” We must once again remind ourselves that the discursive strategies identified here are also employed by people and organisations who are, in fact, arguing in favour of marriage equality. While on the surface, public discourse appears to be moving in an emancipatory direction, subtle features of the language used may be negatively affecting norms, behavioural patterns and perceptions of social issues and groups. It can be argued that families within marriage, whether same-sex or opposite-sex, occupy a privileged legal and constitutional position, and a social privilege follows this recognition. Chapter 3, sections 3.2.10 and 3.3.3, highlighted the traditional values of family as well as the discourse of assimilation, which is so prominent in Irish media, particularly so during the same-sex marriage campaign. It would seem that the position of marriage itself *as* a privileged institution and *as* the ultimate goal for ‘the couple’ remains unchallenged in this mainstream news discourse. See example (12) below for an illustration of this.

(12) We want to make the same vows as others do, for the same reasons. We want to live in the ease and with the protection which marriage offers.

Incidentally, it is evident from the examples given in the above sections that pronouns also play a role in both indexing identity and creating in- and out-group dynamics. While a targeted investigation of pronouns does not form part of the research design of this thesis, it is interesting to note that in many of the explicitly pro-same-sex marriage extracts

pronouns such as ‘we’ are used inclusively to index gay identity and create a collective identity which is centred around attaining legislative equity. Such a discursive feature creates hegemony and conformity of opinion within the LGB community in relation to same-sex marriage. In contrast, other extracts which are clearly against same-sex marriage refer to LGB people in the third person, thereby creating a clear-cut binary between gay people who want same-same marriage and opponents of the amendment. See Chapter 6, section 6.6, for a discussion of how this observation plays into the wider discourses of collectivity and activism in this thesis.

The next section examines the findings related to ingroup representations of the LGBTQI+ community derived from the textual and visual data taken from *GCN Magazine*.

5.3 Constructions by the ‘Self’ – Ingroup Representation of LGBTQI+ Identities

This section examines the linguistic and semiotic resources used by the LGBTQI+ magazine *Gay Community News (GCN) Magazine* between 2017 and 2021. It also considers how language interacts with other communicative modes, in particular imagery and semiotic resources, to produce a version of community constructed by this ‘insider’ group. By considering the below findings, or the self-representation of the LGBTQI+ community, it is possible to consider and critically evaluate the underlying ideologies framing such representations and constructions of this community. In the subsequent sections, a number of emergent salient themes are examined. As outlined in Chapter 4, these themes emerged from a combination of close readings, wordlists, keyword and testing, concordance and collocation analysis of the textual data (section 4.3.8), as well as a content analysis of the visual data (section 4.4.3). Of particular note are the keyword results, which reveal a number of salient emergent domains. These include; community infrastructure and nomenclature, identity labels, medicine and (sexual) health, marriage and kinship, danger, discrimination, stigma, and trauma, activism and inter-group

solidarity, and arts and culture. The below findings are further interpreted through our theoretical lens in Chapter 6.

5.3.1 Nomenclature and Community Infrastructure

There is a large body of keywords in the dataset that denote community organisations and agencies that exist within and for the LGBTQI+ community, as well as a set of keywords identifying individuals of import to the community. See *Table 9* and *10*, as well as *Table 11* and *12* below.

Table 9: Keywords in the category ‘Organisations’ relative to The Irish Times Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)
Organisations (LGBTQI+ community)	<i>GCN</i> (651.5); <i>Outhouse</i> (176.9); <i>NXF</i> (161.4); <i>TENI</i> (138.1); <i>LINC</i> (129.0); <i>NGF</i> (48.8); <i>Outcomers</i> (48.8)

Table 10: Keywords in the category ‘Organisations’ relative to the English Web 2021 Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)	Multi-word keywords (freq. score)
Organisations (LGBTQI+ community)	<i>GCN</i> (557.2); <i>NXF</i> (161.1); <i>TENI</i> (133); <i>Outhouse</i> (109.4); <i>LINC</i> (102.4); <i>Outcomers</i> (48.8); <i>NGF</i> (40.7); <i>Amach</i> (34.7); <i>NGLF</i> (32); <i>Solais</i> (31.8); <i>Glória</i> (26.4)	<i>National LGBT Federation</i> (45); <i>LGBT Ireland</i> (44.9)
	<i>RTÉ</i> (30.7)	

Many of these organisations are support services aimed at various groups across the spectrum of the community, for example, *NXF* (the National LGBT Federation), *TENI* (Trans Equality Network Ireland), as well as community groups, for example, *Outcomers*.

The represented participants in the tables below include activists, artists, pop-icons, and politicians, and in all keyword searches conducted, are all also members of the LGBTQI+

community regardless of other affiliations (with one exception ‘Putin’ which will be discussed in the subsequent section, 5.3.2).

Table 11: Keywords in the category ‘People’ relative to The Irish Times Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)
People (politics, activism, art, pop culture)	<i>Madonna</i> (114.8); <i>Tonie</i> (94.1); <i>RuPaul</i> (91.5); <i>Evgeny</i> (70.8); <i>Joni</i> (60.5); <i>Sara</i> (54); <i>Kylie</i> (54)
	<i>Putin</i> (46.3); <i>Cher</i> (41.1)

Table 12: Keywords in the category ‘People’ relative to English Web 2021 Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)	Multi-word keywords (freq. score)
People (politics, activism, art, pop culture)	<i>Panti</i> (126.3); <i>Tonie</i> (91.4); <i>Ailbhe</i> (71.1); <i>Rupaul</i> (69.9); <i>Evgeny</i> (56.5); <i>Shanley</i> (39.9); <i>Éirénne</i> (29.4); <i>Shtorn</i> (29.4); <i>Niall</i> (29.3); <i>Ranae</i> (29); <i>Joni</i> (25.9); <i>Leger</i> (25.8); <i>Madonna</i> (23.7); <i>Declan</i> (57.7);	<i>Declan Flynn</i> (38.5); <i>Tonie Walsh</i> (47.6)
	<i>Zappone</i> (88.4); <i>Varadkar</i> (80); <i>Warfield</i> (26.9)	<i>Leo Varadkar</i> (47)

It could be argued that this collective group of keywords represents a nomenclature, or a common language and understanding of community infrastructure, that can be accessed by readers with the required prior knowledge. See *Table 13* below for some examples of how this community infrastructure and nomenclature exist primarily as an invisible network. We can infer from close readings that we are supposed to already know who these people are, and what these organisations do. While it’s possible to ascertain the purpose and background of some of these organisations based on the context, we are not invited to engage with them. Instead of being presented as a support available we are most frequently given updates and news about them.

Table 13: Concordances of 'NXF', 'Outhouse', 'Solais', 'Tonie', and 'Panti' in the GCN

Magazine Corpus

Left Context	Keyword	Right Context
As it enters middle-age,	NXF	can rightly claim an illustrious heritage. Long may it continue.
From their early beginnings to the present day, the	NXF	have wholeheartedly embraced change, celebrated diversity, and developed platforms so everyone can feel visible in
's a mixture of the text and the songs in a very simple way," he says. "It's a really informal event over three nights in	Outhouse.	All of the original performers will be there." The show, Millar maintains, is an antidote to the exclusion people
Through both users of	Outhouse	and preliminary research on migrant and refugee LGBT+ populations here, the need to provide a self-organised safe
and it's increasingly frustrating to see Teach	Solais	being denied this same funding. There is a huge LGBT+ community all across Ireland that deserves similar
Members of the public who wish to support the campaign to save Teach	Solais	are also invited and encouraged to contact their own local representatives to ask them to pledge their support.
For most of its existence it has been curated by the legendary	Tonie	Walsh, and as it grew to a considerable size the question of where to house it became a concern for the NLGF. Back to the
that the Irish Government could not be seen to be condoning "criminal acts	Tonie	". is quoted in media reports from the time as condemning the archaic laws in question and expressing confidence that they
For starters, tell us who your queer icon is and why? It's	Panti.	Her speech at the Abbey was so moving and so true, and for everything Rory has done to fight oppression - he's brilliant.
no less, who says it's been used to oppress trans people for so long, it shouldn't be thrown around as a joke. But	Panti,	having been criticised for this before, had said from then on she'd only use it when referring to herself,

Interestingly, in the analysis of the visual data, only 1 of 38 magazine covers included any explicit or material reference to community organisations, and just 7 of 38 covers included a prominent community member. These 7 people represented on the cover of the magazine require an intertextual knowledge to identify, positioning this community infrastructure and nomenclature primarily as an invisible network. See *Appendix 8* and *Appendix 9* for full coding tables.

5.3.2 Activism and the Burden of Community

It has been found that the 21st century has been marked by an increased number of protests and social revolt relative to other temporalities (Ortiz *et al.* 2022). The findings of this thesis suggest that there has been an increasing number of calls to action by *GCN Magazine* within the timeframe that this data was collected (2017-2021). The keywords that fall into this domain are presented in the *Table 14* and *Table 15* below.

Table 14: Keywords in the category ‘Activism and Inter-group Solidarity’ relative to The Irish Times Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)
Activism and Inter-group Solidarity	<i>asylum</i> (165.2); <i>seeker</i> (112.2); <i>Roma</i> (73.4); <i>Chechnya</i> (61.8); <i>refugee</i> (52.7); <i>Russian</i> (51.4); <i>surrogacy</i> (48.4);

Table 15: Keywords in the category ‘Activism and Inter-group Solidarity’ relative to English Web 2021 Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)	Multi-word keywords (freq. score)
Activism and Inter-group Solidarity	<i>activism</i> (28.3); <i>decriminalisation</i> (87.6); <i>referendum</i> (34);	<i>gender recognition</i> (44); <i>gay right</i> (39.9); <i>direct provision</i> (189.7);

This politicisation of the LGBTQI+ community as a monolithic political entity is worth further analysis, as the data reveals that this group is not only engaging with issues that directly affect the community itself, but also adopting the political and social issues affecting other groups. See for example, ‘asylum seeker’, ‘refugee’, ‘Roma’, and ‘surrogacy’. Historically, the goals of this activism have been fighting for recognition, political parity, and social inclusion. This data suggests that a preoccupation with disruptive power is still prevalent today in addition to a growing awareness that queer politics are not discreet from the intersectional nature of institutional and structural oppression. Often, close readings reveal an awareness of the compounding nature of discrimination, particularly at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and, notably, displacement. See *Table 16* below.

Table 16: Concordances of ‘asylum seekers’, ‘Roma’, and ‘refugee’ in the GCN Magazine Corpus

Left Context	Keyword	Right Context
social security, the ability to cook their own food, or access to proper education and mental health services. LGBT+ asylum seekers	Asylum seekers	who arrive into this system are especially vulnerable to further serious oppression and isolation, and they have no
and change of address, a collective formed to organise activities	Asylum seekers	and refugees to make them feel part of the community.
, and they didn't always feel that they could engage with services. I think this links very much to the experience of LGBT	Roma	and the extra barriers they face. If you think of the supports that somebody may need to come out, or if they have come out,
, and she tells the story of how she and her partner chose to live openly. "Although we are two barely-educated	Roma	women living in quite bad conditions, we dared ask to be recognised as a same-sex family," she says. "Apart from being
standards, the food is unhealthy and the living conditions abysmal. There are alternative solutions. The Irish	Refugee	Council (IRC) have conducted research into ways other countries negotiate some of the reception facilities, there

. This is particularly evident to those people living here who need supports urgently; LGBT+ asylum seekers,	Refugee	and migrants - a minority within a minority whose living situations can render individuals isolated and silent.
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This is also evident in an explicit way on the covers of the magazine whereby images contain references to ‘rebellion’, ‘revolt’, and ‘fighting back’ occur alongside commentary on a variety of social and political issues such as asylum-seeking conditions, political regimes inside and outside of Ireland, and bodily autonomy to name a few. See *Appendix 8* and *Appendix 9* for full coding tables of visual data and *Figures 2* to *5* on the following pages.

Figure 3: GCN Magazine Cover: January 2019



Figure 4: GCN Magazine Cover: June 2018



Figure 5: GCN Magazine Cover: September 2019



27 of the 38 covers examined contain either implicit or explicit references to activism, and interestingly there are a number of common modes of representation from a material perspective that present a very particular form of activism. Recalling Bednarek and Caple's (2017) instruction to identify both the represented participants as well as their attributes and environment, we see that political pins, handmade signs, graffiti, spray paint, raised fists, and placards are present in such images, suggesting that change is only

achievable through bottom-up campaigning and resistance. Further, young people and the older generation are more frequently conflated with engagement with activist causes. The effect of this is that it situates changemaking in the realm of the future and past respectively. On one hand this could be read as disempowering those living in the present, while on the other, it could portray changemaking as an integral part of the queer experience. *Figures 6 to 9* below illustrate this.

Figure 6: GCN Magazine Cover: May 2018



Figure 7: GCN Magazine Cover: April 2018



Figure 8: GCN Magazine Cover: November 2019



Figure 9: GCN Magazine Cover: November 2018



Another political and social issue that the magazine pays particular attention to is the political regime in the Russian Federation – although this is very much discussed insofar as it affects the LGBTQI+ communities there. ‘Chechnya’, ‘Russian’, ‘Putin’, ‘Evgeny Shtorn’ (a prominent LGBTQI+ activist in Ireland who fled the Russian Federation and sought asylum in Ireland) are all keywords. In fact, ‘Putin’ is the only keyword representing an individual who is not a member of the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland.

GCN Magazine appears to take up the mantle of raising awareness of international events of import to other communities and attempts to give voice to a wider LGBTQI+ community outside Ireland, through both dedicated articles interviewing refugees, but also through a more dispersed discussion of the topic across the corpus. Parallel to this, the ‘far-right’ is presented as a ‘malicious threat’ to the LGBTQI+ community, which is constructed by *GCN Magazine* as politically homogenous and almost revolutionary in nature.

Nonetheless, there appears to be an asymmetry to the types of issues that are given precedence within this politicisation and discourse of solidarity. While the political regimes and issues focused on by the magazine are worthy of critique, it should be noted that these are not geographically and contextually specific happenings, and many of the ‘atrocities’ covered by the magazine have also happened and are currently happening in other parts of the world, but these are not mentioned. Further, the visual analysis also reveals that a predominantly white skinned represented participant is presented as the face of both the issues of import as well as the actors standing against these injustices. Of all cover images analysed, only 4 of 38 are dominated by people without white skin, and even when there is a group appearing, the vast majority of those present are white. See *Appendix 9* for an issue-by-issue breakdown. It could be argued, therefore, that ‘whiter issues’ dominate to the detriment of others, and that there is a potential commodification of difference and diversity occurring. These findings serve to illustrate the potential of alternative media ecologies to be actors of inclusion and/or exclusion, both in terms of the type and breadth of issues covered, as well as how these are visually reflected in semiotic choices. Nonetheless, this author argues that the move from LGBTQI+-exclusive activism to a more solidarity-based inter-group activism showing an awareness that other issues are not discreet from queer politics is a positive change that serves an inclusive future-building project.

5.3.3 LGBTQI+ Identity Labels

Unsurprisingly, there is a high keyness score for, and visibility of, identity categories relative to mainstream media, and general English corpora. See *Table 17* and *Table 18* below for an overview of these keywords in the *GCN Magazine Corpus* relative to *The Irish Times Corpus* and *English Web 2021 Corpus* respectively.

