Take an example of the film, TV programme, piece of journalism, photograph, novel etc., and discuss the way in which the *truth* about subjectivity is constructed in the work. Discuss this in light of issues raised on the module.

In this essay, I will take a post-structuralist approach to discuss how the ‘truth’ about subjectivity is constructed I will be looking at the work of Valerie Walkerdine, Nick Mansfield's work on subjectivity, and lastly the work of Michel Foucault to examine the ‘truth’. I will be using ‘Buffy The Vampire Slayer’ (Joss Whedon, 1997-2003), an American action, drama, and fantasy series. The series is based on a young woman Buffy Summers, who is destined to fight vampires and demons, tries to lead a normal life while also embracing her responsibilities as the Slayer. I will be analysing the character of Buffy and discuss her subjectification in relation to question. The character of Buffy Summers is unique as it portrays two different identities. The first is of the Slayer and the second is of a normal young woman who seems to adhere to the norms of society. it is imperative to know that the ‘truth’ in this concept is related to power.

The ‘Mirror Stage’ is a concept in Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory. The first few months of the child’s life, which Freud refers to as the pre-Oedipal stage, the child has no sense of direction and does not see itself as a separate entity, “*the child forms a syncretic unity with the mother, and cannot distinguish between itself and its environment”* (Grosz, 1990: 34). The ‘mirror stage’ occurs between the age of 6 and 18 months, according to Lacan, this is when the child starts to recognise their own image in the mirror, and it also constitutes to the infant’s entry into the imaginary order. “*The sense of unified selfhood is one of the most crucial defining moments in the development of subjectivity, according to Lacan.”* (Mansfield, 2000: 42). For Lacan, the ‘mirror stage’ is the most crucial moment in the formation of the child’s subjectivity and ego, as the external image of the child produces an intellectual response that, according to Lacan, provides an increase to the infant’s mental representation of an ‘I’. The blissful recognition is overlaid by misrecognition, as the child sees a superior image of itself in the mirror. This superior image does not correspond with the child’s physical vulnerability; therefore, the child internalises the outside image as an ego-ideal, towards which it will forever strive through his or her life. The subject is then inherently alien to itself and “*radically decentred”* (Mansfield, 2000: 43). There also where the child is also introduced to the ‘other’.

For Foucault and Lacan, “*the subject does not come into the world with all its nature and scope encapsulated within itself in embryonic form. Subjectivity is made by the relationships that form the human context.”* (Mansfield, 2000: 52). The relationship that Mansfield refers to here is one of family; family relationships are amongst the dominant relations that contribute to a child’s subjectivity in terms of gender and sexuality. Though, Mansfield mentions family relationships, for Lacan, family relationships are not a biological fact as much as a semantic signifier. As Mark Olssen said, “*Foucault is not a social constructionist, although he is an anti-essentialist”* (Olssen, 1999: 6). Foucault argues that identity is flexible, and it is something individuals are not born with. Instead, it is formed by discourses, historical circumstances and etc.“*My objective… has been to create a history of different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects”* (Foucault, 1982: 777). Foucault mentions three modes in his 1982 article ‘The Subject and Power’. The first mode of inquiry is science, which objectivises the *“subject in grammaire générale, philology, and linguistics.”* (Foucault, 1982: 777). The second mode is what Foucault calls ‘dividing practices’, this mode divides people into two kinds, for example: male and female, “*the mad and the sane, the sick and healthy, the criminals and the “good boys.”* (Foucault, 1982: 778).The last mode Foucault talks about is of subjectification, ways in which we turn ourselves into the subjects of power discourses. Our subjectification depends on the kind of system we live in, we then enable ourselves to be targets and objects of disciplinary systems that keep us in our category.

‘Truth’ is another concept Foucault talks about and it’s significant in the construction of subjectivity. ‘Truth’ in this context emerged from language and discourses. As Foucault states, “*truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint.”* (Foucault, 1980: 131)

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*“Foucault argued that, in different times and in different places, we have been very different types of subject.”* (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001: 27), this lead back to my point about our subjectification depends on the kind of system we live in. Throughout, history human beings have gone lived in many different systems, which have constructed their subjectivity depending on the time and era. Though,

*“Foucault’s work on power/ knowledge understood subject positions as formed within the apparatuses of power/knowledge, the discursive practices and technologies of the social through which subjectification occurred.”* (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos & Walkerdine, 2008: 6).

Now that we understand, for Foucault subjectivity is not embedded in us when we are born, it is rather constructed through various stages and discourses of power.

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