Table 17: Keywords in the category ‘Identity Labels’ relative to The Irish Times Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)
Identity labels	<i>trans</i> (213.1); <i>tran</i> (188.2); <i>queer*</i> (176.2); <i>non-binary</i> (136.8); <i>bi</i> (134.2); <i>gang</i> (95.4); <i>MSM</i> (86.3); <i>LGBTs</i> (67); <i>cis</i> (41.1)

Table 18: Keywords in the category ‘Identity Labels’ relative to English Web 2021 Corpus

Category	Single-word keywords (freq. score)	Multi-word keywords (freq. score)
Identity labels	<i>LGBT</i> (481); <i>queer</i> (218.9); <i>intersex</i> (154.1); <i>tran</i> (122.4); <i>non-binary</i> (89); <i>LGBTI</i> (88.4); <i>gay</i> (79.4); <i>lesbian</i> (76.2); <i>bisexual</i> (69.5); <i>LGBTs</i> (64.8); <i>trans</i> (50); <i>transgender</i> (37.5); <i>LGBTQ</i> (37.5); <i>cisgender</i> (28.9); <i>LGBTQIA</i> (25.9); <i>LBT</i> (25); <i>MSM</i> (24.5); <i>bi</i> (24.3)	<i>trans people</i> (161); <i>gay man</i> (121.4); <i>queer community</i> (99); <i>queer people</i> (91.1); <i>gay people</i> (63.9); <i>trans woman</i> (59.2); <i>trans community</i> (56.4); <i>intersex people</i> (55.5); <i>bisexual man</i> (52.3); <i>LGBT community</i> (52.2); <i>young LGBT</i> (50.9); <i>LGBT people</i> (47.6); <i>gay community</i> (47.5); <i>non-binary people</i> (42.8); <i>member of the LGBT</i> (40.8); <i>transgender people</i> (37.5); <i>trans man</i> (36.6); <i>same-sex couple</i> (36); <i>young tran</i> (35.4); <i>Irish people</i> (36.1); <i>people of colour</i> (35.5);

It should be noted, however, that while more minoritised identities such as ‘intersex’, and ‘non-binary’ are statistically salient relative to other corpora, they are not as frequent as more mainstream identities in the *GCN Magazine Corpus*. In fact, only ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, and ‘trans’ appear in the top 100 most frequent words in the corpus. ‘LGBT’ and ‘queer’

also appear however these have more flexible grammatical uses and are often used collectively. See *Table 19* below for the frequencies of the other key identity labels.

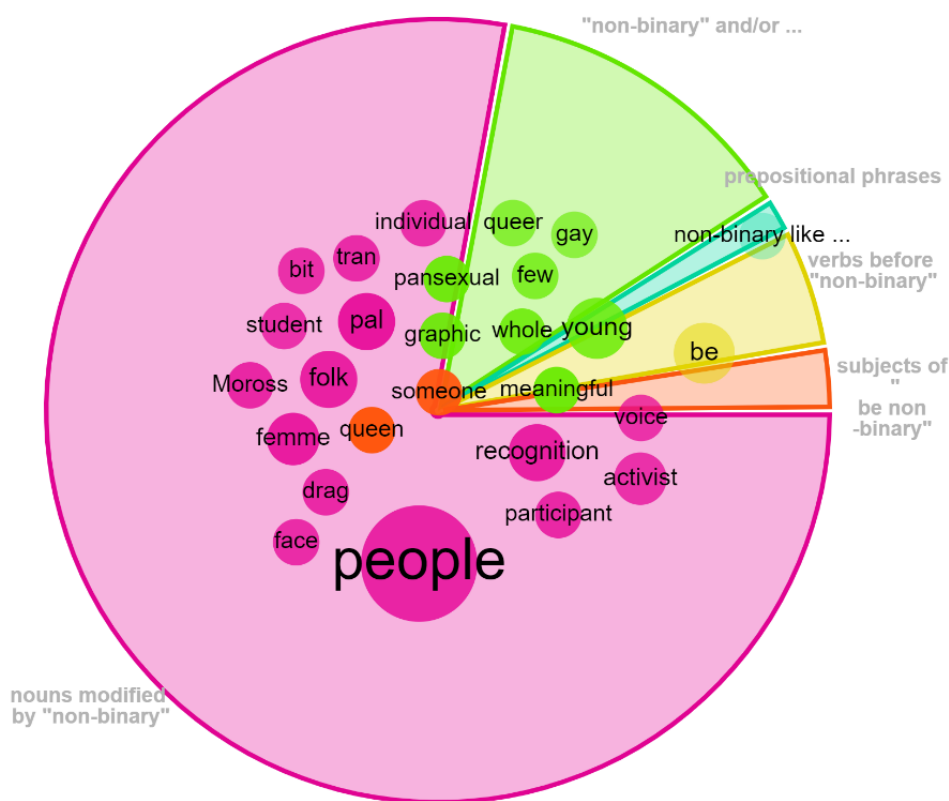
Table 19: Frequency of keywords in ‘Identity Labels’ category in the GCN Magazine Corpus

Keyword	Number of Hits	Number of Million Tokens	Percentage of the whole corpus
LGBT	2,432	3,144.99	0.3145%
gay	1,968	2,544.96	0.2545%
queer	1,224	1,582.84	0.1583%
tran	726	938.84	0.09388%
lesbian	551	712.54	0.07125%
intersex	193	249.58	0.02496%
bisexual	188	243.12	0.02431%
non-binary	105	135.78	0.01358%
cisgender	27	34.92	0.003492%

While the occurrence of the more minoritised identities in the keyword results may appear at first glance to be evidence of improved representation, it must be conceded that there is an uneven discursive framing of these labels upon examination of their Word Sketches as well as close readings of concordance lines. For example, if we examine Word Sketches of minoritised identity labels compared to more mainstream identities, we can see how starkly they differ in their grammatical and collocational behaviour. ‘Intersex’ and ‘trans’ are predominantly used as modifiers of other nouns, and exist within much more limiting frames of healthcare and activism as opposed to within a wider frame of existence as subjects themselves who experience joy, discrimination and so on. In the below figures, ‘intersex’ modifies ‘diagnosis’, ‘condition’, and ‘mutilation’, and ‘trans’ modifies ‘healthcare’ and ‘activist’.

Figure 12: Word Sketch of 'non-binary' in the GCN Magazine Corpus

non-binary



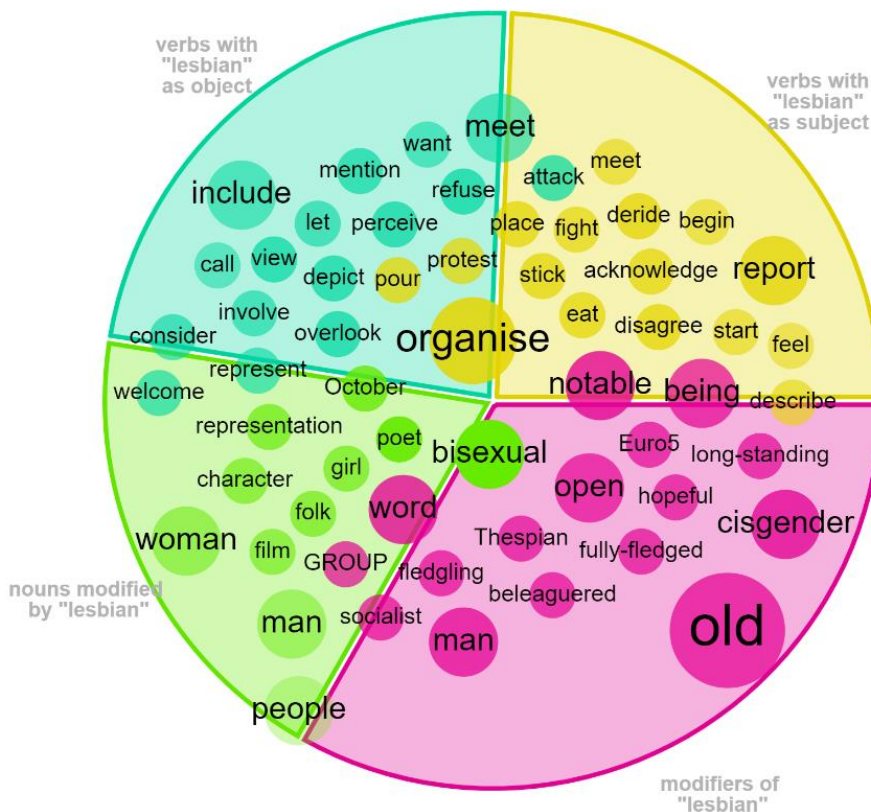
visualization by  SKETCH ENGINE

Although 'lesbian' appears in the top 100 most frequent terms in the corpus, it does not appear as statistically key in the *GCN Magazine Corpus* relative to *The Irish Times Corpus*, reflecting an erasure that has traditionally been in place in Irish society, and elsewhere. Nonetheless, a close examination of the grammatical behaviour of 'lesbian' reveals that, relative to the minoritised identities discussed above, this identity category exists in a much more holistic way. Verbs with 'lesbian' as an object and as a subject, nouns modified by 'lesbian', as well as modifiers of 'lesbian' reveal that this identity is constructed within a somewhat strained space. Verbs with lesbian as an object and subject include, 'overlook', 'refuse', 'protest', 'attack', 'fight', 'deride', and 'disagree'. Modifiers include, 'beleaguered', and there is also a sense that 'lesbian' is an identity akin

to a club, where membership is implied through collocates such as ‘long-standing’, ‘fledgling’, and ‘fully-fledged’. Though this discursive framing is strained, it is nonetheless more humanising than the minoritised categories above. See *Figure 13* below for a visualisation of these results.

Figure 13: Word Sketch of ‘lesbian’ in the GCN Magazine Corpus

lesbian

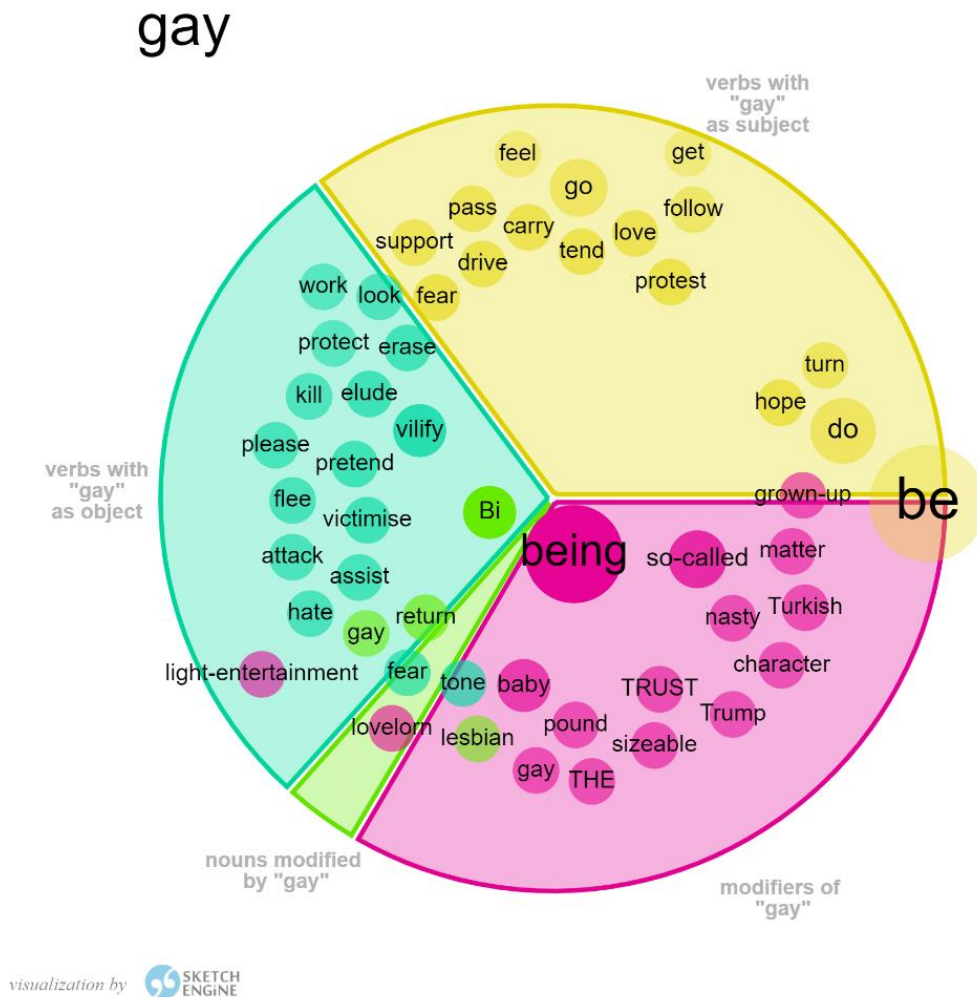


visualization by  SKETCH ENGINE

‘Gay’ evokes a similar sense of struggle, where, in the same grammatical categories analysed above, it collocates with the following terms: ‘fear’, ‘protest’, ‘nasty’, ‘hate’, ‘attack’, ‘victimise’, ‘flee’, ‘pretend’, ‘vilify’, ‘kill’, and ‘erase’. In contrast to the results for ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’ also co-occurs with a more positive semantic field, with results including: ‘support’, ‘love’, ‘hope’, and ‘protect’, although this category is somewhat less visible. See *Figure 14* below for a full visualisation of these results. Furthermore, it is

evident that the more mainstream identity categories are represented as having much more agency and are not grammatically separated from an affective existence.

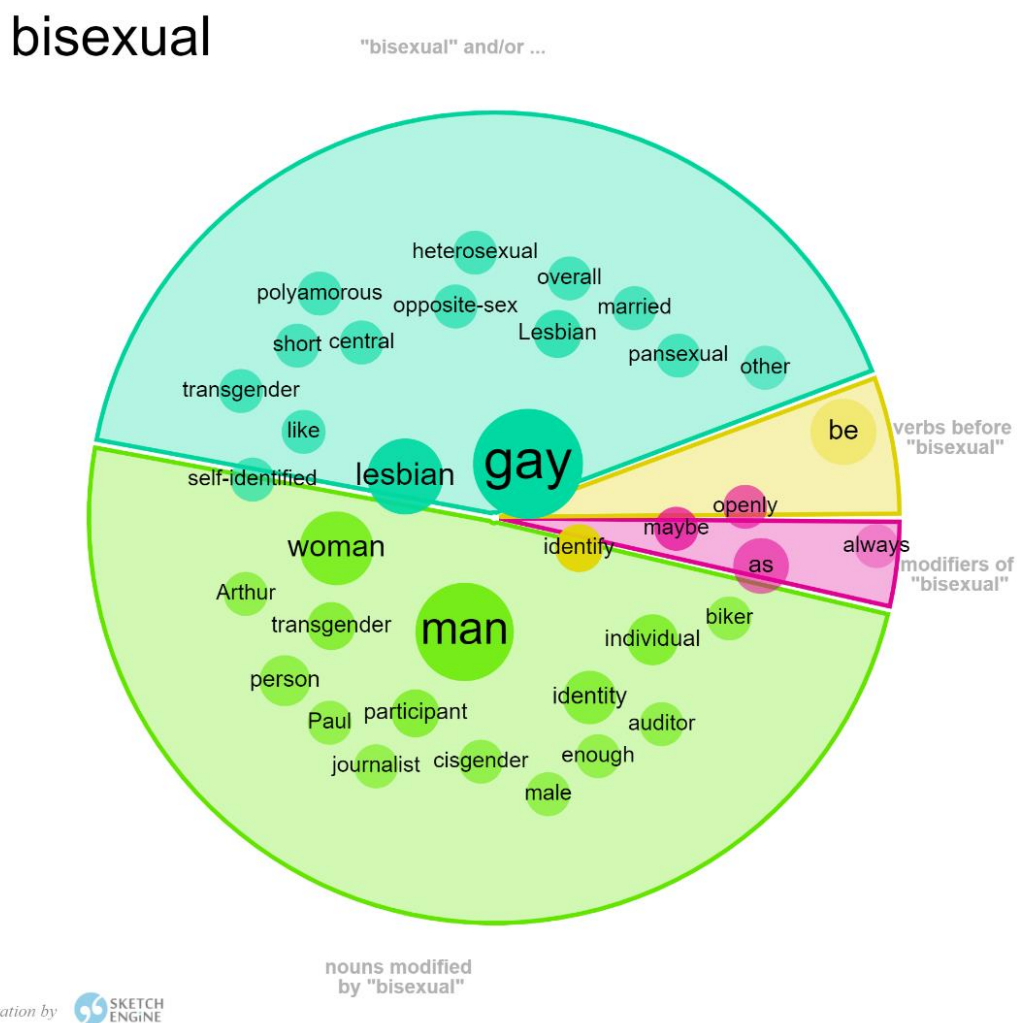
Figure 14: Word Sketch of 'gay' in the GCN Magazine Corpus



The keyword 'bisexual' collocates with a high number of terms in the 'bisexual and/or' category within the Word Sketch feature, and notably collocates with other identity labels and groups, for example 'bisexual and/or polyamorous', 'bisexual and/or transgender', 'bisexual and/or lesbian', and 'bisexual and/or pansexual'. In addition, and unlike 'gay' and 'lesbian', 'bisexual' is represented as lacking agency through a grammatical separation from verbs. 'Bisexual' has limited verbal collocates as a subject or object, and when we consider this in light of the 'bisexual and/or' category, it could be argued that the bisexual community is not given legitimacy as a community in itself, rather it only

exists as part of, or alongside other more powerful groups within the wider LGBTQI+ community, reflective of the historical bi-erasure in Ireland (Reid-Buckley 2023). See *Figure 15* below for a visualisation of the Word Sketch of ‘bisexual’.

Figure 15: Word Sketch of ‘bisexual’ in the GCN Magazine Corpus



5.3.4 Assimilatory and Queer Agendas

The data show that there is a possible reification and reproduction of homonormative ideologies in the magazine, exemplified by the publication of an annual ‘Wedding Issue’ where *GCN Magazine* supplies “a one-stop directory of wedding day info”, discusses the merits of various venues and wedding themes, and where suppliers are suggested for the “loved-up couples who enjoyed the biggest day of their lives.” Such a narrative is not perhaps what you would expect to find in a queer publication, as it places the ritual of

marriage, a tradition steeped in heteronormativity, on a pedestal. However, it should be noted that this traditional treatment of marriage does not occlude broader representations of fluid and less normative identity which also occur in representations of marriage. The wedding issue in 2019, for example, gives voice to a couple who are, “perfectly happy not to walk down the aisle.” As is evident in *Figure 16* and *Figure 17* below, non-traditional attributes often appear alongside traditional ones in the portrayal of marriage.

Figure 16: GCN Magazine Cover: October 2018



Figure 17: GCN Magazine Cover: November 2017



As mentioned, and to move beyond the visual and textual representations of marriage, *GCN Magazine* does also provide space for the blurring of normative gender boundaries and norms of expression. Recalling Kerrigan's (2020, p.163) assertion that queer visibility is governed by a structuring dynamic of a 'tug-of-war' from Chapter 3, section 3.3.2, we can see how the more traditional assimilatory force (represented by traditional kinship practice of marriage) is at odds with a more radical queerness. Often, however, much

intertextual or in-group knowledge is required to decode these queerer representations, which are often framed within pop-cultural and artistic domains, and so these particular representations are less accessible to a general LGBTQI+ audience. *Figure 18* and *Figure 19* below exemplify these queerer representations and highlight how the magazine creates space for both the assimilatory and the radical. As discussed in Chapter 2, the LGBTQI+ community is not homogenous, and as Mowlabocus (2021, p.6) reminds us, you can be, by turns, queer, homonormative, assimilationist, and radical, depending on the context.

Figure 18: GCN Magazine Cover: July 2017



Figure 19: GCN Magazine Cover: January 2021

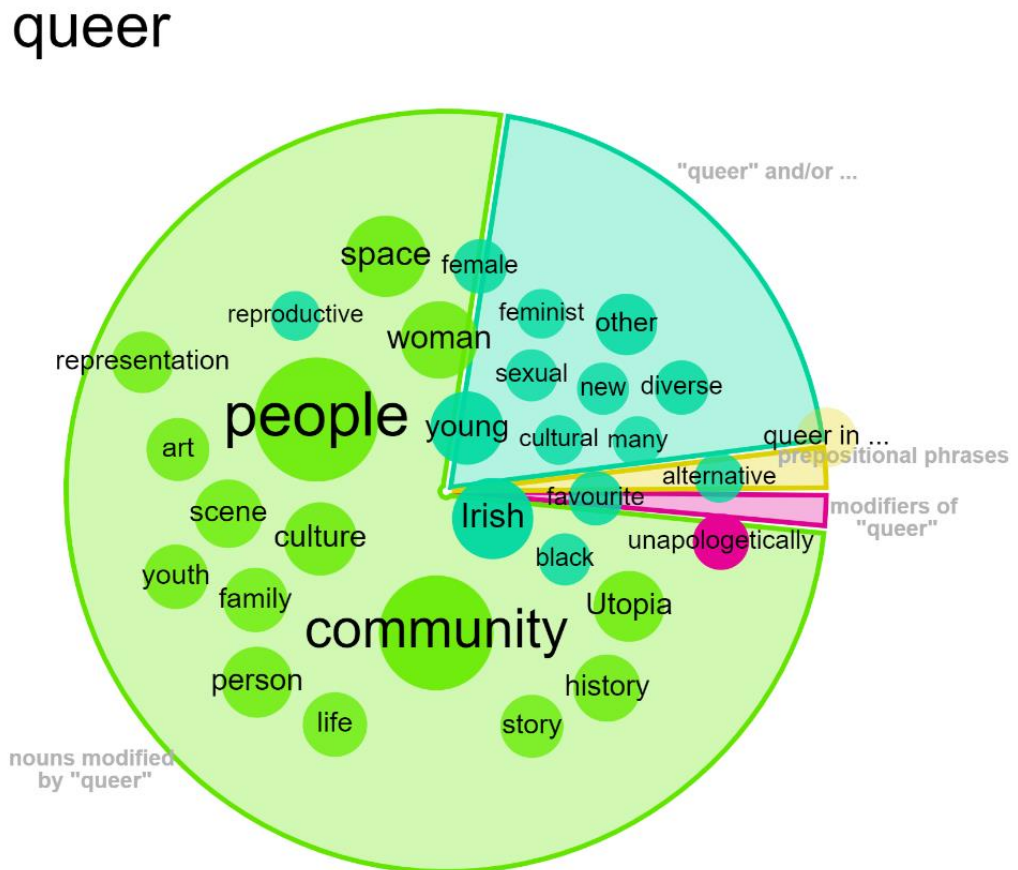


5.3.5 Engagement with the Arts and Culture as a Future Building Project

There is an engagement with the arts and popular culture in this dataset, however, relative to some of the other findings, it more dispersed and visible as discursive traces within other semantic domains, at least in the textual data. Visually, it is much more evident.

Textually, 'queer' collocates with 'art' and 'culture' as well as with various artistic subcultures such as film, performance arts, music, and indeed, queer 'culture' through collocates such as 'leather' and club nights. See *Figure 20* below for a visual representation of grammatical collocates.

Figure 20: Word Sketch of 'queer' in the GCN Magazine Corpus



visualization by  SKETCH ENGINE

Visually, this connection is much more explicit. The conflation of arts and queerness is not only limited to aspects of popular culture, but also with fine arts, and there are many references in the visual data to art and photographic exhibitions, arts festivals, as well as individuals within these communities. See *Appendix 8* and *Appendix 9* for full coding tables of visual data. That said, these references are often intertextual and implicit, requiring prior knowledge and recognition of the represented participants (see, for

example, *Figure 21* and *Figure 22* below, which are taken from a photo essay and photography exhibition respectively).

Figure 21: GCN Magazine Cover: September 2018



Figure 22: GCN Magazine Cover: May 2018



At other times, the magazine covers represent an art form in their own right (see, for example, *Figure 23* and *Figure 24* below). The attributes present include; leather, dramatic make-up, flowers, colours, nudity, confetti, tattoos, piercings, feathers and rainbows. These are common elements across the visual dataset. See *Appendix 8* and *Appendix 9* for full coding tables of visual data.

Figure 23: GCN Magazine Cover: July 2019



Figure 24: GCN Magazine Cover: October 2017



Additionally, close readings reveal a collaborative initiative between *GCN Magazine* and LGBTQI+ “artists, activists, and makers” called *Queer Utopia*. Within this initiative, creators of differing backgrounds and disciplines are asked to come together and collectively respond to the notion of a queer utopia through “bold imaginings”. While traces of this theme are difficult to identify robustly in the textual data, the visual data and

the initiative itself are worthy of discussion. Chapter 6, section 6.7, discusses this in the context of queer futurity.

5.3.6 Medicalisation and Sexualisation of Community

Statistically, there is a highly salient semantic domain related to medicine and (sexual) health in the data relative to other corpora (both mainstream media representations of LGBTQI+ people and a general English corpus). See *Table 20* below.

Table 20: Keywords in the category ‘(Sexual) Health’ relative to the English Web 2021 Corpus and The Irish Times Corpus

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
	<i>GMHS</i> (62.9); <i>HSE</i> (51); <i>surrogacy</i> (48.4); <i>HIV</i> (48); <i>undetectable</i> (41.6); <i>PrEP</i> (38.3); <i>STIs</i> (37.1); <i>untransmittable</i> (32.9); <i>STI</i> (32.7); <i>HPV</i> (30.4); <i>GHN</i> (27.8); <i>Mpower</i> (27.4); <i>pre-exposure</i> (26.6); <i>PEP</i> (24.7)	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	sexual health (104.2); HIV diagnosis (38.2); HIV Ireland (35.8)	
(Sexual) Health	<i>PrEP</i> (396.7); <i>clinic</i> (214.4); <i>HIV</i> (115.9); <i>vaccine</i> (100.6); <i>testing</i> (95.4); <i>lockdown</i> (94.1); <i>diagnosis</i> (92.8); <i>HPV</i> (91.5); <i>PEP</i> (82.5); <i>condom</i> (81.2); <i>undetectable</i> (76); <i>STI</i> (74.7); <i>pandemic</i> (73.4); <i>infection</i> (73.4); <i>transition</i> (67); <i>GMHS</i> (63.1); <i>virus</i> (61.8); <i>medication</i> (59.2); <i>COVID-19</i> (59.2); <i>dose</i> (55.3); <i>STIs</i> (54); <i>anal*</i> (50.1); <i>prophylaxis</i> (46.3); <i>variation</i> (46.3); <i>epidemic</i> (42.4)	The Irish Times Corpus

While the COVID-19 pandemic is a factor here, the majority of terms are unrelated to the pandemic. For example, the keyword ‘vaccines’ refers to HPV predominantly, ‘testing’ refers to HIV rapid testing, and ‘diagnosis’ refers to HIV diagnosis. While the framing of this semantic domain is unlike historical medical discourse which pathologised homosexuality itself, it is nonetheless still notable how prominent this discourse domain still is today in text produced by the community itself.

Table 21: Concordances of 'PrEP', 'STIs', 'condom', and 'anal' in the GCN Magazine

Corpus

Left Context	Keyword	Right Context
We would love to see services five days a week. The fourth day is part of our new	PrEP	monitoring clinic, which monitors patients who are taking PrEP they've procured online.
This walk-in clinic offers users information on how to get and use	PrEP,	along with a consultation with a supportive doctor who can answer questions about PrEP
the peace of mind of knowing I'd be protected from HIV. But most of the discussion about	PrEP	in Ireland has focused on cis gay and bisexual men. I still had questions
much more frequent among gays, gays are still attacked on the streets, rates of	STIs	are increasing once again and what about services for an aging gay population?
Results are delivered by SMS in six hours, and treatment for any	STIs	picked up by the tests is provided free-of-charge the same day. The clinic is so efficient
"In order to get your PrEP you go for an STI test every three months, so we're diagnosing	STIs	at a much earlier time, sometimes for the first time for someone that's never been tested
The notion that being undetectable will encourage HIV positive people to stop using	condoms	is yet again stigmatising, but glaringly removes all responsibility from the other partner.
can be seen as facilitating or encouraging a sexual choice not to use other protections such as	condoms.	We strongly disagree and recently discussed the comparison of PrEP to that of oral contraception
It will take some time, but with a combination prevention approach, joining	condoms,	PrEP, PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), and the knowledge that effective treatment prevents sexual transmission
Not content with that, it causes	anal	cancer and in men it causes cancer of the penis.
more prevalent in MSM compared to the general population - for example, rates of	anal	cancer are 15 times higher in MSM compared to heterosexual men.
She explained the different dosing regimens to me. If a person were to only engage in	anal	sex, it is suitable for them to 'daily dose' - take one pill per day.

Based on the above concordance examples, it is possible to interpret this as a discourse space that has been reclaimed and re-operationalised to educate and inform. It could be further argued that the calibre of sexual health services in Ireland is presented as proof of liberal or progressive ‘status’ of both the LGBTQI+ community and of Ireland. That said, there is a marked emphasis on the sexual health of gay men upon a close reading, reflecting other findings throughout this thesis, where gay men are given much more space than other members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Despite being one of the most salient categories of keywords relative to multiple reference corpora, this medical/health discourse is not communicated visually on the covers of the magazine, although the advertising in the magazine would appear to contribute to this discourse. It was unfortunately outside the scope of this thesis to also examine the advertising within the magazine. While the medical/health discourse does not feature in the visual corpus in any explicit way, bare skin, bodies, leather, and allusions to ‘kink’ are key elements of the visual corpus (see *Appendix 8* and *Appendix 9* for full coding tables of visual data). Given the plethora of information available on safe sex practices and space given to such discussions, it is not infeasible to read this as reinforcing the idea of ‘hypersexuality’ as central to identity and community membership.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of this thesis from both perspectives under investigation; mainstream representation of the LGBTQI+ community and ingroup representations of the LGBTQI+ community. The first of these perspectives yielded a number of insights, particularly in relation to discursive strategies used to frame the debate regarding the introduction of same-sex marriage. Differentiation emerged as a primary discursive strategy and occurs through (i) a ‘diminishment-enhancement binary’; (ii) the recontextualisation of discourse domains; (iii) exclusionary definitions of marriage and a strategy of non-phobic stance taking. These strategies manifest in three

primary ways that position LGBTQI+ people as (i) ‘changemakers’; (ii) ‘threats’ to the welfare of children, and; (iii) ‘inappropriate’ parents. This second perspective, focusing on ingroup representations considered how language interacts with other communicative modes, and identified a number of salient themes, including; community infrastructure and nomenclature, identity labels, medicine and (sexual) health, marriage and kinship, danger, discrimination, stigma, and trauma, activism and inter-group solidarity, and arts and culture.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Building on the insights and findings outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter moves to the interpretative level, and considers the findings in light of the theoretical underpinning of the thesis outlined in Chapter 2 – most notably using the analytical foci derived from the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009). The first part of this chapter considers how the choices of theories, methods, and data, worked together in this research to form an analytical synergy. Then, the complementary theoretical lenses of disidentification and queer futurity are revisited before each of them are treated in turn. Within each of these sections, findings from the previous chapter are considered in terms of how they might be considered as manifestations of disidentification or queer futurity (or both), and if so, the implications of this are also discussed. Finally, this chapter presents a model that illustrates how *GCN Magazine*, in particular, operationalises a productive form of queer futurity that allows it to construct, constrain, and enact perspectives and activities on its own terms, thereby operating as a system of rules and norms that governs the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society in relation to the LGBTQI+ community.

6.2 Analytical Synergy: Theory, Methods, and Data

Throughout this thesis, the various theoretical and methodological choices have been explained and justified. At this point, ahead of revisiting some of these frameworks to interpret the findings outlined in the previous chapter, it is useful to bring together some of these disparate justifications and discuss how the theory, methods, and data share an analytical synergy. While this thesis did not explicitly set out to test the usefulness of the combination of specific theories and methods, a novel aspect of this research is nonetheless the distillation of the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009) and its application to a set

of multimodal data via corpus-assisted methods. In light of this, omitting an exploration of the synergy between these foci would be a shame.

As outlined in Chapter 2, section 2.6, this thesis understands and uses the term ‘discourse’ on two levels. The first understands discourse as a term that describes different discourse types (e.g. news discourse, political discourse, medical discourse) and holds synergy with the CADS approach to discourse analysis because research conducted within this tradition places emphasis on these discourse types, i.e. news discourse, and investigates the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* (Partington *et al.* 2013, p.10). Here, the communicative function of discourse relates to how language is used to, “influence the beliefs and behaviour of other people” (Partington *et al.* 2013, p.5) within a specific discourse type. The second understanding of discourse relates more to the theoretical workings of the regulatory (constructing and constraining) nature of discourse at a macro level. In this way, it aligns with the Foucauldian perspective of discourse which highlights that discourses surrounding sexuality have historically produced and regulated various forms of subjectivity, through the normalisation of certain behaviours and marginalisation of others. Central to Foucault’s conception is the idea that discourse operates as a system of rules and norms that govern the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society, and so by adopting the perspective of discourse as mediated and constituting a nexus of practice, we can examine how a particular configuration of actions, rules, and norms achieve this regulatory end. Marchi (2021, p.584) hails the intersection between journalistic practice and journalistic products as the, “new frontier of CADS research”, and argues that, “CADS should foster an holistic approach that takes into account the complex interaction between production, message and reception.” By approaching the analysis in this way, it is possible to explore how individuals can resist or subvert dominant discourses, and therefore power dynamics, through counter-discourses and alternative practices. This holds particular theoretical

potential with the notions of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’ which encourage us to dissociate from current regulatory discourses and structures and articulate innovation and ‘newness’ in relation to what queer lives might look like in the future.

Chapter 3 showed how sexuality has traditionally been a secretive area in Irish history, and how a part of what facilitated the persistency of such secrecy was the lack of counter discourses circulating in the public sphere. Further, the contemporary history of sexuality in Ireland is a fractious one, where the LGB community has suffered from internal conflict as well as from external oppression. By engaging with the notions of disidentification and queer futurity, the veil is lifted on practices and cultures regarding the LGBTQI+ community. As suggested in the preceding paragraph, the core tenet of these complementary theories lies in their offering of a new way to understand how minority groups can negotiate new ways of being and doing. This is done through challenging hegemonic norms, a perspective which holds great synergy with queer projects. In a context where the pursuit of rights and legislative goals have frequently directed the actions of community members, and where visibility has been contested, the utility of disidentification and queer futurity becomes even greater, as it allows us to step away from such priorities and consider what an equitable and inclusive future could look like at a social and institutional level. Thus, analysing data gathered from queer news media, in particular, aligns with this core tenet. Finally, in Chapter 2, section 2.5, Muñoz (2009, p.1) asserts that, “Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity”, which seems particularly relevant considering this thesis’ multimodal approach, where the aesthetic, comprising of multiple modes (language and visual for example), is central.

6.3 Articulating Disidentification and Queer Futurity: Theoretical Framework

Revisited

In Chapter 2, section 2.5, the theoretical framework for this thesis was outlined, and the usefulness of the complementary frameworks of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’ were explained. If we recall, disidentification can be summarised as a strategy employed by marginalised groups to navigate and resist dominant cultural norms that do not represent or include them. This process involves neither assimilating into nor directly opposing these norms but creating a third space of negotiation and resistance, wherein existence beyond these norms can persist. Queer futurity, on the other hand, encourages a more active role in this process of resistance. It challenges the present status quo by imagining a future where queer people are recognised and celebrated. It seeks to articulate new social and institutional structures that are more befitting to a diverse queer community. It is a forward-looking approach that envisions a world of potentialities where queer lives and experiences are not just tolerated but are central to societal progress and understanding. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it argues that the future is queer and offers a powerful critique of the here and now, while offering hope and a vision for a more inclusive world (Muñoz 1999; 2009).

Within these frameworks, it was also noted that there are a number of potentially illuminating contexts that could be explored to investigate to what extent, if any, the mediated representations of the LGBTQI+ community in the data contain traces of radical transformative potential. If we recall, these categories are:

1. Mediated Representations as Normative and Disruptive Forces
2. Normative and Transformative Kinship
3. Spatial Creation: Safe Spaces and Community Building
4. Activism and Resistance: Deploying Disorder and Dystopia

5. Art and Cultural Engagement as Subversion

6. The Radical Potential of Re-operationalisation

The following sub-sections will each focus on one of these areas, weaving together the findings of the previous chapter with these and other elements of the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis. In particular, this chapter focuses on how the various mediated discourses in the data, which are linguistically and semiotically constituted, and multimodally conveyed, can be interpreted as either a normative or an anti-normative nexus of practice, or indeed both (see, Chapter 2, section 2.6.3). By doing so, the above analytical foci derived from the work of Muñoz can each be considered in terms of how they construct, constrain, and enact perspectives and activities, thereby operating as a system of rules and norms that governs the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society in relation to the LGBTQI+ community.

6.4 Mediated Representations as Normativising and Disruptive Forces

As previous sections have established, mediated representations of LGBTQI+ individuals, in both mainstream and community media, can either reinforce stereotypes or challenge dominant norms. In mediated contexts, acts of disidentification and articulations of queer futurity can be seen when media portrayals challenge and subvert stereotypes, offering more authentic and diverse representations of LGBTQI+ experiences. This section explores to what extent, if any, this occurs.

In Chapter 3, section 3.3.3, queer visibility in the Irish media was described as being structured within a ‘tug-of-war’, where a radical queerness is in contention with the homonormative ideal. Kerrigan (2020, p.162) highlights that this, “tug-of-war complicates any narrative of progress or linearity around queer visibility [...]”, and highlights that issues surrounding queer visibility, “do not neatly align into a conjunctural moment of things becoming better or create a narrative of progress; instead they require

a more flexible or queer approach.” This tug-of-war is reflected in the hierarchal nature of the LGBTQI+ community as represented in the data. These hierarchies are established in both mainstream and community media. In mainstream media representations, it is mainly cisgender gay men who are present, aligning with the historic foregrounding of this group’s agenda. The erasure of anyone who is not gay or lesbian from public discourse in the mainstream publication is not specific to this context. As Bachmann (2011) notes, marriage equality is gay marriage in all but name, and the discourse centred around cisgender gay men and to a lesser extent, lesbian women. The more marginalised members of the LGBTQI+ community are effectively absent from the mainstream data. This has also been shown to be true in other mediated discourse domains, for example, in television debates.

Mainstreaming and respectability politics shaped the social media content produced and the ways in which gays and lesbians were framed in television debates. This was evident when the marriage-equality campaign forwarded white, cisgender gay male couples and, to a lesser extent, cisgender white lesbians. This was a deliberate representational strategy for the campaign, with the aim of making Ireland’s gay community palatable to a broad audience, but it was retroactively criticised for its exclusionary tendencies.

(Kerrigan 2020, p.161)

Representations of the LGBTQI+ community also appear affected by these mainstreaming and respectability politics, though it must be acknowledged that *GCN Magazine* presents a more nuanced community and gives voice to less mainstream identities (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.3). ‘Gay’, ‘lesbian’, and to a lesser extent ‘trans’, people are still foregrounded, with the visuality of the magazine emphasising cisgendered whiteness. See *Appendix 8* and *Appendix 9* for full coding tables of visual data.

Chapter 5, section 5.3.3, highlighted the keyword category of ‘Identity Labels’ in community-led media representations of LGBTQI+ people, and in particular, outlined the grammatical behaviour of the various groups under the LGBTQI+ umbrella. It was noted that while the more marginalised identities, such as ‘intersex’ and ‘non-binary’, are statistically salient relative to other corpora, they are not as frequent as more mainstream

identities in the *GCN Magazine Corpus*, and nor do they behave in the same way from a lexico-grammatical perspective. Chapter 5 highlighted that ‘intersex’ and ‘trans’ are predominantly used as modifiers of other nouns, and exist within much more limiting frames of healthcare and activism as opposed to within a wider frame of existence as subjects themselves who experience joy, discrimination and so on. We saw how ‘intersex’ modifies ‘diagnosis’, ‘condition’, and ‘mutilation’, and ‘trans’ modifies ‘healthcare’ and ‘activist’. While increased visibility of intersex and trans issues can be lauded, we must nevertheless be critical about the dehumanising effect this discursive framing has on these groups. Bisexual representation, though less limited than ‘intersex’ and ‘non-binary’, is not given legitimacy as a community in itself either, only existing as part of, or alongside other more powerful groups within the wider LGBTQI+ community, especially in relation to that of ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’, for example. Even though, as mentioned, some negative semantic prosody is evident in the types of verbs that collocate with ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’, it is nonetheless evident that the more mainstream identity categories are represented as having much more agency and are not grammatically separated from an affective existence. Viewing this hierarchy of identities through the prism of disidentification and queer futurity, it can be argued that more needs to be done in both mainstream and community media domains to diversify representation and expand discursive framing of these groups to build a more equitable future.

In terms of mediated representations above the level of the individual identity label, a number of patterns of note emerge that can be understood at a community level. As noted in Chapter 5, section 5.2.2, the mainstream media employs a strategy that recontextualises discourse domains to distance itself from arguments about sexuality-based discrimination. Often, this is done by positioning phobic discourses as scientifically framed. While the community-led media does not appear to do this, at least to the same extent, there is one highly salient discourse domain that is operationalised by the LGBTQI+ press, that of

medicalisation and (sexual) health. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the framing of this semantic domain is unlike historical medical discourse which pathologised homosexuality itself, however it is nonetheless notable how prominent this discourse domain still is today in text produced by the LGBTQI+ community. Perhaps such a finding is unsurprising, given that the foundation of the queer press in Ireland was intimately linked to the domain of medicine and sexual health (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.1, for a discussion of *OUT*, a forerunner of *GCN Magazine*). In any case, this preoccupation with (sexual) health still anchors the LGBTQI+ press today. While it is possible to be critical of the fact that representations of the community by the community are still drawing upon discourses that were, in another context, harmful and limiting, it is also possible to view this through the lens of disidentification, in that a discourse space has been reclaimed and re-operationalised to educate and inform. It could be further argued that the calibre of sexual health services in Ireland is presented as proof of liberal or progressive ‘status’ of both the LGBTQI+ community and of Ireland. However, it could be argued that this also amplifies the idea that LGBTQI+ people are hypersexual. This is a trope against which the community has frequently struggled. Further, bare skin, bodies, leather, and allusions to ‘kink’ are key elements of the visual corpus. Bednarek and Caple (2017, p.111) remind us that such visual elements can often carry more communicative weight relative to linguistic elements, and highlight how, “Enduring stereotypes may be visually represented in the typical costumes, actions, and attributes that are widely considered to represent a particular nationality or group.” Such a reading reinforces the idea of ‘hypersexuality’ as central to identity and community membership.

6.4.1 Normative and Transformative Kinship: Queerly or Dearly Beloved?

The sheer amount of research that has been conducted on the topic of same-sex marriage, as well as on discursive strategies within discussions of same-sex marriage (Findlay 2017; Paterson and Coffey-Glover 2018) reveals that this is a topic of particular occupation for

queer people and queer scholars alike. More adjacently, studies on family structures (Sokalska-Bennett 2017) and negotiating normativities in this sphere (Mackenzie 2023) have also been conducted, revealing a need to identify and understand kinship structures. This section focuses on whether the versions of kinship evident in this thesis constitute as either normative or transformative.

It is clear from Chapter 5, section 5.3.4, that in the mainstream media, rigid definitions of marriage, based on gender complementarity and ‘natural’ roles, are evoked in an attempt to exclude same-sex people from the institution of marriage. Not only is this exclusionary towards same-sex parents, but it also reveals a hierarchy of ‘families’, where the conjugal, reproductive husband-and-wife duo are constructed as hegemonic, positioning alternative family units as lesser while framing the value of women in terms of reproductive capabilities. This reification of normative kinship and essentialising of gender roles is at odds with Muñoz’s paradigms, and is inherently harmful to LGBTQI+ people, women, and trans people in particular. The community-led media, too, seem to reproduce the privileged social position of marriage, as exemplified by the publication of an annual ‘Wedding Issue’ where *GCN Magazine* supplies “a one-stop directory of wedding day info”, discusses the merits of various venues and wedding themes, and where suppliers are suggested for the “loved-up couples who enjoyed the biggest day of their lives.” Viewing the varied representations of marriage in the community-led media through the lens of disidentification, however, reveals a secondary, less assimilatory force at play. Indeed, there are both traditional as well as non-traditional versions of marriage presented by *GCN Magazine* (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.4), representing the, “friction between the assimilation of queerness to an acceptable homonormative alternative to monogamous heteronormativity versus broader representations of indeterminate variety and fluidity” (Kerrigan 2021, p.47). See Chapter 3, section 3.3.3, for an exploration of this tension. On one hand, we can see efforts by *GCN Magazine* to disidentify with normative structures

(traditional marriage) and invoke a new aesthetic that is less dissonant for LGBTQI+ lives, incorporating new traditions and *modus operandi*, however, on the other, if queer futurity encourages us to transcend existing structures and envision an existence beyond current systems, then this representation of kinship falls short. What must be considered then, is whether these apparently contradictory representations can, or should, co-exist, or whether *GCN Magazine* is, in fact, limiting its transformative potential as increased visibility of this ‘ideal assimilated gay’ performs a “regulatory function” in that it contains the queerer subject. It could be argued that despite the presence of ‘marriage with a camp twist’, queer visibility is concretely configured, “through a homonormative paradigm.” That said, this visibility, while sanitised, enables, “cultural scripts to emerge pertaining to the challenges still remaining” for the LGBTQI+ community. Mehta (1999, p.69) argues that subjects construct their subjectivities “in terms of multiple, shifting, and potentially contradictory subject positions, which individuals take up through engagement with a range of discourses and social practices” and Mowlabocus (2021, p.6) claims that you can be, by turns, queer, homonormative, assimilationist, and radical, depending on the context. Adopting this perspective frames *GCN Magazine*’s representation of this version of marriage more positively.

In any case, both mainstream and LGBTQI+ media align with the view of marriage as a privileged institution and marriage as the ultimate goal for ‘the couple’ remains unchallenged in any meaningful way. It should be acknowledged, however, that this finding is at least partly a consequence of the research design; whereas the mainstream news data was gathered with deliberate emphasis on how marriage equality was discussed – both in terms of the sampling method and the time period chosen – the *GCN Magazine* data was from a longer period and considered the full range of topics discussed during that time. The narrowing of the data collection parameters in relation to *The Irish Times* inevitably resulted in this narrower framing of LGBTQI+ concerns. Nonetheless, this

unchallenged status of marriage calls to mind Foucault's discussion of the biopolitical state which seeks to exert power over the lives of its subjects. Foucault (1981) argues that we only tend to notice power when it occurs negatively, or as discursive prohibition, censorship, and repression. In the context of this thesis, the global struggle for legislative rights surrounding same-sex marriage, of which Ireland's story is among the first, would suggest that we fail to see power as power in its constitutive form. 'Gay politics' now concerns itself with attaining rights, laws and amending constitutions to explicitly refer to sexual orientations, but as Butler (2004) puts it, what is actually happening is that racially and class privileged same-sex couples are situating themselves closer to the heterosexual norm rather than affirming their transgression of that norm, a transgression that Muñoz also desires. The resulting so-called homonormativities, or the 'preferred' ways to be and act as an LGBTQI+ person, have caused tension between members of LGBTQI+ communities and are entrenched in the discussions within this dataset. It could be argued that Foucault's biopolitical state is expanding its borders to include those it previously ostracised. Thus, what we can observe is discourse of 'tolerance' that stretches acceptability but does not disturb or change the status quo, as it is LGBTQI+ people who need to do the work to conform.

In the mainstream media in particular, it is possible to argue that the symbol of the heteronormative 'family' is potentially a means of driving a discursive strategy of differentiation, using 'the welfare of children' as a vehicle to do so. Moreover, I agree with Edelman (2004) who contends the political uses of 'the child', and what they call "reproductive futurity". They also maintain that conventional Western politics tend to be grounded in the idea of 'making the future a better place', where the child acts as a symbolic image of that future. In the mainstream data in particular, LGBTQI+ people are symbolically and linguistically separated from the act of reproduction, and therefore they are positioned as a threat to the child, and to the future to which the child belongs. As

Edelman (2004, p.3) says, “queerness names the site of those not fighting for children”, and queerness is positioned as a “relentlessly narcissistic, antisocial, and future-negating drive.” Biblarz and Savci (2010) call into question whether ‘the family’ is an adequate term given the plurality of kinship that exists today. They state that,

some scholars of the family have been pushing for a recognition of the plurality of kinship and familial arrangements that people have (and calling for the use of the term “families” instead of “the family”), but critiques coming from queer studies question whether “queer” and “family” are compatible concepts at all.

(Biblarz and Savci 2010, p.491)

Instead of trying to seek recognition within an existing order that places LGBTQI+ people in opposition to ‘the future’ as symbolised by ‘the child’, a refutation of that very order might be required. In the context of imagining what type of new social order LGBTQI+ people might belong to on equal terms with heterosexual people, Halberstam (2005) highlighted that LGBTQI+ people and their lives often fall outside of “heteronormative time.” In other words, LGBTQI+ temporality exists outside of a birth-marriage-reproduction-death sequence which results in the trapping of LGBTQI+ lives in an extended adolescence from a heteronormative perspective (given that marriage and reproduction are often seen as important steps into adulthood). The discourses drawn upon in this data lacked an exploration of the symbolic and ideological implications for LGBTQI+ subjects of the deeply entrenched symbolic place held by ‘the family within marriage’. It would appear that imaginaries are used to incite moral panic and polarise two apparently competing ideological positions; recognition for same-sex couples on one hand, and the rights of children on the other. These issues are constructed as mutually exclusive, where the rights and welfare of children are under threat from queer social progress. This type of representation of LGBTQI+ people runs in absolute opposition to the type of imagining encouraged by Muñoz's concept of queer futurity, but nonetheless shows the potential power of imaginaries. This notion is further explored in section 6.8 below.

6.5 Spatial Creation: Safe Spaces and Community Building

We can infer from Muñoz that safe spaces and community building initiatives provide essential environments for disidentification and future building innovation to flourish. These spaces offer alternatives to mainstream environments, structures, and institutions and foster a sense of belonging and support for those who might face discrimination or alienation in the broader society. Moreover, given the challenges faced by queer people in occupying heterosexual spaces, and the ongoing heterosexualisation of queer spaces (see, for example, Casey 2004), such an endeavour becomes central to a community's health and ability to grow.

Chapter 5, section 5.3.1, highlights a large group of keywords in the community-led media data that could be considered as representative of a nomenclature, or a common language and understanding of community infrastructure, that can be accessed by readers with the required prior knowledge. These spaces offer inclusive alternatives to mainstream social norms and foster a sense of belonging and support for those who might face discrimination or alienation in the broader society. Moreover, nomenclature constitutes an ingroup knowledge that is accessible only to those who have relevant intertextual information and reference points. On one hand, this could be viewed as a type of future building project, whereby a nexus of supports, networks, and services are written into existence for an imagined group of beneficiaries. However, on the other hand, we must consider that not everyone has access to the knowledge, and by extension access to this imagined community infrastructure. It is also interesting to note that, by virtue of the fact that there are no organisations or figures mentioned in the keyword results who are not directly tied to the LGBTQI+ community, it could be argued that the community is attempting to operate outside of the current structure of society. While various individuals and groups in Irish society make decisions that affect the community, the magazine does not give them voice. In one sense, this is potentially transformative as the magazine is

disassociating (or disidentifying) with the (hetero-)normative framework of mainstream society in favour of establishing its own infrastructure and modes of operation, but on the other, it could be said that this is somewhat naïve and not entirely useful, as LGBTQI+ people do not solely exist within queer spheres, and this potentially disregards the obligatory engagement with mainstream society and its structures that members of the LGBTQI+ community must undertake on a daily basis. Inevitably, politics, national and international events, and the actions of individuals within mainstream society will have an effect on queer lives, and so, the magazine's lack of engagement with these domains would appear to separate the LGBTQI+ community from mainstream society and suggest that it exists within a vacuum, disregarding aspects of LGBTQI+ peoples' identities that intersect with other domains of society. In this way, the magazine has an essentialising effect on the lives of LGB people, limiting them to their sexual identity, instead of celebrating LGB lives as lives. As mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.5.2, the term LGB is sometimes used instead of the LGBTQI+ initialism to render the discussion more accurate. In this case, non-heterosexuality is the focus, rather than trans and gender-diverse people or intersex people, and so LGB has been used instead.

6.6 Activism and Resistance: Deploying Disorder

As outlined in Chapter 3, sections 3.2.3 to 3.2.8, the LGBTQI+ community has a rich history of activism and resistance, both nationally and internationally. Historically, the goals of this activism have been fighting for recognition, political parity, and social inclusion, and this thesis shows that this drive to resist and disrupt is still present today.

Findings from the mainstream media data show that, despite the sometimes-problematic framing of debates and uneven representation during this period, the Marriage Equality Referendum was presented as a unifying political goal of the LGBTQI+ community. Despite some criticism of the campaign advocating for the introduction of same-sex marriage (outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.2.10), queer visibility found new forms.

Kerrigan (2020, p.161) observes that, “Much of the visibility within the Irish media during the campaign, both digital and traditional, was linked to LGBTQ media activism.” The data from the community-led media show that this activism is no longer limited to issues that only affect the LGBTQI+ community. In fact, most of the salient issues in *GCN Magazine* related to wider political and social injustices affecting other groups. On one hand, this shows a new awareness of the compounding and intersectional nature of oppression and that other issues are not discreet from queer politics. In this way, this inter-group solidarity is perhaps a, “glimpse of queer hope” (Bayramoğlu 2021) in the sense that *GCN Magazine* is constructing (i) a community that exists *in* difference and in solidarity with others for the benefit of all, and (ii) Ireland as a place of refuge for those fleeing persecution due to their gender or sexual identity. Further, the fact that individuals are given voice within the magazine and given a face in the visuality of the magazine, would suggest that *GCN Magazine* is not just paying lip service to these issues.

Relatedly, it was highlighted in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2, that the political and social climate in the Russian Federation was a topic of particular salience in community-led media. This could be a further sign of inter-group solidarity and it could be argued that the magazine is facilitating and accelerating cosmopolitan flows between contexts, and a sign of a post-migration and post-digital world where it is appreciated that there cannot be justice for the one until justice for the many is achieved, in other words an international utopic project. However, as mentioned in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2, seemingly ‘whiter’ political issues dominate, and so, we must be critical of this asymmetry and acknowledge the need to have a more intersectional and less Eurocentric perspective in the domain of activism. An understanding of intersectionality must inform our application of disidentification and queer futurity, where acknowledging the complexities of lived experiences is key to recognising acts of resistance as well as processes of exclusion. An intersectional perspective allows the operationalisation of disidentification and queer

futurity to challenge the existing social order and envision a more just and equitable future. The findings outlined in the previous chapter show that activists advocate for policy changes, cultural shifts, and societal acceptance, reflecting their refusal to assimilate into oppressive norms. For example, in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2, textual and visual references to ‘rebellion’, ‘revolt’, and ‘fighting back’ occur alongside commentary on a variety of social and political issues such as asylum-seeking conditions, political regimes inside and outside of Ireland, and bodily autonomy to name a few. As noted, 27 of the 38 covers examined contain either implicit or explicit references to activism, and interestingly there are a number of common modes of representation from a material perspective that present a very particular form of activism. Political pins, handmade signs, graffiti, spray paint, raised fists, and placards would all support the idea that change is only achievable through bottom-up campaigning and resistance, rendering political engagement and self-determination accessible to anyone. Further, young people and the older generation are more frequently conflated with engagement with activist causes. The effect of this is that it portrays changemaking as an integral part of the queer experience. The move away from issues affecting the community itself towards issues that affect other groups reveals new potential future in which communities more readily come to each other’s aid and where systematic exploitation and oppression are viewed as participatory, and therefore require collective responsibility and action. However, it would appear that both mainstream media and community-led media construct the LGBTQI+ community as a homogenous group in terms of their political and social goals. The mainstream media does this by situating same-sex marriage as a pinnacle of progress to the attained, desired by all LGBTQI+ people (and also evidenced by in- and out-grouping of gay people through pronoun usage in discussions of same-sex marriage), while the community-led media positions the community in opposition to far-right groups. This latter version of community is defined by a purpose to disrupt dominant political paradigms and a picture

of the modern queer in Ireland emerges as a left-wing radical who takes on every liberal cause as their own. Those who are able are urged to make as much noise about injustice whenever and wherever possible, to keep the possibility of a better, more inclusive future alive. The former, while less radical, still represents the community as changemakers along a diminishment-enhancement binary. The LGBTQI+ community emerges as a disruptive force, regardless of the angle and nature of the media outlet. That said, there appears to be an issue of diversity both in terms of the types of issues that are presented as important to the LGBTQI+ by the Irish media, and also in the visuality of the data, where white skin and ‘white issues’ are hugely disproportionately represented. Issues like Black Lives Matter only appear in a cursory way, and we must also be critical of this potential commodification of diversity.

An alternative interpretation of the above findings is that the media is employing dystopic ideations. As mentioned, in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2, the activist framing of community could potentially be seen as a burden to the LGBTQI+ person. This is particularly the case when we consider the salience of notions of ‘rebellion’, ‘revolt’, and frequent calls to ‘fight back’. Combined with the bottom-up nature of the activism represented (through the materiality of political pins, handmade signs, graffiti, spray paint, raised fists, and placards), as well as the conflation of activist causes with young people (and their future) and the older generation (and their past), a picture of a disempowered oppressed LGBTQI+ person living in the present emerges.

Somewhat adjacently, but worthy of note nonetheless, is that *GCN Magazine* engages in everyday linguistic activism that legitimises nonbinary language use which raises awareness of the issues associated with pronouns in particular (see, for example, Conrod 2022). Saguy and Williams (2022) also highlight this affirmative potential of the use of pronouns, and in particular, how their use compels others to use them. In this way, it functions as breathing space for new language that has been developed, where the use of

specific pronouns and language linked to a community of practice reflects a resistance to dominant language norms and asserts the validity of unique identities.

This section serves to highlight what Jones (2023, p.13) describes as, “the motivational power of discourse that resists inequality and builds solidarity, both locally and transnationally.” Jones argues that this activism exists, “because of the ongoing need for progress [...]” which is being recognised by *GCN Magazine*. The discourses of inter-group solidarity that are present in the data can be viewed both as a burden to members of the LGBTQI+ community who are framed as constantly embattled, as well as a sign of a more equitable queer future.

6.7 Articulating Futurity: Art and Cultural Engagement as Subversion

The significance of artistic expressions by LGBTQI+ individuals and communities emerged as important in the data, particularly so in relation to self-representation of the community. Muñoz (1999; 2009) reveals how art, literature, films, music, and other forms of cultural production can serve as powerful tools for disidentification, as well as for imagining a better future. It can be claimed that, through these creative works, voices within the LGBTQI+ community are challenging prevailing norms and representations, offering alternative narratives that explore diverse identities and desires.

As noted in Chapter 5, section 5.3.5, the arts and popular culture emerge as important categories both in the keyword results, as well as in the visual corpus. The lemma ‘queer’ collocates with various artistic subcultures such as film, performance arts, music, and indeed, queer ‘culture’ is presented as taking place within these realms. There are a number of potential interpretations of this. Firstly, it could be argued that ‘progress’ is being driven by engagement with these domains, and that it is a type of collective future building project, perhaps as a counteractive measure to the ‘pinkwashing’ and corporate commodification of pride and queer lives. Through engagement with the queering of art,

film, and music, the LGBTQI+ community is constructed as able to distance itself from mainstream culture and imagine an alternative future for itself. However, this can also be criticised as being elitist and classist, where non-engagement with this domain can lead to in-group/out-group dynamics and exclusion. In this way, the queerer aspect of the LGBTQI+ community is the classed aspect of the community as it is accessible as an inclusive space to middle and upper-middle class people who have appropriate intertextual knowledge, as well as the means to engage. This recalls Grant's (2021) argument, stated in Chapter 2, section 2.5.1, where queer narratives of space are class specific.

In this case, economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) is required, and can primarily be acquired through queer networks which are themselves semi-private. As such, the queer community, as a cultural subgroup of the LGBTQI+ community is one which can be difficult to access, but one with huge transformative potential. One example of how the magazine engages with this transformative potential is through its initiative *Queer Utopia*, a collaborative initiative between *GCN Magazine* and LGBTQI+ "artists, activists, and makers." Within this initiative, creators of differing backgrounds and disciplines are asked to come together and collectively respond to the notion of Queer Utopia through "bold imaginings". In fact, the magazine urges readers, "to unite as a community and imagine a different, better version of the world and map out an exciting future that can unite, inspire and encourage us all." Muñoz tells us that queer utopia can be glimpsed in the aesthetic, and so it seems fitting that *GCN Magazine* asked artists how would it "look, sound, [and] feel." See below for examples of this.

(1) [...] a place where queer people are open and proud, supporting each other in beautiful harmony.

(2) [...] living in an environment where one can access dyke women's spaces more frequently, dancing naked to sickening tunes and attending our friends' local music gigs in a country that doesn't punish the community with sky-high rent prices is an ideal that we strive to experience in the very near future.

A strong sense of affect emerges from these various sentiments expressed through different modes by a variety of artists from different backgrounds in the context of this project. It calls to mind Neary's (2023, p.349) musings on affect, affective flows, and art, where she posits that art and arts-based methods, "facilitate grappling with these affective flows, fostering open and unpredictable lines of exploration and experimentation with gender and sexuality topics with young people." Neary (2023, p.349) argues that art can be useful in broaching new or taboo topics as they facilitate openness and "have huge generative value for 'coming in slantwise' (Quinlivan 2018, p.87; Ahmed 2006) or 'sideways' (Ivinson and Renold 2013) on topics." In this way, art articulates queer futurity.

6.8 The Radical Potential of Re-operationalisation

It has been well documented that, often implicit, exclusionary strategies are frequently employed by the mainstream media when representing the LGBTQI+ community (see, for example, Peterson 2010; Love and Baker 2015; Van der Bom *et al.* 2015). Inspired by the tenets of queer futurity, I would like to offer my thoughts on the potential of some of these strategies for the LGBTQI+ or alternative press. It is this researcher's belief that many of these could be appropriated and re-operationalised positively by the LGBTQI+ community towards the creation of new discourses for the public consciousness. For example, Van der Bom *et al.* (2015, p.125) reveal that imaginaries are used to construct hypothetical future realities which, 'conceptualise the consequences of the break between marriage and procreation by stating that there "could be unpredictable" and "possibly risky results"'. Chapter 5, section 5.2.3, revealed similar findings in relation to the welfare of children and the 'dangers' of same-sex parenting. While I could not be more abhorred by the particular use of this strategy in mainstream public discourse, the potential of the strategy to inspire is not necessarily a negative force. In many ways, the LGBTQI+ press is operationalising Krzyżanowski's (2020) normalisation model, to create and sustain 'borderline discourses' (Krzyżanowski 2020, p.503) which are more positive and

transformative. In a similar way, where the mainstream press employs the recontextualisation of discourse domains (such as scientific or religious) to achieve non-phobic stance-taking (Van der Bom *et al.* 2015), *GCN Magazine* shows evidence of employing this strategy with more positive results. As highlighted in section 6.4 above, for example, there is a highly salient semantic domain related to medicine and (sexual) health in the data relative to other corpora (both mainstream media representations of LGBTQI+ people and a general English corpus). As previously alluded to, while it is possible to be critical of the fact that representations of the community by the community are still drawing upon discourses that were, in another context, harmful and limiting, it is also possible to view this through the lenses of disidentification and queer futurity, in that a discourse space has been reclaimed and re-operationalised to educate and inform. While I have previously argued that references to sexual activity (even safe sexual practices) and the reoccurring visual elements of bare skin, bodies, leather, and allusions to kink amplify the idea that LGBTQI+ people are hypersexual, a trope against which the community has frequently struggled, a counterargument exists in that the magazine is creating a space which is unashamedly sexual and sexually inclusive. Here, *GCN Magazine* constructs an imagined community that has apparently ‘transcended’ the ‘traditional’ secrecy surrounding sex and sexuality in Ireland (explored in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2), as well as a progressive community relative to other ‘backward’ states. The level of ‘sexual freedom’ and services in place to facilitate this is presented as a sign of national ‘progress’, and a determiner of how people and places are positioned and assessed in relation to one another in transnational narratives of modernity and progress. This has been shown by a number of other scholars (see, for example, Cruz Malavé and Manalansan 2002).

Chapter 3 highlighted that to be a member of the LGBTQI+ community was to be inherently un-Irish (Pettit 1998, p.21). There is evidence in the data that this notion is

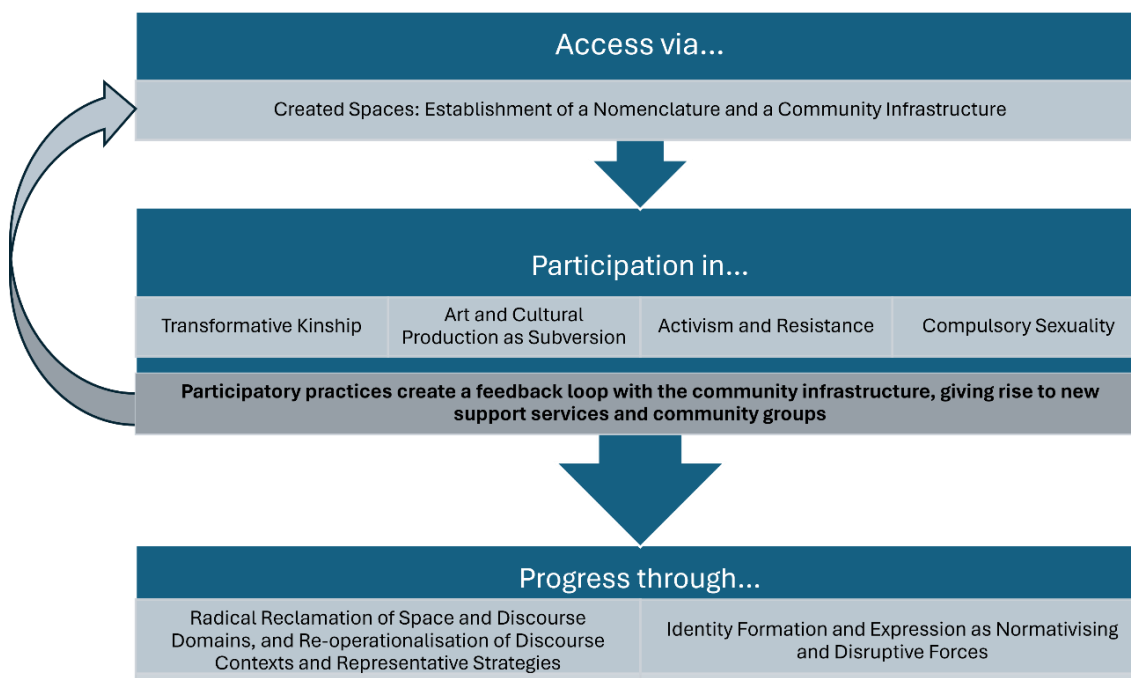
being challenged. *GCN Magazine* runs an online store where they sell merchandise and clothing containing taglines such as “Protect Trans Youth”, “Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of Your Fist”, “Smash the Patriarchy”, “Stop Violence Against Gays and Women – Fairview March ‘83”, “Trans Liberation Now”, “Be Gay. Do Crime”, “Cumhacht Aiteach” (Gay Power in Irish), among others. Here, *GCN Magazine* attempts to find new ways to pursue activism within the neoliberal commercial market. While this can also be criticised as the commodification of social injustice, the use of the Irish language in these slogans is particularly interesting. Indeed, it is not the only instance of Irish in the corpus. The above slogans combined with the multiple occurrences of Irish terms in the nomenclature discussed in the section 6.5 (for example, Amach, Solais Glória) highlights a potential link between national identity and queer social progress. The foregrounding of an ‘Irishness’ in the data is also reflected in the findings of Strange (2022), who identified that the Irish language was a key signifier of national pride and identity during Ireland’s 2018 abortion referendum. Strange (2022) argues that, in this context, Irish was conflated with progressive feminist goals to enable nationalism. This allowed voters to align themselves symbolically with both a pro-abortion stance and a nationalistic one. In a similar way, here Irish is reappropriated from its traditional relationship with heterosexual and cisgender Catholic identities to align with the other values being constructed by *GCN Magazine*.

6.9 Towards a Model of Progress: The Operationalisation of Productive Queer Futurity by *GCN Magazine*

In terms of how we can transpose the aforementioned themes from the realm of abstract discussion to a useful model for understanding how a minority group has operationalised a productive form of futurity, we must first organise them. This thesis contends the value in this model lies firstly in its usefulness as an aide to understanding the matrix of discourses, nexus of practice, and representations of a minority group (in this case the

LGBTQI+ community) at play in a given context (in this case the Irish context), and secondly, in highlighting the structuring dynamic of progress as ‘access-participation-progress’. In doing so, the values of various ways of being, their associated necessary social and economic capital, and obstacles to access and participation (and therefore progress) become clear(er). We get a more concrete sense of how the LGBTQI+ community imagines itself, and therefore also the scope of discord between community and mainstream representations of the same community. Crucially, we can also infer who may struggle with or benefit least from this version of progress and collectivity, allowing us to see beyond statistics from advocacy and other civil society organisations (who quite rightly, but somewhat superficially, identify the discrepancies within the LGBTQI+ community in relation to wellness and mental and physical health). This model of progress and community allows us to see and feel the process of how progress and community are created.

Figure 25: *The Operationalisation of Productive Queer Futurity by GCN Magazine*



This model visualises *GCN Magazine*'s operationalisation of disidentification and queer futurity and yields the following insights. The creation of safe spaces and the

establishment of a nomenclature and community infrastructure is the means by which LGBTQI+ people can first access queer spaces. While some may be able to access the community directly through participation, many of these spaces are, as mentioned above, semi-private, and difficult to access initially. As such, a community infrastructure comes primarily in the form of specialised support services and community groups. The next step towards progress is participation in one or a number of domains highlighted by the community as key to the queer Irish experience. These include participating in; normative or transformative kinship (arrangements from traditional marriage to polyamory), art and cultural production and consumption as a subversive practice, activism and resistance to hegemonic structures, and, a compulsory hyper-sexuality. The effect of this participation is twofold. In the first instance, a feedback loop is created with the access phase, giving rise to new services and groups, and in the second instance, it allows for radical change and progress to occur. Participation, or lack thereof, in the mentioned domains allow for identity formation to act as both normalising and disruptive forces, pushing the community forward. Finally, the practices of reclamation of space (discursive and physical) and novel forms of representation also contribute to the collective progress.

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter explored how community-led or alternative media ecologies can be useful in creating space and advancing discourse and dialogue around non-normative gender and sexual identities. It also revealed how the nexus of practice established by community-led media can differ greatly from that of mainstream media. By examining the ‘ways of being and doing’ present in representations of LGBTQI+ lives in both *GCN Magazine* and *The Irish Times*, this chapter has shown how these outlets can be a platform for both positive and negative change for the LGBTQI+ community. Finally, by viewing the data through the lenses of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’, it attempted to understand

how LGBTQI+ people are articulating their future by shedding light on their engagement with current societal and cultural structures, some of which are limiting to queer lives.

Chapter 7: Contribution, Limitations, and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter in this thesis outlines the contribution of this research by providing a summary of the thesis and re-entering a dialogue with previous scholarship in the field of language, gender, and sexuality to highlight the significance of the discussion that took place the previous chapter. Then, the aims and objectives of the study mentioned in Chapter 1 are revisited and reflected upon. In a further section, this chapter proposes some potential ‘real world’ applications of the research in areas of education, policy, and journalism. This chapter also reflects on the limitations of this research, firstly in a general sense, and then in terms of its methodological design and theoretical underpinning. Taking into account the limitations of the study as well as its contribution to the field, the final section in this thesis outlines some suggestions for further study, by proposing some potentially illuminating theoretical and methodological innovations and fruitful research contexts, in particular.

7.2 Aims and Objectives Revisited

Chapter 1, section 1.4, outlined the overarching aim of this thesis, which is to examine the representation of gender and sexual minorities in mediated discourse contexts, by looking specifically at one mainstream news media publication, as well as one LGBTQI+ community media publication from the Republic of Ireland. The purpose of this aim was to interrogate constructions of community and collectivity, as well as the values within this community. By doing so, we can identify what type of progress is being made, and thus, who is most privileged in this future version of community. Within this examination, this thesis aimed:

- (i) to critically examine representations of the LGBTQI+ community in mediated discourse contexts in order to highlight the ways in which oppressive discourses

continue to be (re-)produced – in both a mainstream and community-led publication

(ii) to reveal the ideological underpinning of the dominant discourses at play in these mediated contexts

(iii) to highlight transformative and radical practices that challenge (or have the potential to challenge) any problematic representations through a theoretical framework based on the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009).

In doing so, this thesis was able to engage with the notion of ‘progress’. As mentioned throughout, legislative gains can oftentimes be conflated with the notion of ‘progress’ when it comes to matters of gender and sexuality. Chapter 1, section 1.2, pointed out that the benefits of such gains cannot be applied to the LGBTQI+ community as a whole which necessitates a critical examination of how we conceive of the notion of progress. As such, this thesis interrogated the construction of the notion of progress by tracing imagined temporalities, spatialities and processes of future building in mediated news discourse from two perspectives – the outsider perspective (mainstream media) and the insider perspective (community-led LGBTQI+ media). Using the complementary theoretical lenses of ‘disidentification’ and queer futurity (Muñoz 1999; 2009), I show how these media construct, constrain, and enact perspectives and activities, thereby operating as a system of rules and norms (or a nexus of practice) that governs the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society in relation to the LGBTQI+ community. I show how this manifests linguistically and semiotically in both mainstream and community-led media and identify who the primary beneficiaries are of such constructions of progress, thus revealing hierarchies of power.

7.3 Summary of Thesis

This thesis began with some opening remarks on the rationale and background context of the research and explored how it enters a dialogue with established scholarship in the field of language, gender, and sexuality by outlining the dominant narratives and trends within the field. Namely, this occurs through an engagement with emerging interests in the field of language, gender, and sexuality. It does so by viewing the intersection between language, gender, and sexuality as a, ‘mesh of possibilities’ (Sedgwick 1993, p.8) rather than a psychosocial process containing binaries and hierarchies. Though language and gender-, and sexuality-based normativity, exclusion, marginalisation, and representation are all still considered, this emerging trend examines these aspects to consider language and gender-, and sexuality-based transgression, disorder and struggles for voice, and their disruptive potential to craft a more inclusive and equitable future for the community. Leap (2021) considers what theoretical avenues may yet hold potential in this regard and suggests that Muñoz’s (1999) concept of ‘disidentification’ as one such avenue. As such, this thesis combined this notion of disidentification with another of Muñoz’s concepts ‘queer futurity’ Muñoz (2009) and proposed a framework to interpret representations of LGBTQI+ people. I argue that these complementary notions offer a new way to understand how minority groups generally can negotiate new ways of being and doing through challenging hegemonic norms, a perspective which holds great synergy with queer projects.

Chapter 1 explored the challenges related to the use of language itself within studies of language, gender, and sexuality, as well as the researcher's positionality and subjectivity in research that is necessarily personal and outlined the structure and organisation of the thesis. Chapter 2 introduced the reader to some of the central concepts and theoretical framing of the thesis. In particular, it outlined that discourse is understood as mediated, where such mediated discourse is linguistically and semiotically constituted, and

multimodally conveyed, and can be interpreted as either a normative or an anti-normative nexus of practice. By perceiving discourse as such, Chapter 2 argues that the above analytical foci derived from the work of Muñoz can each be considered in terms of how they articulate disidentification and queer futurity. Ultimately, Chapter 2 argued that a discourse approach to the study of language, gender, and sexuality is useful, and indeed, holds great affinity with the complementary theoretical lenses of disidentification and queer futurity. Chapter 3 traced the trajectory of the understanding of sexuality in the Irish context by looking at key influential factors and events throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries and explored how the media has intersected and interacted with the LGBTQI+ community in recent decades. Overall, this chapter has revealed that Ireland has gradually seceded from the influence of the catholic Church, primarily through incremental gains facilitated by both political activism and other social and economic factors. It also highlighted that despite these developments, the centrality of legislative goals to current agendas and the foregrounding of mainstreamed LGBTQI+ identities has had an obviating effect on the more radical queerness that exists in Ireland today. Notably, this tension is visible in media contexts and reflects the historical ideological divides within the LGBTQI+ community. Chapter 4 outlined the methods used in this research as well as the data drawn upon in its analysis. It elucidated the two primary approaches that facilitated the interrogation of the data: CADS and CAMDA. The analytical procedure followed for each data type was provided before a final section that presented reflections on the methodological issues that arose during the course of the research. Chapter 5 presented the findings of this thesis from both perspectives under investigation; mainstream representation of the LGBTQI+ community and ingroup representations of the LGBTQI+ community, while Chapter 6 interpreted and discussed these through the lens of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’. Finally, Chapter 6 presented a model that illustrates how *GCN Magazine*, in particular, operationalises a productive form of queer

futurity that allows it to construct, constrain, and enact perspectives and activities on its own terms, thereby operating as a system of rules and norms that governs the production, dissemination, and circulation of knowledge within society in relation to the LGBTQI+ community.

7.4 Contribution

This thesis highlights how community-led or alternative media ecologies can be useful in creating space and advancing discourse and dialogue around non-normative gender and sexual identities, and revealed how the nexus of practice established by community-led media can differ greatly from that of mainstream media. In doing so, it foregrounds the agency of the LGBTQI+ community. By examining the linguistic and semiotic practices of *GCN Magazine* and *The Irish Times* using established corpus and visual discourse analytic techniques, I have shown how these outlets can be a platform for both positive and negative change for the LGBTQI+ community. Secondly, this thesis highlights the disruptive potential of disorder and struggles for voice through a theoretical framework derived from the work of Muñoz (1999; 2009). By interpreting the ‘ways of being and doing’ present in the data through the lens of ‘disidentification’ and ‘queer futurity’, we can come to understand how minority groups generally are articulating their future by shedding light on their engagement with current societal and cultural structures which are limiting to queer lives. As alluded to, the fundamental tenet of these theories lies in the pursuit to challenge hegemonic norms, a perspective which holds great synergy with queer projects. It is my belief that there are a number of potentially positive applications of this research, both in academia, where this framework can be used to understand minority groups generally, but also beyond academia, for example in social policy and journalistic best practice. These are discussed in the subsequent section.

7.4.1 Applications of Research Outside Academia

I believe that there are many potential applications of this research beyond academic contexts. I align myself with Jones (2023) who asserts that,

sociolinguists have long championed an advocacy approach in which researchers inform public policy (e.g. Cameron *et al.* 1993) and support the social justice efforts of their participants (e.g. Bucholtz, Casillas and Lee 2016).

(Jones 2023, pp.14-15)

This thesis achieves this by attempting to give voice to articulations of a better future containing structures and spaces that are more affirming to queer lives. In doing so, I mirror Jones' (2023, p.3) aim of reaffirming, "the vital and emancipatory role that language, gender and sexuality scholarship plays in resisting discrimination and demanding change."

One area in which there is space for such impact is in a policy domain. Currently, policies that affect the LGBTQI+ community have an essentialising effect, assuming political and social homogeneity. This research has shown how different groups experience their queerness in different ways, and how certain structures (for example, marriage) may contain the queerer subject when co-opted by homonormative ideology. More diversity of initiatives and structures may be required to make meaningful change. For example, it is clear from this thesis that many queer people are finding an affirmative outlet in cultural and/or artistic pursuits. By investing in queer cultural and/or artistic initiatives from the top down, institutions could enable further articulation of queerer desires and open dialogue between groups. Beyond this, Motschenbacher (2022) argues for nonheteronormative language policies that could support more inclusive social change.

Jones (2023, p.14) summarises some of his recommendations which include,

avoiding assumptions about individuals' identities, such as labelling every man who has sex with men as 'gay', and avoiding the use of gendered labels (such as 'Ms' or 'Sir') altogether.

(Jones 2023, p.14)

In a similar way, we can consider the development of a linguistic ‘toolkit’ for schools, parents, and indeed industry. As a scholar of language, gender, and sexuality, I am often asked, “Is it okay if I say x?”, and many peers, family members, and colleagues often express their fear of ‘saying the wrong thing’. I believe that research in language, gender, and sexuality has a lot to offer in this area. The idea of a linguistic “toolkit” is a useful way to think about the contribution of this research, where people can be given the tools to be critical of their own language use and consider for themselves whether they are reinforcing stereotypes or challenging dominant norms. This will allow people agency in their own learning and avoid the feeling of being policed. We often hear about the de-colonisation of the curriculum, and this can be a useful model to apply to this context. By de-heterosexualising curricula, we can begin to challenge the pervasiveness and ‘naturalness’ of certain structures and practices. For example, the findings of this thesis showed that marriage is understood in Ireland to be based on gender complementarity and ‘natural’ roles of men and women are frequently discussed in this context. As mentioned in the previous chapter, not only is this exclusionary towards same-sex parents, but it also reveals a hierarchy of ‘families’, where the conjugal, reproductive husband-and-wife duo are constructed as hegemonic, positioning alternative family units as lesser while framing the value of women in terms of reproductive capabilities. This reification of normative kinship and essentialising of gender roles is at odds with Muñoz’s paradigms, and is inherently harmful to LGBTQI+ people, women, and trans people in particular.

A final area I will explore is the domain of journalistic best practice. As discussed in the previous chapter, this tug-of-war of queer visibility identified by Kerrigan (2020) is reflected in the hierarchal nature of the LGBTQI+ community as represented in the data. These hierarchies are established in both mainstream and community media. In mainstream media representations, it is mainly cisgender gay men who are present, aligning with the historic foregrounding of this group’s agenda. The erasure of anyone

who is not gay or lesbian from public discourse in the mainstream publication is not specific to this context. The more marginalised members of the LGBTQI+ community are effectively absent from the mainstream data. Chapter 5 highlighted that ‘intersex’ and ‘trans’ are predominantly used as modifiers of other nouns, and exist within much more limiting frames of healthcare and activism as opposed to within a wider frame of existence as subjects themselves who experience joy, discrimination and so on. We saw how ‘intersex’ modifies ‘diagnosis’, ‘condition’, and ‘mutilation’, and ‘trans’ modifies ‘healthcare’ and ‘activist’. While increased visibility of intersex and trans issues can be lauded, we must nevertheless be critical about the dehumanising effect this discursive framing has on these groups. Bisexual representation, though less limited than ‘intersex’ and ‘non-binary’, is not given legitimacy as a community in itself either, only existing as part of, or alongside other more powerful groups within the wider LGBTQI+ community, especially in relation to that of ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’, for example. Even though, as mentioned, some negative semantic prosody is evident in the types of verbs that collocate with ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’, it is nonetheless evident that the more mainstream identity categories are represented as having much more agency and are not grammatically separated from an affective existence. Further, the mainstream media employs a strategy that recontextualises discourse domains to distance itself from arguments about sexuality-based discrimination. Often, this is done by positioning phobic discourses as scientifically framed. I argue that journalists can learn from research such as this and move away from such discourse domains to situate discussions of LGBTQI+ people more within more humanising frames. By doing so, the press would have less of an essentialising effect on the lives of LGBTQI+ people, limiting them to their sexual identity, instead of celebrating LGBTQI+ lives as lives. Finally, by showing how a community-led publication can innovate (comparative to a mainstream publication), this thesis highlights the potential for change to be enacted through linguistic interventions (for example, through

normalising pronoun usage). In this way, journalists demonstrate the application of sociolinguistic expertise in meaningful and productive ways.

7.5 Limitations

This section highlights the limitations of this thesis in terms of its methodological and theoretical framing, and it also considers how the somewhat ambitious scope of the research has ultimately restricted the space available for more granular discourse analysis.

A first acknowledgement I would like to make relates to the difficulties of combining the two corpora, as their design affected the types of questions that could be asked as well as some of the findings outlined in Chapter 5. Whereas the mainstream news data was gathered with deliberate emphasis on how marriage equality was discussed – both in terms of the sampling method and the time period chosen – the *GCN Magazine* data was from a longer period, consisted of textual and visual data, and considered the full range of topics discussed during that time. The narrowing of the data collection parameters in relation to *The Irish Times* inevitably resulted in this narrower framing of LGBTQI+ concerns. Notably, this becomes an issue when searching for examples of innovation in representation and instances of queer futurity. Given that the *Irish Times* data was specifically collected at the critical discourse moment of the marriage equality referendum, it is not altogether unsurprising, then, that the focus remains on legislative progress and marriage in the data, thereby skewing the findings somewhat. That said, while the discourses and examples of queer futurity being analysed are primarily drawn from the *GCN Magazine* data, an examination of mainstream media representations, notably authored by those who are not members of the LGBTQI+ community, is also useful as it shows the continued, constraining presence of heteronormative ideology. In establishing a baseline of the types of discourses that are circulating in the public sphere via the mainstream analysis, any instances of futurity and innovation are potentially rendered more visible. Further, given that similar studies have also been conducted in

mainstream media contexts, this also allows for comparisons to be drawn between this research and other contexts, further strengthening the arguments made in this thesis. In addition, the specificity of these news contexts limits the broader applicability of findings. However, I do not argue that the findings in this thesis are representative of every linguistic and semiotic strategy used to represent LGBTQI+ people in Ireland. Instead, these distinct data sources are intended to provide a snapshot of the kinds of attitudes, ideologies and discursive strategies which were being produced by liberal Ireland within the indicated time periods. Given the academic endeavour is to apply a queer utopian lens to these distinct data sources in an attempt to explore to what extent discourses of queer futurity are evident in Irish media contexts, the specificity of the data sources is not an impediment.

Another limitation linked to its ambitious scope relates to the review of the literature, content of the data, and subsequent focus of the analysis and argument, which foregrounds an exploration of sexuality (in particular, lesbian and gay identities) rather than sex or gender. Indeed, in *The Irish Times* corpus, it is notable that the reform of the gender recognition act – happening at the same time as the marriage equality debate – is absent. Reducing the scope of the research, by focusing on a single media outlet for example, may have created space for a more holistic and integrated exploration of the entire LGBTQI+ community within one mediated context. This constraint is most evident in the focus in the literature on sexual identities (rather than gender identities), specific findings that are not applicable to the wider LGBTQI+ group, and also in the breadth of the findings. Narrowing the scope would have allowed for more depth as well as breadth in Chapter 5 through a closer and more detailed discourse analysis and exploration of textual examples in-context. This depth was somewhat sacrificed in the decision to conduct two discourse analyses and experiment theoretically with notions of disidentification and queer futurity.

It should also be noted that the geographical and sociocultural context of the research is specific, which, although allows for insights to be generated and critically interpreted, still necessarily limits the applicability of the findings to other contexts. In other words, any discussion can only be partial. Similar research in mediated discourse contexts has been carried out primarily in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, although recent research has a more holistic and global scope, and while it was beyond the scope of this thesis to collect and analyse data across a variety of contexts, extensions of this thesis to non-Western and non-anglophone contexts could be enlightening. The CADS approach, as outlined in Chapter 4, has been heavily employed in European contexts in particular, and so the application of this approach to other contexts could push the field to innovate. Singh (2021) notes that it is important for the field of language, gender, and sexuality to engage with contexts in the Global South to move towards decolonisation of the field. I acknowledge that, although the Irish context is understudied relative to other research contexts in the field, it nonetheless contributes to the sizable body of research that has taken place in the Global North. In Chapter 2, section 2.4, I attempted to engage with research that has been conducted in the Global South in order to ensure that these contexts are not eclipsed and to benefit from these perspectives.

A further potential limitation of this research is that a reference corpus had to be chosen against which to compare the data to facilitate keyword analyses. Ideally, this should have been a large corpus of Irish-English, and while an Irish-English sub-corpus of English Web 2013 (enTenen13) does exist, it was unfortunately unavailable on *Sketch Engine* during the period in which this research was being conducted. Future studies might consider a smaller, more context-specific corpus to this end. Nevertheless, valuable insights were gained from the various analytical tools on *Sketch Engine*. These are explicated in Chapter 4, sections 4.3.3.1 to 4.3.3.4.

A final limitation of the approach taken in this thesis relates to the top-down nature of the data under investigation. While this approach aligns with the understanding of news discourse as deeply imbricated in relations of power and ideology, it somewhat diminishes the agency of LGBTQI+ people. For example, in their analysis of online reader responses to the erotic fiction series *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Jones and Mills (2014) highlight that while normative and problematic gender roles are portrayed within the series, this does not necessarily mean that readers become disempowered or lose agency as sexual beings. In fact, the opposite was found. They highlight that there is much value in investigating discourses from a bottom-up perspective, centring subjects' negotiation of discourses and representations, in contrast to the more top-down perspective of this research. I acknowledge that this thesis does not take into explicit consideration the agency of readers with regard to any identity work undertaken vis-à-vis the representations they are exposed to in the selected publications.

7.6 Suggestions for Further Study

In terms of the visual and semiotic resources employed by the magazine, this thesis focused solely on the cover images of *GCN Magazine*. While this was a useful tool in the triangulation of approaches to assist the researcher in accessing the data as well as in contributing to a more robust and holistic identification of discourses and representational strategies, it did not represent the entirety of the visuality of the magazine. A large portion of space is dedicated to advertising material within the pages of the publication, and this could be a potentially illuminating area for further research, in particular in relation to how this intersects with the LGBTQI+ person as a consumer in a neoliberal state. Further, no semiotic data was used in the analysis of the data taken from *The Irish Times*. This is because these articles were much more difficult to find, and often contained generic stock images, rather than curated visuality. That said, the semiotic landscape of Ireland was saturated with imagery at the time of the Marriage Equality Referendum, and would have

made for rich data, but unfortunately due to the fleeting nature of these landscapes, this data was missed. That said, useful insights were nonetheless generated from the textual analysis. Despite the finding relating to the creation of safe spaces and the establishment of a community infrastructure, the discourse approach of this thesis resulted in less engagement with queer spatialities relative to queer temporalities and discourses of futurity more generally. To that end, future research could consider applying the complementary theoretical frameworks of 'disidentification' and queer futurity used in this thesis to the linguistic and semiotic landscape to explore mediated queer spatialities in a more direct way. The analysis of such spaces may generate further insights about how queer inclusive spaces can be curated, leading to further potential in the area of policy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Categorised keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Community Infrastructure

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
Organisations (LGBTI+ community)	<i>GCN</i> (557.2); <i>NXF</i> (161.1); <i>TENI</i> (133); <i>Outhouse</i> (109.4); <i>LINC</i> (102.4); <i>Outcomers</i> (48.8); <i>NGF</i> (40.7); <i>Amach</i> (34.7); <i>NGLF</i> (32); <i>Solais</i> (31.8); <i>Glória</i> (26.4); <i>RTÉ</i> (30.7); <i>National LGBT</i> <i>Federation</i> (45); <i>LGBT Ireland</i> (44.9)	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>GCN</i> (651.5); <i>Outhouse</i> (176.9); <i>NXF</i> (161.4); <i>TENI</i> (138.1); <i>LINC</i> (129.0); <i>NGF</i> (48.8); <i>Outcomers</i> (48.8)	The Irish Times Corpus
People (politics, activism, art, pop culture)	<i>Panti</i> (126.3); <i>Tonie</i> (91.4); <i>Ailbhe</i> (71.1); <i>Rupaul</i> (69.9); <i>Evgeny</i> (56.5); <i>Shanley</i> (39.9); <i>Éirénne</i> (29.4); <i>Shtorn</i> (29.4); <i>Niall</i> (29.3); <i>Ranae</i> (29); <i>Joni</i> (25.9); <i>Leger</i> (25.8); <i>Madonna</i> (23.7); <i>Declan</i> (57.7); <i>Zappone</i> (88.4); <i>Varadkar</i> (80); <i>Warfield</i> (26.9); <i>Declan Flynn</i> (38.5); <i>Tonie Walsh</i> (47.6); <i>Leo Varadkar</i> (47)	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>Madonna</i> (114.8); <i>Tonie</i> (94.1); <i>RuPaul</i> (91.5); <i>Evgeny</i> (70.8); <i>Joni</i> (60.5); <i>Sara</i> (54); <i>Kylie</i> (54); <i>Putin</i> (46.3); <i>Cher</i> (41.1)	The Irish Times Corpus

Appendix 2: Categorical keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Identity Labels

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
	<i>LGBT</i> (481); <i>queer</i> (218.9); <i>intersex</i> (154.1); <i>tran</i> (122.4); <i>non-binary</i> (89); <i>LGBTI</i> (88.4); <i>gay</i> (79.4); <i>lesbian</i> (76.2); <i>bisexual</i> (69.5); <i>LGBTs</i> (64.8); <i>trans</i> (50); <i>transgender</i> (37.5); <i>LGBTQ</i> (37.5); <i>cisgender</i> (28.9); <i>LGBTQIA</i> (25.9); <i>LBT</i> (25); <i>MSM</i> (24.5); <i>bi</i> (24.3)	
Identity Labels	<i>trans people</i> (161); <i>gay man</i> (121.4); <i>queer community</i> (99); <i>queer people</i> (91.1); <i>gay people</i> (63.9); <i>trans woman</i> (59.2); <i>trans community</i> (56.4); <i>intersex people</i> (55.5); <i>bisexual man</i> (52.3); <i>LGBT community</i> (52.2); <i>young LGBT</i> (50.9); <i>LGBT people</i> (47.6); <i>gay community</i> (47.5); <i>non-binary people</i> (42.8); <i>member of the LGBT</i> (40.8); <i>transgender people</i> (37.5); <i>trans man</i> (36.6); <i>same-sex couple</i> (36); <i>young tran</i> (35.4); <i>Irish people</i> (36.1); <i>people of colour</i> (35.5);	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>trans</i> (213.1); <i>tran</i> (188.2); <i>queer*</i> (176.2); <i>non-binary</i> (136.8); <i>bi</i> (134.2); <i>gang</i> (95.4); <i>MSM</i> (86.3); <i>LGBTs</i> (67); <i>cis</i> (41.1)	The Irish Times Corpus

Appendix 3: Categorised keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Medicine and (Sexual) Health

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
Medicine and (Sexual) Health	<i>GMHS</i> (62.9); <i>HSE</i> (51); <i>surrogacy</i> (48.4); <i>HIV</i> (48); <i>undetectable</i> (41.6); <i>PrEP</i> (38.3); <i>STIs</i> (37.1); <i>untransmittable</i> (32.9); <i>STI</i> (32.7); <i>HPV</i> (30.4); <i>GHN</i> (27.8); <i>Mpower</i> (27.4); <i>pre-exposure</i> (26.6); <i>PEP</i> (24.7)	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>sexual health</i> (104.2); <i>HIV diagnosis</i> (38.2); <i>HIV Ireland</i> (35.8)	
	<i>PrEP</i> (396.7); <i>clinic</i> (214.4); <i>HIV</i> (115.9); <i>vaccine</i> (100.6); <i>testing</i> (95.4); <i>lockdown</i> (94.1); <i>diagnosis</i> (92.8); <i>HPV</i> (91.5); <i>PEP</i> (82.5); <i>condom</i> (81.2); <i>undetectable</i> (76); <i>STI</i> (74.7); <i>pandemic</i> (73.4); <i>infection</i> (73.4); <i>transition*</i> (67); <i>GMHS</i> (63.1); <i>virus</i> (61.8); <i>medication</i> (59.2); <i>COVID-19</i> (59.2); <i>dose</i> (55.3); <i>STIs</i> (54); <i>anal*</i> (50.1); <i>prophylaxis</i> (46.3); <i>variation</i> (46.3); <i>epidemic</i> (42.4)	The Irish Times Corpus

* *'anal'* appears in the context of sexual health.

* *'transition'* appears in the context of gender affirming medical care.

Appendix 4: Categorized keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Marriage and Kinship

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
Marriage and Kinship	<i>marriage equality</i> (211); <i>marriage referendum</i> (64.8); <i>equality referendum</i> (57.5); <i>marriage equality referendum</i> (55); <i>same-sex marriage</i> (44.2); <i>civil partnership</i> (43.5);	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
		The Irish Times Corpus

Appendix 5: Categorized keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Danger, Discrimination, Stigma, and Trauma

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
Danger, Discrimination, Stigma, and Trauma	<i>homophobia</i> (75.3); <i>homophobic</i> (69.1); <i>transphobia</i> (29.8); <i>stigma</i> (28.8); <i>transphobic</i> (28.3); <i>internalise</i> (37.7); <i>marginalised</i> (27.6);	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>trauma</i> (72.1); <i>dangerous</i> (64.4); <i>survivor</i> (55.3); <i>internalise</i> (48.8);	The Irish Times Corpus

Appendix 6: Categorized keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Activism and Inter-group Solidarity

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
Activism and Inter-group Solidarity	<i>activism</i> (28.3); <i>decriminalisation</i> (87.6); <i>referendum</i> (34);	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>gender recognition</i> (44); <i>gay right</i> (39.9); <i>direct provision</i> (189.7);	
	<i>asylum</i> (165.2); <i>seeker</i> (112.2); <i>Roma</i> (73.4); <i>Chechnya</i> (61.8); <i>refugee</i> (52.7); <i>Russian</i> (51.4);	The Irish Times Corpus

Appendix 7: Categorised keyword results scores from GCN Magazine Corpus:

Arts and Culture

Category	Keywords (freq. score)	Ref. Corpus
Arts and Culture	<i>drag queen</i> (57.2); <i>Spicebag</i> (25.6); <i>Dublin fringe</i> (38.1);	English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)
	<i>season</i> (140.7); <i>performer</i> (104.5); <i>fringe</i> (91.5); <i>debut</i> (83.8); <i>horror</i> (65.1); <i>concert</i> (57.9); <i>vogue</i> (55.3); <i>zine</i> (54); <i>cabaret</i> (51.4); <i>disco</i> (50.1); <i>glitter*</i> (43.7);	The Irish Times Corpus

* *'glitter'* refers to a performance group called *Glitter Hole*.

* *'Spicebag'* refers to a queer event.

Appendix 8: Coding of Visual Data - Bednarek and Caple (2017) Framework

Issue	Represented Participant	Primary Attributes	Activity Sequence	Setting	Connotations/ Intertextuality
2017 Jul	Model	Prosthetics, Tattoos, Piercings	Posing	Photography Studio	Drag, Nudity, Queer Bodies, Famous Queer Photographer
2017 Aug	Couple	Leather	Posing	Photography Studio	Film
2017 Sep	Drag Artist 'Xnthy'	Makeup	Performing, Blowing Up a Balloon	Photography Studio	Drag
2017 Oct	Artistic Artefact	N/A	N/A	N/A	Kink, Art, Famous Artist 'Niall Sweeney'
2017 Nov	Newlyweds	Leather, Tulle, Veil, Harness	Celebrating at Wedding	Wedding Venue	Marriage, Kink
2017 Dec	Nude Couple	Body Hair, Nudity	Embracing, Posing	Photography Studio	Sex, Intimacy
2018 Jan	Nude Group of People	Tattoos, Piercings, Body Hair, Nudity	Posing	Photography Studio	Queer Bodies, Body Positivity
2018 Feb	Michelle Visage	Makeup	Posing	Photography Studio	Drag, Pop Culture
2018 Mar	Unknown Woman	Makeup, Piercings, Jewellery	Posing	On a City Street	Women's Rights
2018 Apr	Newspaper Compilation	Newspaper	N/A	N/A	History, Activism
2018 May	Mental Health Advocate 'Ray O'Neill'	N/A	Posing	Photography Studio	History, Activism, Older Generation
2018 Jun	Protester	Graffiti, Denim, Raised Fist	Raising Fist at Abortion Referendum Imagery	On a City Street	Pop Culture, Activism, Women's Rights
2018 Jul	LGBTQI+ Choir 'Glória'	Confetti	Posing	Photography Studio	Music, Community
2018 Aug	Musician 'Conor O'Brien'	N/A	Posing	Photography Studio	Rurality, Music
2018 Sep	Drag Artist 'Chanel'	Makeup, Corset, Body Hair	Posing	Photography Studio	Drag, Art (Photography Essay)
2018 Oct	Newlyweds	Lace, Flowers	Celebrating at Wedding	Wedding Venue	Marriage
2018 Nov	Youth Activists	Political Pins, Jewellery	Posing	Photography Studio	Activism, Youth
2018 Dec	Bodies Lying Together	N/A	Posing	Photography Studio	Sex, Queer Bodies, Body Positivity
2019 Jan	Newspaper Compilation	Warning Tape, Spray-paint, Newspapers, Paint Roller	N/A	N/A	Activism, Street Art

2019 Feb	Queer Writer and Artist 'Scottie'	N/A	Posing	Photography Studio	Art
2019 Mar	Band 'Pillow Queens'	Historical Costumes	Posing	Photography Studio	History, Art (Music and Performance)
2019 Apr	Actor/Director 'Liam Burke'	Tweed	Posing	Outdoors	History, Older Generation, Art (Film)
2019 May	Artistic Artefact	Pins, Nature	N/A	N/A	Climate Crisis, Activism
2019 Jun	Mister Leather Ireland	Leather	Eating a Hotdog	In a Restaurant	Kink, Sex, Art (Photography Series)
2019 Jul (a)	Artistic Artefact	Tattoos, Feathers, Rainbows, Unicorns, Piercings, Nudity	Two Men Kissing	N/A	Sex, Art, Pride
2019 Jul (b)	Man in Dress	Dress, Nature	Posing	In a Field	Art, Pride, Photography
2019 Aug	Collection of Political Pins	Pins	N/A	N/A	Activism, Politics
2019 Sep	Fist and Human Heart	Raised Fist, Human Heart	N/A	N/A	Activism, Politics, Northern Ireland
2019 Oct	Graffiti on Castle in a Field with Cows	Castle, Cows, Graffiti	N/A	Rural Area	Rurality, Marriage Equality, Activism
2019 Nov	Group of Young People	Placards, Hand-painted signs, Banners	Protesting	City	Activism, Politics, Youth
2019 Dec	Model	Bed, Nudity, Tattoos, Piercings	Posing	On a Bed	Queer Bodies, Art (Photography Series)
2020 Jan	Text	N/A	N/A	N/A	Black Lives Matter Movement
2020 Feb	Unknown Woman	N/A	Posing	Photography Studio	Feminism, Women's Rights, Activism, History
2020 Mar	Activist 'Evgeny Shtorn'	N/A	Posing	Photography Studio	Politics, Activism, Asylum Seeking, Refugees, Russia
2020 Oct	Drag Artist 'Viola Gayvis'	Flower, Dress, Makeup	Holding a Flower	In a Field	Art (Drag and Photography), Queer Utopia, Drag
2020 December	Activist 'Bulelani Mfaco'	Ocean	Staring into Distance	On a Beach	Activism, Direct Provision and Asylum Seeking, Refugees
2021 January	Model	Denim, Pink	Sitting in front of Mirror with different reflection	Photography Studio	Drag, Art
2021 July	Artistic Artefact	Skin, Nudity, Birds	Two Men Kissing Surrounded by Other Nude People	Dreamlike Space	Art, Pride, Sex

Appendix 9: Supplementary Coding of Additional Attributes

Issue	Gender	Significant Skin Visible	Skin Colour	Palette	Gaze	Prox.
2017 JUL	Vague	Yes	White	Colour	Direct	Alone
2017 AUG	Male and Female	Yes	White	Colour	Direct	Close
2017 SEP	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	Alone
2017 OCT	Vague	N/A	N/A	Colour	Direct	Alone
2017 NOV	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	Close
2017 DEC	Male Only	Yes	White	B/W	Averted	Close
2018 JAN	Mixed	Yes	Mixed Group	Colour	Direct	Close
2018 FEB	Female Only	Yes	White	Colour	Direct	Alone
2018 MAR	Female Only	No	Black	Colour	Direct	Alone
2018 APR	N/A	N/A	N/A	Colour	N/A	N/A
2018 MAY	Male Only	No	White	B/W	Direct	N/A
2018 JUN	Female Only	No	White	Colour	Averted	N/A
2018 JUL	Mixed	No	White Group	Colour	Direct	Close
2018 AUG	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2018 SEP	Male Only	Yes	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2018 OCT	Female Only	No	White	Colour	Averted	Close
2018 NOV	Vague	No	White	B/W	Direct	Close
2018 DEC	Vague	Yes	White	Colour	N/A	Close
2019 JAN	N/A	N/A	N/A	Colour	N/A	N/A
2019 FEB	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2019 MAR	Mixed	No	White	Colour	Direct	Close
2019 APR	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2019 MAY	Vague	No	N/A	Colour	Averted	Close
2019 JUN	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Averted	N/A
2019 JUL (A)	Male Only	Yes	White	Colour	Averted	Close
2019 JUL (B)	Male Only	Yes	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2019 AUG	N/A	N/A	N/A	Colour	N/A	N/A
2019 SEP	N/A	N/A	N/A	Colour	N/A	N/A
2019 OCT	Female Only	No	White	B/W	Averted	Close
2019 NOV	Mixed	No	White Group	Colour	Averted	Close
2019 DEC	Transgender	Yes	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2020 JAN	N/A	N/A	N/A	Colour	N/A	N/A
2020 FEB	Female Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2020 MAR	Male Only	No	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2020 OCT	Male	No	Black	Colour	Averted	N/A
2020 DEC	Male	No	Black	Colour	Averted	N/A
2021 JAN	Male	No	White	Colour	Direct	N/A
2021 JULY	Mixed	Yes	Mixed Group	Colour	Averted	Close